

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

John Haw

If thou art borrow'd by a friend,
Right welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend;
But to return to me.

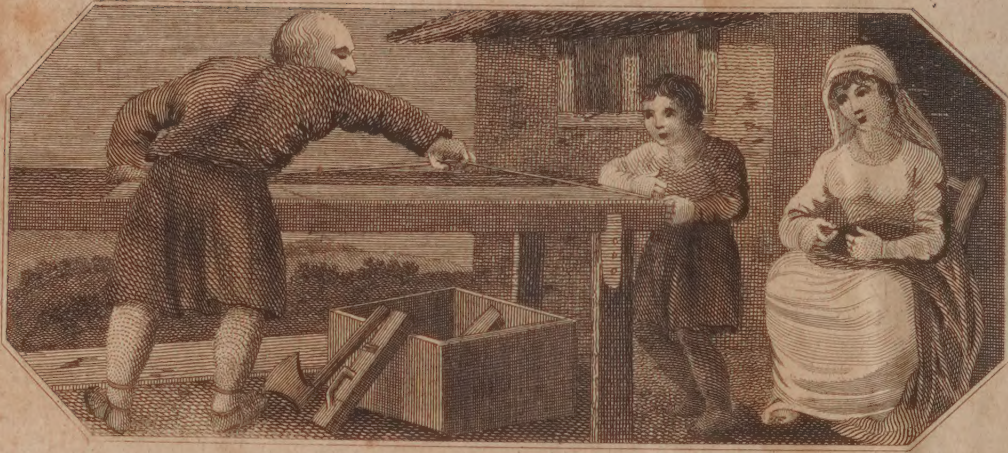
Not that imparted knowledge doth
Diminish learning's store;
But books, I find, if often lent,
Return to me no more.

☞ *Read slowly, pause frequently,
think seriously, return duly, with
the corners of the leaves not turned
down.*

Thompson, Printer.

H. Shaw
Ad. 1094th

Holy Family



BURKITT'S NOTES
ON THE
New Testament.



Jesus disputing with the Doctors

Black, D. & Co.

EXPOSITORY NOTES,
(With)
Practical Observations,
ON
The New Testament
OF OUR
Lord and Saviour
JESUS CHRIST,



By W^m. BURKITT, M.A.

Late Vicar and Lecturer of Dedham, Essex.

EXPOSITORY NOTES,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
ON
The New Testament
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

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WHEREIN THE  
SACRED TEXT IS AT LARGE RECITED, THE SENSE EXPLAINED, AND THE INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE OF THE  
BLESSED JESUS AND HIS HOLY APOSTLES, TO OUR IMITATION RECOMMENDED.

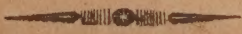
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THE WHOLE DESIGNED TO
ENCOURAGE THE READING OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES
IN PRIVATE FAMILIES,

And to render the daily perusal of them profitable and delightful.

BY WILLIAM BURKITT, M. A.

LATE VICAR AND LECTURER OF DEDHAM, ESSEX.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED.

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1818.

A PRAYER

BEFORE

Reading of the Holy Scriptures.



ALMIGHTY GOD and MERCIFUL FATHER, who hast appointed thy word to be a light to our feet, and a lamp unto our paths, and caused all the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant us the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, that we may in such wise read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And seeing of thy tender love to mankind thou hast given thy dear and only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life, give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive this his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

TO

FAMILY GOVERNORS.

AS religion did always consist in an imitation of GOD, and in a resemblance of those excellencies which shine forth in the BEST and most PERFECT Being, so we may imitate him now with much more ease and greater advantage, since his Son was MANIFEST IN THE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US: for he was pleased to become MAN, on purpose to show us how we might become like to GOD, by an imitation of his holiness. And it is most certain, that God our father will never own any of us for his children, unless he sees upon us the air and features, the impression and resemblance, of Christ our elder brother.

This consideration had induced me to set the example of the Holy Jesus before myself and you, in these PLAIN, PRACTICAL NOTES upon the HOLY EVANGELISTS, which contain remarks upon the history of our SAVIOUR'S LIFE, DOCTRINE, and MIRACLES, and of his RESURRECTION and ascension: to the intent that the temper of our minds, and the actions of our lives, may be a lively transcript of the mind and life of our blessed Redeemer; that we may admire and imitate his unspotted purity, his condescending humility, his fervent charity, his patience under sufferings and reproaches, his readiness to forgive injuries, and his entire resignation to the divine will in all conditions of life whatsoever; so that following our LORD and MASTER in all the steps of an imitable virtue, and setting his example continually before us, we may be daily correcting and reforming our lives by that glorious pattern; for without present likeness to him, we have no grounds to hope that we shall hereafter live with him.

A true compassion to your souls, and a fervent desire to further their salvation from the PRESS as well as from the PULPIT, has put me upon redeeming time for this work.

I must acknowledge my constant preaching thrice a week unto you (besides occasionals) and visiting as often a populous and scattering parish from house to house amongst you (which I have always accounted a most important part of my duty) would allow me but little time for such a work as this, which I heartily wish had fallen upon the shoulders of some that had more leisure, and greater abilities for writing on this noble and lofty subject, which even to eternity can never be exhausted. But thus much I can truly say, that earnestly imploring divine assistance, I have done what I could; my work has been my recreation, and the LORD accept it, and succeed it.

And I have this observation to ground my hope of acceptance and success upon, that the ALMIGHTY GOD has, in all ages, rendered those labors of his servants (how mean soever in themselves) most acceptable and useful, which have been employed in the profitable explication of any part of the Holy Scriptures; as if HE, who imprinted such a majesty upon the text, delighted also to reflect honor upon the interpreters thereof.

My design in preparing, and giving these NOTES into your hands, is to oblige you to read a part of the Holy
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Scriptures in your families every day; and to invite you thereunto, the sacred text is here at large recited, and controversies declined.

And I do most affectionately request you not to suffer the HOLY WORD of GOD, which is in all your hands, to lie by you as a neglected book; but daily to read it in and to your families, with simplicity of mind, to be directed and instructed by it.

All the return I desire from you for this MY LABOR OF LOVE, is your living in a daily imitation of that grand pattern of holiness and obedience, which is here set before you; and in every page recommended to you; and that we may continue to strive together in our prayers one with, and one for another, for that grace which may enable us to the faithful discharge of our respective duties towards God, towards each other, and all mankind. And that the happy union and unanimity which has hereto been amongst us, may continue and increase still with us, to the glory of God, the honor of our holy religion, the present benefit and comfort, and the eternal joy and rejoicing both of minister and people in the day of our Lord Jesus, which, as it is the fervent prayer, so it shall be the constant endeavour, of your unworthy minister, whose highest ambition it is to serve you in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, whilst I am

W. BURKITT.

EXPOSITORY NOTES,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, ON THE HOLY GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. MATTHEW.

The HOLY BIBLE contains the whole Revelation of the will of GOD to the children of men. This sacred book is usually divided into the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament contains the law and the prophets: the writings of the New Testament are either histories or epistles: the histories are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: the four Gospels are written by the four Evangelists whose names they bear; of whom St. Matthew and St. John were eye-witnesses of what they wrote, but St. Mark and St. Luke had what they wrote from the relations of others.

This Gospel before us of St. Matthew, contains an history of the birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection of the holy Jesus: all of which are the most stupendous and amazing matters and mysteries, as well as the most necessary truths to be known and believed in the world: And,

This chapter before us contains the genealogy or pedigree of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, as he was man, unto verse 17, and then relates the fact of his wonderful incarnation, to the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER I.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

That is, the descent of Jesus Christ, who was, according to the flesh, the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, is on this wise. And his genealogy from Abraham down to his reputed father, was thus: here note, that our Evangelist designing to write a narrative of our Saviour's life, begins with his pedigree and genealogy, and shows whom he descended from, namely, from David and Abraham. Where observe, 1. That David is named before Abraham, because he being a king, an illustrious type of the Messiah, the Jews expected, and do to this day expect, that the son of David shall reign over them; and that they should enjoy a temporal kingdom by him. Observe, 2. The names given to our blessed Saviour, Jesus and Christ; Jesus is his Hebrew name, and signifies a Saviour; Christ is his Greek name, and signifies anointed: from whence some do infer an imitation and encouragement, that both Hebrews and Greeks, both Jews and Gentiles, may alike come unto Christ for life and salvation, he being the common Saviour of both; according to that of St. John, Epist. 1. chap. ii. verse 2. *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

2 Abraham begat Isaac: and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naason; and Naason begat Salmon;

Both the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, make mention of our Saviour's pedigree; the former by his reputed father's side, the latter by his mother's side: the design of both was to present us with a general draught of our Lord's pedigree and descent, and not to be strict and accurate in enumerating every individual person. This should teach us, not to be over curious in scanning the parts of this genealogy, much less captiously to object against it. For if the Evangelists were not critical and exact in composing of this genealogy, why should we show ourselves so in examining of it? Rather let us attend to the design of the Holy Ghost in writing of it, which was twofold; first, for the honor of our Saviour, as a man, showing who were his noble and royal progenitors according to the flesh. Secondly, for the confirmation of our faith, touching the reality of our Redeemer's incarnation. The scripture ma-

king mention of all his progenitors, from the first man Adam, to his reputed father Joseph, will not suffer us to doubt either of the truth of his human nature, or of the certainty of his being the promised Messiah. Learn hence, that the wisdom of God hath taken all necessary care, and used all needful means for satisfying the minds of all unprejudiced persons, touching the reality of Christ's human nature, and the certainty of his being the promised Messiah; for both these ends is our Saviour's genealogy and descent recorded in the holy scriptures.

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth: and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;

7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias.

9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Ahas; and Ahas begat Ezekias;

10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

11 And Josias begat Jeconias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon;

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud: and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc: and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David, *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon, *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

Observe, here are several women mentioned in our Saviour's genealogy, and all or most of them, have a brand of infamy upon them. Tamar was one, with whom her father-in-law, Judah, committed incest; Rachab is called an harlot; Ruth came of Moab whom Lot begat of his own daughter; and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was one with whom David had committed adultery. Now the wisdom of God has thought fit to leave all this upon record for several ends and purposes. 1. To denote the freeness of God's grace, which extends itself in the saving effects and benefits of it to them that are most unworthy and ill deserving. 2. To encourage the greatest sinners to go unto Christ by faith, and seek to be ingrafted into him: for as Christ by the power of his godhead, did purify our nature from all the pollution of our ancestors, so he can, by the power of his grace and spirit, sanctify our persons and natures, how foul and impure soever they either are or have been. 3. Hereby our Lord gives us to understand, that he came to save the most notorious sinners, as well as those whose lives have been less scandalous. 4. This is recorded for the support of such as are illegitimate and base-born, how vile soever their parents' sin has rendered them in the eyes of men, it is their own sin only which exposes them to contempt in the sight of God. It is not illegitimacy, but unregeneracy, that makes us objects of God's wrath.

18 ¶ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise; when his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

That is the birth of Christ was not in the ordinary and natural way, but his mother Mary was found to be with child by the extraordinary and miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost. Here note. That the espousal of Mary to Joseph was for the safety of Christ, and for the credit and reputation of the virgin. It was for our Saviour's safety, because being to fly into Egypt, he hath Joseph his reputed father to take care of him; and it was for the virgin's reputation, lest she should have been accounted unclean. Learn hence, what a special regard Almighty God has to the fame and reputation of his children, he would have them free from the least suspicion of evil and dishonesty. Mary being espoused to an husband, frees herself from the suspicion of naughtiness, and her son from the imputation of an illegitimate birth. Observe farther, the miraculous conception of the holy Jesus; the Holy Ghost overshadowed the virgin, and did miraculously cause her conception without the help of an human father. Thus Christ was the Son of God as well in his human as in his divine nature; he must needs be a perfect, holy person, who was conceived purely by the Holy Spirit's operation.

19 Then Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

That is, being an holy person, and a strict observer of the rites of his nation, he was unwilling to accompany with a defiled woman, and therefore minded to put her away, by giving a bill of divorce into her hand before two witnesses; being kind and gentle, he intended to put her away *privily*, lest she should have been exposed and stoned to death. Observe here, how early our dear Lord's sufferings began; he and his mother designed to be put

away, even when he was but an embryo in the womb. Observe farther, From the great clemency of Joseph towards the suspected virgin, that kind and merciful men always presume the best, and prosecute with gentleness, especially where life is concerned. Meek Joseph doth resolve upon the milder course, and chooses rather to put her away privily, than publicly to expose her.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Two things are here observable, namely, the care that Almighty God takes: 1. For Joseph's satisfaction. 2. For vindicating of the virgin's reputation. For Joseph's satisfaction, an angel is dispatched to give him assurance that the virgin was not defiled by man, but overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. Whence note, that Almighty God will certainly find out ways and means for his people's satisfaction, when they are willing and desirous above all things to come to the knowledge and right understanding of their duty. Observe, 2. How the angel clears the virgin's innocency, as well as satisfies Joseph's doubtings, by assuring, that what was conceived in her, was by the Holy Ghost. Learn hence, that God will, in his own time, clear the innocency of such as suffer in their name and reputation for the sake of Christ, though for the present they may lie under the burden of disgrace and shame.

21 ¶ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.

Observe here, 1. A prediction of our Saviour's birth; the virgin shall bring forth a son. 2. A precept for the imposition of his name; Thou shalt call his name JESUS, that is, a Saviour. 3. The reason why that name was given him; because he should save his people, not temporally, as Joshua did the Israelites from their enemies, but spiritually, and externally from their sins; not in their sins, but from them; that is from the guilt and punishment, from the power and dominion, of them. Observe, 4. The peculiar subjects of this privilege; his people: he shall save his people from their sins. Learn, 1. That sin is the evil of evils; or that sin considered in itself, is comparatively the greatest and worst of evils. 2. That the great end of Christ's coming into the world, was to be a Saviour from this evil. 3. That Christ's own people do want and stand in need of a Saviour as well as others: if he does not save them from their sins, they must die in and for their sins, as well as others. Therefore he saves them from sin three ways: 1. By obtaining pardon for sin, and in reconciling us to God. 2. By weakening the reigning power of sin, and implanting a new principle of holiness in the heart. 3. By perfecting and accomplishing all these happy beginnings at the end of this life in heaven — Dr. Hammond's Pract. Catech.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

(No. 1)

23 ¶ Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.

Of all the prophets of the Old Testament, the prophet Esaias has the honor to be first recited in the New. Here the Evangelist quotes his prophecy of Christ's incarnation, *Behold a virgin shall be with child.* Learn thence, that the great mystery of our Saviour's wonderful incarnation was (though darkly) revealed to the church of God under the Old Testament. Observe farther, the name given to our Saviour under the Old Testament, *Emmanuel*, that is, *God with us*; God manifest in our flesh, God appearing in our nature; God reconciling man to himself. O happy and blessed union of two natures in one person! Christ is God and man united, that God and man may be reconciled.

24 Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife;

Joseph is no sooner assured that Mary is with child by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, but he instantly obeys the Lord's command, and takes Mary to him, without farther disputing or delaying. Learn thence, that a gracious person, when once satisfied in God's word of command, disputes no farther, but instantly complies with the will of God, even in the most hazardous and difficult duties.

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

It is piously believed, though not positively in scripture asserted, that the virgin had no other child but our Saviour: it is a very probable opinion, though not an infallible article of faith, as the church of Rome would make it: for the word *until* signifies in scripture as much as *never*. So Gen. xxviii. 15. *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have promised*; that is, *I will never leave thee*. So the words following, *her first-born son*, do not imply that she had any child after, but that she had none before. That child which first opened the womb, is usually in scripture called the *first-born*, though there was no other born after. Thus Josh. xvii. 1. Machir is called the first-born of Manasseh, though he had no more children. So that Christ, not only as God, but as also he was man, was the first-born and only son. St. Austin expounds and applies Ezek. xlii. 2. to the Virgin Mary; *this gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut.* And others of the ancients say, that as Christ lay in a tomb, in which none lay before himself, so he lodged in a womb, in which none ever lay either before or after himself. But he said, *Quid post partum secutum erat curiose non est quaerendum.* What the virgin was afterwards is of small concern to the mystery, therefore not to be inquired after. And yet it is now passed by some into a matter of faith, that the Virgin Mary was ever a virgin, and it has been styled a

heresy to hold the contrary : but how it is consistent with good divinity, to make that an article of divine faith, which is founded on no divine revelation, or to make that necessary to be believed, which confessedly is not contained in the holy scripture, let the church of Rome answer,

CHAPTER II.

Our Saviour's miraculous conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost, being recorded in the first chapter, several remarkable circumstances relating to his birth are set down in this : as, namely, the place of his birth, Bethlehem ; and the time, in the days of Herod the King.

NOW, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

Observe here, 1. The place of our Lord's birth, Bethlehem ; he was born, not at Athens, not at Rome, not at Jerusalem, not in any opulent or magnificent city, but in the meanest of the cities of Judah ; thereby showing us, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he little regarded pomp and outward greatness. O how can we be abased enough for Christ, that thus neglected himself for us ! Observe, 2. The time of our Lord's birth, *in the days of Herod the king*. This Herod being a foreigner, and made king by the Romans, which now reigned over the Jews, in him was fulfilled Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 10. *That the sceptre should not depart from Judah* ; that is, the Jews should have governors of their own nation, until *Shiloh come* ; that is, until Christ the promised Messiah come in the flesh. So that considering the circumstance of time and place, where and when Christ was born, it was and is wilful obstinacy in the Jews to deny that the Messiah is come in the flesh. Observe, 3. That tribute of honor which was paid unto our Saviour at his birth : the wise men of the east came and worshipped him, that is the Chaldean, Arabian, or Persian astronomers, who, as the first fruits of the Gentiles, seek after Christ, whilst the Jews, his own people rejected him. O how will their coming so far as the east to seek Christ, rise up another day in judgment against us, if we refuse to be found by Christ, who came from heaven to seek us !

2 Saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Observe here, the inquiry that they make after Christ : they do not ask *whether* he was born, but *where* he was born ; not doubting of the fact, but ignorant of the place. Observe, 2. The ground of their inquiry : *for we have seen his star*. They had seen a star ; but how did they know it was his star ? Probably by divine revelation ; they had a light within, as well as a star without, for they had never seen Christ. It is likely the Holy Spirit's illumination accompanied the star's apparition. As God made known the birth of Christ to the Jews by an angel, so he manifested

the same to the Gentiles by a new created star. Observe, 3. The end of their journey : *we are come to worship him* ; that is to pay all that honor and homage which is due to a great and mighty prince ; all that adoration and worship which belongs to the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. All honor and homage, all glory and worship, is due to Christ from the sons of men, and will be given him by those that know him.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Observe here, that when Christ came into the world to save men, it cast the world into a consternation, and caused wonderful disturbances. Herod is first concerned, and next *all Jerusalem with him* ; Herod for fear of losing his kingdom, Jerusalem for fear of new commotions. Thus Christ, who was the angel's song, the wise men's joy, Israel's consolation, becomes Herod's fear and Jerusalem's terror. But why was Herod thus disturbed ? It is true a King is born, but one whose kingdom is not of this world : it was Herod's false apprehension that was the cause of this perturbation. Hence we see, that the greatest enmities and bitterest animosities have arisen from causeless fears and groundless jealousies.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea : for thus it is written by the prophet.

6 And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda : for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Herod being in great perplexity, convened a council of the chief priests and scribes, and demands of them the place where Christ, the promised Messiah was to be born. They readily reply, out of the prophet Micah, chap. v. 2. that Bethlehem was a place ; this was the city of David's birth, and of Christ's the son of David. Bethlehem signifies *the house of bread*, and was so called from its fertility and fruitfulness, and as some think with reference to Christ, the true bread of life, born there. Bethlehem was a mean and contemptible place in itself, but being honored with Christ's presence, how great is it ! Learn thence, that the presence of Christ dignifies and exalts a place, how mean soever in itself. Bethlehem, though a little city in itself, yet is not the least among the cities of Judah, because Christ is born there.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go, and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him* bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Observe here, 1. How Herod clokes his intended cruelty with disguised hypocrisy; he had murder in his heart when he pretended to worship Christ with his mouth. There is no villany so great, but will mask itself under a pretence and show of piety. Herod veils his intent to kill Christ, with a pretence to worship him. Observe, 2. Herod calls him *the young child*, not *the young king*; that word was too big to come out of Herod's mouth; he could neither bear the thing, nor brook the title. A king it is true he is, but one that will never be thy rival; he has a kingdom, but it is not of this world. Observe, 3. How craftily Herod lays his plot; he desires the wise men to inquire thoroughly, and to inform him privately. To be wise in doing mischief, is the worst wisdom in the world, it is not the wisdom from above, but from hell beneath.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 ¶ And, when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Observe here, 1. How the star, which for some time disappeared now appears again, to their farther direction in finding Christ: teaching us, that God will not be wanting to such as are on the way to seek Christ, but will renew directions and encouragements to them, according as they stand in need; none ever sincerely sought Christ, but they certainly found him at the last. Observe, 2. That the joy which arises in such a soul as has found Christ, is unutterable and unspeakable. The wise men here *rejoiced with joy, with great joy, with exceeding great joy*. Observe, 3. The wise men having found this young King, they bring presents to him, according to the manner of the Eastern countries; namely, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which were the principal commodities of the east. But the best present we can make to Christ is ourselves; he seeks not ours, but us: and rather desires what we are, than what we have. Yet the providence of God was wonderfully seen in these presents; for hereby provision was made for the sustenance of Joseph and Mary, and the child Jesus, in their exile or flight into Egypt, which they were shortly to undergo.

12 And, being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

God having warned these wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned home another way. But did these wise men play the parts of honest men, in that they returned not again to Herod? Answer, it appears not that they promised Herod to return though he expected it: or if they did, it was in consideration that Herod should come and worship Christ, not murder and destroy him. But if they promised him ever so positively, God Almighty gave them a dispensation from that promise, by commanding them to return home another way. Herod kept his design against Christ close from the wise men: but he could not conceal his intentions from the infinitely wise God; he knew the purposes of his heart, and, by his providence, kept Christ out of his hand. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 ¶ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.

15 And was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's humiliation by persecution in the very morning of his life: he was banished almost as soon as born. *Flee into Egypt; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him*. Ungrateful Herod! Was this entertainment for a Saviour! What! raise the country upon Christ, as if a destroyer, rather than a Saviour, had landed upon thy coast! O! barbarous injustice! to deny a subject the protection of those laws under which he was born! The child as a beggar might claim that as his birthright, which is here denied to the Son of God, Lord! how great an humiliation was this, not only to become an infant, but in thine infancy to be hurried up and down, and driven out of thine own land as a vagabond! Observe, 2. How our Lord himself in a time of persecution flies for safety, who was able a thousand ways to have preserved himself from danger; teaching us, that in times of difficulty and danger, it is neither unwarrantable nor unbecoming to preserve our lives by flight. Surely it is no shame for us to fly, when our captain doth both practise it, and command it also. Christ, by his own example, hath sanctified that state of

life unto us; and by his command, has made it lawful for us. Observe, 3 The place which Christ flies unto for safety; and that is Egypt, an unlikely place, considered in itself. Who could expect liberty in that house of bondage. But any place is good, if God send us thither, and Christ be in our company. His presence can make Egypt itself not only safe but delightful also. Observe, 4. How readily Joseph complies with the divine command: instantly he arose, and took the young child, and fled. Faith gave wings to his obedience, and instantly vanished all his fears, and afforded a fuller supply than all the treasures of the Arabian princes; teaching us, that when our direction is clear, our compliance should be speedy. We cannot bet o forward and expeditious in the execution of divine commands. Observe, 5. Though Joseph, at the command of God, flies presently from Herod's rage, yet he flies privately by night, and prudently begins his journey when least notice should be taken of his motions: teaching us, that although we have ever so many promises of safety and deliverance, yet we must not put God upon working miracles for our preservation; when it may be obtained in the use of means.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Observe here, how Herod having played the fox before, acts the lion now: his secret policy not succeeding, he breaks out into open and inhuman cruelty. Learn, that when fraud and subtilty fails the enemies of the church, then they fall to open rage and barbarous inhumanity. Thus here these holy innocents fall as a sacrifice to Herod's rage, and die for Christ, who came to die for them; and so were martyrs in deed, though not in will. Some affirm, that Herod did not spare his own child, then at nurse in the coasts of Bethlehem; which made Augustus say, "he had rather be Herod's hog than Herod's child," because the Jews did never eat swine's flesh; and Herod in compliance with the Jews, abstained from it.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not.

Observe here, the loud and bitter cry which the mothers of Bethlehem make for the death of their innocent children, which were barbarously slain by the sword of Herod. Here was lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, made by Rachel: that is, by the women inhabiting in and about Bethlehem, where Rachel's sepulchre was; for the land about Bethlehem, was called Rachel, from the sepulchre, so famous in those parts. Rachel here is not the name of a

person, but of a place. Observe, 2. The cause and reason of this cry and bitter lamentation; the mothers weep, not because their children are, but because they are not; they did not, with some wicked parents, repine because they had children, but because they had lost them: mothers have the sharpest throes both in their children's births and burials. As children in their births are their mothers' Benjamins; so in their burials they are their mothers' Benonies, sons of sorrow.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Observe, 1. Herod's death; like a bloody persecutor, he is sent unlamented to the grave. Historians say, that out of his body issued forth such impure streams of blood, that the loathsomeness and pain made him attempt the killing of himself. God seldom suffers persecutors to pass in quiet to their graves: they rarely die the common death of all men, having no other balm at their funeral than their own blood. Observe, 2. The happy consequence of Herod's death, Christ is not called home without danger: Herod being sent to his grave the coast is clear for the return of the holy family. The death of persecutors in the delivery of the persecuted. Observe, 3. An angel is dispatched to acquaint Joseph with Herod's death. O! how cheerful do those glorious spirits execute the commands of their sovereign master! With what delight do they carry the messages of God's kindness to their fellow creatures! Lord! what an argument is this of thy love unto us, that in this our pilgrimage state thou allowest us thine own royal guard to attend and preserve us.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee;

Observe here, 1. The just fear that Joseph has upon his mind, that Herod's son would be as bloody a tyrant as his flagitious father. No wonder that the children of cruel persecutors are suspected to tread in their bloody parents' steps. Observe, 2 How God's warrant and direction doth quiet Joseph's mind, resolve his doubts, and remove his fears, and make him readily comply with the command of God: *being warned of God he removes out of Egypt into Galilee.* O how safe and satisfactory is it, in all our ways, to follow the call and command of God! Joseph and Mary durst not move their

feet, no not out of Egypt itself, till God gives them a warrant for their departure, and bids them go.

23 And he came and dwelt in a city, called Nazareth : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets : he shall be called a Nazarene.

A threefold interpretation is given of these words, *he shall be called a Nazarene*. Some read the words, 1. *He shall be called a Nazarite*. The Nazarites were a religious and separate rank of persons among the Jews, who abstained from wine, and came not near the dead, for fear of pollution. Christ was a holy person, but no Nazarite, in a strict sense; for he drank wine, and touched the dead. 2. Others read the words, *he shall be called a Netzer*, a branch, in allusion to Isaiah xi. 1. where he is called a *branch of the root of Jesse*. Christ was that true branch of which the prophets had so often spoken. 3. Others will have the word Nazarene refer to the city of Nazareth, where Christ was conceived, and lived most of his time, *he shall be called a Nazarene*, because he dwelt at Nazareth. Hence his disciples were called the sect of the Nazarenes: that is, the followers of him that dwelt at Nazareth; and Christ himself is pleased to own the title, Acts xxii. 8. *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest*. Learn from hence, the great humility of mind that was found in our Saviour. He was born at Bethlehem, a little city; he lived at Nazareth, a poor, contemptible place: he aspires not after the grandeur of the world, but is meek and lowly in Spirit. May the humble mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus!

CHAPTER. III.

The Evangelist having declared our Saviour's miraculous conception in the first chapter, and recorded several remarkable circumstances relating to his birth in the second chapter; in this chapter before us, he passes over in silence the whole course of our Saviour's life in private; taking no notice how he spent his minority whilst he dwelt at Nazareth, which was till he was thirty years old; at which time, he entered upon his public ministry, having John the Baptist for his harbinger and forerunner, as this chapter fully informs us.

IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

2 And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Observe here. 1. The preacher sent by God; *John the Baptist*, a pattern of mortification, and a preacher of repentance. Observe. 2. The place he is sent to preach in, *the wilderness of Judea*: not in populous Jerusalem, but in a barren wilderness, where the inhabitants are few, and probably very ignorant and rude. Learn hence, that it is God's prerogative to send forth the preachers of the

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gospel, when and whither, and to what people he pleases; and none must assume the office before they be sent. Observe. 3. The doctrine that he preaches: namely, the doctrine of repentance, *Repent ye*. This was to prepare the people for the Messiah, and the grace of the gospel. Learn thence, that the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, in order to the preparing of the hearts of sinners for the receiving Christ Jesus and his holy doctrine. Observe 4. The motives which St. John uses to enforce the exhortation to repentance. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*, that is, now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the Messiah come; the Old Testament dispensation is now to be abolished, and the mercy, and grace of the gospel is now to be revealed; therefore repent, and amend your lives. Note thence, that the free and full tenders of grace and mercy in the gospel, are the most alluring arguments to move a sinner to repent, and to convert to God.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The Papists, from John the Baptist's living in the wilderness, would make him the first founder of the order of the hermits, but very groundlessly. For, 1. What he did was by God's command; what they do is by the dictates of their own fancy. 2. He busied himself in preaching in the wilderness; they bury themselves alive, and do nothing. 3. He lived in the wilderness but for a time, afterwards we find him at court, preaching a sermon to Herod; but they bind themselves by a vow to live and die hermits.

4 ¶ And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

The plainness of John's habit and diet is here declared: he was habited in a plain suit of camel's hair, much as Elijah was before him; and as his habit was plain, so his diet was ordinary, feeding upon herbs, and such things as the wilderness affords. Hence it was that Nazianzen said he was all voice; a voice in his habit, a voice in his diet, and a voice in his whole conversation. His example teaches us, that the ministers of the gospel are not to affect bravery in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but having the necessary comforts and needful conveniences of life, to be therewith content.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.

Observe here, The great encouragement which John had in his ministry, from the people's attendance upon it: he was now fishing for souls, and God brought the people very thick about the net of the gospel, and multitudes were inclosed, no doubt, to his joy and great satisfaction. For it is matter of great rejoicing to the ministers of Christ, when they find their people forward to encourage their ministry by a diligent attendance.

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

This place the Papists bring to support their doctrine of auricular confession; but very groundlessly. For, 1, the confession of those converts was voluntary, and not constrained. 2. It was general, and not of every particular sin. 3. It was public and open, not in the ear of a priest. 4. It was a confession of sin committed before baptism, not after they were baptized: in all which circumstances it differs from the auricular confession of the church of Rome very greatly. Note, that confession of sin past, together with a profession of faith in and obedience to Christ for the time to come, are necessary requisites and qualifications in all persons of riper years that are admitted to baptism. John admitted these persons to baptism, upon their confession of sin and promise of amendment. From whence we may learn, that such persons as have been very bad, upon a profession of their repentance, and a promise to become better, may be admitted to the holy sacrament, provided that we warn them, as the Baptist did these, not only to make profession of repentance, but to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

7 ¶ But when he saw many of the pharisees and sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance;

9 And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to *our* father. For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Here we have the entertainment which John gave to his unexpected auditors, the pharisees and sadducees, which came to hear him, and to be baptized by him. He gives them first a quick and cutting compellation, *O generation of vipers!* next a sharp and severe reprehension, *who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* It was matter of wonder and admiration to see such men turn proselytes. Note thence, that the condition of the proud pharisees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though it be very dangerous, yet is not hopeless and desperate; and their salvation, though very improbable, yet must not be despair'd of as impossible: and accordingly, the Baptist having given them a smart reproof subjoins, a seasonable exhortation, *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; as if he had said, do not satisfy yourselves with a bare profession of repentance, but let us see the fruits of sincere repentance in your daily conversation. Learn thence, that sincere repentance is not a barren thing, but constantly brings forth the fruits of holiness answerable to its nature. As the body without the spirit, and as faith without works are dead, so repentance without fruits is dead also. Observe farther, how he enforces his exhortation with a necessary caution; *think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to*

our father, &c. As if he had said, trust not to your outward privileges, and glory not in them, flatter not yourselves, that because you are Abraham's seed and the only visible church, that therefore the judgments of God will not reach you; for God can out of the obdurate Gentile world, who now worship stones, raise up a people to himself, and take them into covenant with himself, and cast you all out, who have Abraham's blood running in your veins, but nothing of Abraham's faith in your hearts, nor of his obedience in your lives. Now from St. John's plain dealing with these hypocritical pharisees, we learn, that it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour of the ministers of Christ, to drive hypocrites from their vain confidence who do constantly bear up themselves upon their external privileges, in the enjoyment of which they promise themselves a freedom from the judgments of God. *Think not to say within yourselves we have, &c.*

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.

The Baptist had preached the doctrine of repentance in the former verses, he backs it with a powerful motive in this verse, drawn from the certainty, the severity, and suddenness of that vengeance which would come upon them, if they continued impenitent: *now is the axe laid to the root of the trees.* Learn, 1. That those whose hearts are not pierced with the sword of God's word, shall certainly be cut down and destroyed with the axe of his judgments. Learn 2. That it is not unsuitable for gospel preachers to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers from arguments of terror: John does it here, and Christ elsewhere. Observe farther, That forasmuch as the sin here specified, is a sin of omission, which brings this sore and severe judgment, *every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*, as well as that which bringeth forth evil fruit, *is hewn down and cast into the fire*; we may gather, that sins of omission are certainly damning as well as sins of commission; the neglects of duty are as dangerous and damnable as the acts of sin. Such trees as stand in God's orchard, and bring forth no good fruit, are marked out as fuel for the devil's fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire.

In these words John declares the excellency of Christ's person and ministry above his own. As to his person, he owns that he was not worthy to carry his shoes after him, or to perform the lowest offices of service for him. And as to his office, he declares that Christ should not baptize as he did, with water, but with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; that is, should plentifully pour down of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit upon his proselytes, which, like fire, in their operation, should purify their hearts from sin, consuming their lusts and corruptions: but at the same time he has a fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like combustible stubble.

Where observe, how Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror unto his enemies, he is a fire unto both; he sits in his church as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire: a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by.

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

In these words the Baptist compares Christ, the promised Messiah, to an husbandman, the Jewish church to a barn-floor. The office of the husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow his corn, separating it from the chaff; preserving the one, and consuming the other. Learn hence, 1. That the church is Christ's floor. 2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly. 3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor. The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church; in a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there is and will be a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere christians. But this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up: purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and existence: and the fan with which he will purge his floor is his word, accompanied with the wind of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wind dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both, the floor is purged. *His fan is in his hand, &c.*

13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we have our Saviour's solemn inauguration and public entrance upon his prophetic office, by baptism, or washing with water, according to the manner of the priests under the ceremonial law. Exod. xxix. 4. Where we have observable, 1. The circumstance of time: *then cometh Jesus*; that is, after he had lain hid in Nazareth thirty years he comes abroad, and enters upon his public ministry, teaching us by his example, that when we are ripe and fit for public services, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation. Observe, 2. The action of itself, Christ is baptized now, as he was circumcised before; not because there was any impurity in him, either filth, or foreskin, which wanted either the circumcision knife, or the baptismal water; yet purity itself condescends to be washed, Christ to be baptized; for these reasons: 1. That by this symbol he might enter himself into the society of christians, as by the circumcision he had done into the society of Jews; as a king condescends sometimes to be made a freeman of a city or corporation. 2. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto his church. 3. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered their office, as appears from Exod. xxix. 4. Observe, 3. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and

submitting to the baptism of John: Christ cometh to John, not John to Christ. Behold! the Lord seeketh to his servant, Christ will be baptized of his messenger! Our Saviour's design hereby no doubt was, to put honor upon the ministry of John. Oh! how dare the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God, which Christ himself honored in his own person, and graced with his own presence.

14 But John forbade him saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

Note here, 1. The modesty of John's refusal: *John forbade him*, and refused to admit him. But why? 1. In regard of Christ, because he knew he needed it not: such was his majesty and greatness, that he was above it; and such was his purity and holiness, that he could not want it. 2. In respect of himself, he knew his own uncleanness: *I have need to be baptized of thee, &c.* He thought it unsuitable that a sinner should baptize and wash him that was no sinner. 2. With respect to the people: lest they seeing Christ baptized should apprehend him to be a sinner, and one that wanted the baptism of repentance as well as themselves. Observe, 2. As the modesty of John's refusal, so the reason he assigns for it; *I have need to be baptized of thee*, as if he had said, "thou art purity, I am pollution; thou art spirit, I am flesh; thou art the Son of God, I am the son of Adam;" such an humble apprehension has this holy man of himself. Learn, that the more holy a person is, the more sensible he is of his unholiness: where there is most grace, there is the greatest sense of the want of grace.

15 And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, Then he suffered him.

These words contain our Saviour's reason, why he submitted to John's baptism, because it became him to fulfil all righteousness; that is, to own every divine institution, particularly the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered upon their office, Exod. xxix. 4. Learn hence, 1. That whatever the law required in order to perfect righteousness, that Christ fulfilled in most absolute perfection. 2. That as it became Christ to fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law for himself, so it is our duty and interest to fulfil the righteousness of the moral law for ourselves, as an evidence of our being righteous in God's sight, 1 John iii. 7. *He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Here we have the solemn inauguration of Christ into his prophetic office, accompanied with a threefold miracle. 1. The opening of the heavens. 2. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, like a dove descends. 3. God the Father's voice concerning his Son. The heavens were opened, to show that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us. As the first Adam shuts us out of heaven, the second Adam let us into it; he opened heaven to us by his meritorious passion, and he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession. Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour; here we have an evidence of the blessed Trinity; the Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost appears upon him. Hence we gather, that the Holy Ghost is not a quality, or an operation, but a person, and a person really distinct from the Father and the Son. But why did the Holy Spirit now descend upon Christ, seeing he was now truly and really God? Answer. The divinity of Christ was quiescent in him, till he entered upon his prophetic office at thirty years old, and after. And the Holy Ghost now descends, first, for the designation of his person, to show that Christ was the person set apart for the work and office of a mediator. Secondly, for the qualification of his person for the performance of his office. This was Christ's unction, Isa. lxi. 1. when he was anointed above his fellows, to be the king, priest, and prophet of his church. Last of all, we have the audible voice of God the Father pronouncing, 1. The nearness of Christ's relation to himself. *This is my Son*, not by adoption, but by his eternal generation. 2. The endearedness of his person, *this is my beloved Son*. 3. The fruit and benefit of this near and dear relation unto us: *in him I am well pleased*. Note, 1. There is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ; both our persons and our performances find acceptance only for his sake. 2. That in and through Christ, God is well pleased with all believers: *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, &c. Lord! what reviving news is this to thy church, to hear that her head and husband, her surety, mediator, and intercessor, is that only Son of God in whom his soul is delighted and ever well pleased! That Son who always pleased thee, and by and through whom thou art well pleased with, and reconciled to, thy offending creatures.

CHAPTER IV.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our blessed Saviour's combat with, and conquest over, satan; and the first verse informs us of the time when, and the place where, the combat was fought.

THEN was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

Observe, 1. The great humiliation of the Son of God, how exceedingly was he humbled by the horrid temptations wherewith he was assaulted, than which nothing could be more grievous to his holy heart. What could be more bur-

densome to him that was brought up from eternity with God the Father, than to be shut up in the wilderness with the devil, there to be baited by him so many days, having his ears filled, though not defiled with horrid blasphemies, spit upon the holy and reverend name of God! Oh deep abasement and wonderful humiliation of the Son of God! Observe, 2. The time when Christ entered the lists with satan, implied in the word *then*; that is, first, immediately after his baptism; he is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation. Secondly, immediately after the spirit descended upon, and the Father had by a voice from heaven, manifested his complacency and satisfaction in him. *This is my beloved Son*, &c. Note, thence, that great manifestations of love from God, are usually followed with great temptations from satan. Observe, 3. The place where this combat was fought, and that is, *in the wilderness*. Learn thence, that no place can privilege us from temptation, or be a sanctuary from satan's assaults: the solitary wilderness has a tempter in it, yea, satan sometimes makes use of men's solitariness, to further his temptations: a cell, a nunnery, or a cloister, are as open to satan as the open fields, and the persons that live in them have a tempter without, and an enticer within as well as other men. Observe, 4. The efficient cause of Christ's going into the wilderness to be tempted by satan: *he was led up of the Spirit*, says St. Matthew: *the Spirit drove him*, says St. Mark; that is, the Holy Spirit of God, not satan the unclean spirit, for the devil is seldom if ever called *the Spirit*, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the *evil spirit*, or the *unclean spirit*. Christ was *led by the Spirit*; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God into the wilderness, to be tempted by satan. Learn hence, 1. That none of the children of God ought to expect a freedom from temptations; seeing Christ himself, in the days of his flesh, was strongly solicited by satan unto sin. 2. That all the temptations wherewith the children of God are assaulted, are ordered by divine and special dispensation. Satan could not assault our Saviour till he was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for that end; and he shall not assault any of his members, but by divine permission.

2 And when he had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered.

Observe here, how the divine power upheld the human nature of Christ without food. What Moses did at the giving of the law, Christ doth at the beginning of the gospel, namely, fast forty days and forty nights. Christ hereby intended our admiration, not our imitation: or, if our limitation, of the action only, not of the time. Christ teaches us, by fasting and prayer to prepare ourselves for a conflict with our spiritual enemies; as he prepared himself by fasting to grapple with the tempter, so should we.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Observe here, 1. The occasion of temptation. 2. The temptation itself. The occasion of our Saviour's hunger and want of bread. Learn thence, that when God suffers any of his dear children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon, to tempt and assault them. But what doth he tempt our Saviour to? To the sin of distrust, to question his sonship; *if thou be the Son of God*: and next to distrust his Father's providence and care. *Command that these stones be made bread*. As if satan had said, "how unlikely is it that thou shouldst be highly favored, and yet deserted? What! the Son of God; and yet ready to starve! Certainly if thou canst not supply thy necessities, thou art nothing akin to God." Learn hence, 1. That satan's grand design is, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption; and next, to distrust God's fatherly care over them and provision for them; and last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves. Thus satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with christians: for to work a miracle of satan's direction was not a lawful means of providing food for himself.

4 But he answered and said, it is written, a man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Observe here, The weapon which our Saviour made use of to repel the temptation, and to vanquish the tempter: and that is the word of God, *it is written*. Learn, that the scripture, or the written word of God, is the only sure weapon wherewith to vanquish satan, and to beat back all his fiery temptations. Satan himself has not the impudence to oppose scripture: what monsters of impiety then are they who ridicule and deride it! They not only run counter to the practice of Christ, but outdo the devil himself in impudence.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple;

That is, satan, by God's permission, took up his body and carried it in the air, and set it upon one of the battlements of the temple. Learn hence, 1. What a mighty power evil spirits have over our bodies, if God permits them to execute and exercise their power upon them. 2. That it is owing to the gracious care, and watchful providence of God over us, that we are not hurried away bodily by satan. Thanks be to God, though the devil's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded: and as he cannot do all the mischief he would to the bodies and souls of men, so he shall not do all he can. *Quest.* But why is the holy city and holy temple chosen by satan to be the scene of this temptation? *Ans.* I cannot tell, unless he apprehended (as he might) that the holiness of the place would aggravate the sin. No place so sacred, no duty so holy, as to protect us from satan's assaults. This enemy pursues us even to the horns of the altar. Lord! how ought we at all times and in all places, to be upon our watch and guard, especially in thy presence, because then and there satan is most active and busy, and most desirous to draw us into sin!

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6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Here we have observable, first, the sin which satan tempts Christ unto; and next, the argument which he tempts him from. The sin tempted to, is the sin of self-murder; *cast thyself down*. Whence we learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of saints may, by satan, be tempted to the commission of. But forasmuch as satan tempted Christ to murder himself, but had not power to do it himself; do thou *cast thyself down*; we learn, that though satan may tempt, yet he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce any to sin, without their own consent. Observe, 2. The argument which satan uses; it is a scriptural argument; he quotes the promise of God. *He shall give his angels charge over thee*. What a marvel is here, to find satan with a bible under his arm, and a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alledged scripture before to satan, here satan retorts scripture back again to Christ: *it is written*, says Christ; *it is written*, says satan. Learn thence, that it is no wonder to hear heretics and hypocrites quote scripture, when satan himself durst recite it: he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hand, sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scriptures of God with his tongue. Yet observe, how wretchedly the devil wrests, perverts, and misapplies the scriptures: when God promises his angels shall keep us, it is, *in viis non in precipitiis*; it is in all God's ways, not in any of our own crooked paths. Note here, that although the children of God have the promise of the guardianship of holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when they are walking in the way of their duty, and using the means for their own preservation.

7 Jesus said unto him, it is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Observe here, Though the devil had wrested and abused scripture, yet Christ still alledged scripture. The abuse of the holy scriptures, by heretics and seducers, is no argument against the use of them. We must not throw away our bibles because the devil quotes scripture; but as Christ here compares scripture with scripture, so shall we, in order to the finding out the true sense and meaning of it; for scripture is the best interpreter of itself: scripture is most clearly expounded by scripture. This satan knew full well, and therefore dares not make any farther reply.

8 Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

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The next sin which satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. O thou impudent and foul spirit! to desire thy Creator to adore thee an apostate creature! Surely there can be no sin so black and foul, so gross and monstrous, but that the christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter. St. Matthew reads the words, *if thou wilt fall down and worship me*. St. Luke, *if thou wilt worship before me*. Whence we may gather, says Dr. Lightfoot, That if to worship before the devil be to worship the devil, then to worship before the image is to worship the image. Observe, 2. The bait which satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry; and that was in representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world in the most inviting manner, and that in a moment of time; to the intent it might affect him the more, and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, that the pomp and greatness, the glory and grandeur of this world, is made use of by satan as a dangerous snare, to draw men to a compliance with him in his temptations unto sin. When satan sets thee on a pinnacle, look to thyself.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, satan: for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Observe here, 1. With what zeal and indignation of spirit our blessed Saviour repels and beats back the temptation of satan: *get thee hence*. Note thence, that the greater the sins are which the devil tempts us to, the greater our zeal and indignation ought to be in opposing and resisting of the temptation to them. A great temptation must be withstood with great resolution. Observe, 2. The weapon with which he repels and beats back the fiery dart of satan's temptation, and that is with the shield of scripture; *it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*. Learn thence, that God is the sole object of religious worship: it is so peculiarly the Creator's due, that to give it to any creature is gross idolatry, and repugnant to the scriptures. No creature is to pay divine adoration to any but his Creator; hence it appears, that Christ is not a creature, divine worship being given to him.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Observe here, 1. The issue of this combat; satan is conquered and quits the field; *then the devil leaveth him*: teaching us, that nothing like a vigorous resistance of temptation causes the tempter to flee from us; *resist the devil, and he will flee from you*. Observe, 2. Our Lord's triumph over his enemy: *behold, angels came and ministered unto him*: food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul. They came no sooner, lest it should be thought he needed their assistance: they came now, because he was now pleased to make use of their assistance. Learn thence, that those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting satan, shall find the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them, to send in succour and relief in the end.

12 Now, when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee:

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:

16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's hearing of John's imprisonment, provides for his own safety by departing into Galilee. As our holy Lord avoided persecution, so may we. Observe, 2. The place in Galilee he comes to, Capernaum. Christ had three cities which he called his own; Nazareth, where he was bred; Bethlehem, where he was born: and Capernaum, where he dwelt; this was a seacoast town in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali. Observe, 3. The special providence of God, in this change of our Saviour's habitation; for by that means the prophecy, ix. 1. was fulfilled, which declares, that in that dark part of the country, the Messiah, the true light should shine forth. Learn hence,

1. That a people destitute of the saving knowledge of the gospel are in great darkness, how great soever the light of their outward comforts may be. This people had natural light enough, and civil light enough; they had an abundance of wealth and riches, peace and plenty: but they wanted the light of Christ and his gospel, and therefore are said to sit in darkness. 2. That wherever the gospel is preached amongst a people, it is as light springing up and shining forth among them; quickening and enlivening, reviving and cheering the souls of those who entertain it, how great soever their outward darkness and distress may be. *The people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up, &c.*

17 ¶ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Here our Saviour begins to enter upon his prophetic office, and by preaching to make known the will of God to mankind; and observe, the doctrine which he preached is the same that John the baptist did preach, namely, the doctrine of repentance, *repent ye*, and the argument is the same also, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is, now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the promised Messiah. Learn hence, that the doctrine of Christ and his ambassadors is alike, and the same in substance: they both preach the doctrine of repentance to a lost world, as most suitable to the time and dispensation of the gospel.

18 ¶ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Our blessed Saviour, as he was the great prophet of his church, had power and authority to appoint teachers under him; and accordingly here he begins to call his apostles to that great work; and in his call we have several particulars very observable; as, 1. The meanness of the persons, whom he calls, illiterate *fishermen*; not a Paul, that had long studied at the feet of Gamaliel, is first called; but Peter, who was a stranger to eloquence and human learning. Hereby our Saviour took effectual care that his gospel should be known to be *the power of God*, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instrument should not carry away the glory of the work. Observe, 2. How our Saviour calls his apostles, by couples, two and two, Peter and Andrew, James and John, to let us understand, that the work of his ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it: all the ministers of God put their hands, join their hearts, and set their shoulders as one man to this great work; and all little enough to carry it on with advantage and success. Observe, 3. The work which they were called to from being *fishermen*, to be *fishers of men*. They caught fish before with the labor of their hands, they shall catch men now by the labor of their tongues. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command; first to follow him, before they are sent out by him; *follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. We must be Christ's disciples, before we are his ministers; his followers, before his ambassadors. We must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, for honor and applause, but not for souls: if we be not first inclosed in the net of the gospel, we can have but small hopes of bringing in of others. Observe, 5. The promise which Christ gives his apostles for their encouragement: 1. To qualify them, *I will make you fishers*. 2. To succeed them, *I will make you fishers of men*. Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour is our part; but the blessing and success is Christ's. "Our labor is only in the cast, Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, and more wallow in the mud; and we shall labor all our days and catch nothing, if Christ doth not bring our fish to the net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the

throwing of it," Bp. Hall. Observe, 6. The apostle's ready compliance with our Saviour's call, *straightway they followed him*. Whom Christ calls persuasively, and effectually; whom he calls, he draws, and works them to a willing compliance with their duty, lastly observe, upon their call to the ministry; they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and their nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, that the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves to their work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs; nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's entangling himself with worldly business.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people.

Our Saviour having called Peter, James, Andrew and John to be disciples, in order to their being apostles to preach the gospel, in the foregoing verses; this verse acquaints us how he went himself along with them in the work; he did not send them forth as his curates to labor, and lie at home himself upon his couch at ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen, who can set others to the drag, care only to feed themselves with the fish, not willing to wet their hands with the nets? Our blessed Saviour, when he sent forth his apostles, went along with them, and labored himself as much as any of them.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Observe here, 1. That although our Saviour's doctrine needed not confirmation beyond his own authority, yet he was graciously pleased to exert the power of his godhead in working miracles for the establishment of our faith. Observe, 2. That the miracles which Christ wrought were not judicial, but beneficial to mankind; Moses' miracles were as great judgments as wonders; but Christ's miracles were salubrious and healing, full of goodness and compassion, and very advantageous to the world: he dispossessed devils, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. O blessed Saviour! thy life, in all instances, was a life of universal serviceableness and beneficialness to mankind.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

Observe here, how affecting our Saviour's ministry was at first; multitudes throng after him; they come from all

parts to attend upon his ministry, when he first began to preach among them. His ministers find it thus also; at their first coming amongst a people, their labors are most acceptable, and they do most good; our people's affections are then warmest, and our own zeal perhaps is then greatest. Happy is that minister that improves all opportunities and advantages for the good of souls: "for he that winneth souls is wise,"

CHAPTER V.

This chapter, and the two next following, contain Christ's famous sermon upon the Mount, which comprehends the sum and substance both of the Old and New Testament. Our Saviour begins this his sermon with a declaration who are blessed; including an exhortation to duty, and annexes a reward to the performance of that duty. By this sermon the christian world will be judged in the last day; and by the particulars of it we must either stand or fall.

AND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him;

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying:

Observe here, 1. The preacher; *he*, that is, Christ, the great prophet and teacher of his church. Observe, 2. The place where he preached, upon a *mountain*; probably for conveniency to himself, and advantage to his auditors; though some will have a mystery in it; that as the law at first was given on a mountain, so Christ would now explain it upon a mountain: or to show the sublimity of his doctrine and precepts. Observe, 3. The posture in which he preached, sitting; *when he was set, he taught*, according to the custom of the Jewish doctors, who sat, to show their authority. Observe, 4. The sermon itself, which begins with beatitudes and blessings, and is accompanied with promises of reward. Not as the law was delivered on Mount Sinai, with threatenings and thunder, with fire and earthquake, but in a still and soft voice. Our Lord's lips are full of grace, they drop as the honeycomb. Blessings and promises are our encouragements to obedience.

3 ¶ **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Observe here, 1. It is not said, *blessed are the poor in estate*; but, *blessed are the poor in spirit*; it is not a poverty of purse and possession, but poverty of spirit, that entitles us to the blessing. 2. It is not said, *blessed are the spiritually poor*, but *blessed are the poor in spirit*, he that is destitute of the grace and spirit of Christ; that has no sense of his spiritual wants, he is spiritually poor, but he is not poor in spirit. Farther, 3. It is not said, *blessed are the poor-spirited*, but the *poor in spirit*. Such as act below and beneath themselves as men and as christians,

these are poor spirited men; but these are not poor in spirit. 4. It is not said, *blessed are they that make themselves poor by leaving their estates and callings, and turning beggars*, as some do among the papists: but *blessed are they whom the gospel makes poor*, by giving them a sight of their spiritual wants and necessities, and directing them to Christ that they may be made rich. In sum, not those that are poor in estate, or those whom the world has made poor in possession, but those whom the gospel has made poor in spirit: that is, the truly humble, lowly spirits, have a right, and title to the kingdom of heaven. Now, humility is called poverty of spirit, because it is the effect and fruit of God's spirit.

4 **Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**

Observe here, 1. That mourning for sin is a gospel duty; the law allows no place for repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears. Observe, 2. The time and season for this duty; *blessed are they that now mourn*. Sorrow for sin is physic on earth, but is food in hell. Repentance is here a grace, but there a punishment. Observe, 3. As mourning goes before comfort, so comfort shall follow after mourning. Our godly sorrow for our own and others sins, shall end in everlasting joy and comfort.

5 **Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**

Observe here, 1. The grace and duty recommended, *meekness*. 2. The wages and reward belonging to that grace and duty, the inheritance of the earth. Meekness either respects God or our neighbour. As it respects God, so it implies flexibility to his commanding will, and submissiveness to his providential pleasure. As it respects our neighbour, it consists in forgiving injuries, bearing reproaches, and recompensing good for evil. The reward and blessing insured to this grace and duty is, the inheritance of earth, where heaven is not excluded, but included; yet the earth is mentioned, to show that men should be no losers by their meekness as to their outward estates: for Almighty God will make good to them, what they lose for peace sake. O happy temper of mind, that at once secures heaven and earth to boot! *Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth* in this life, and heaven in the next.

6 **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.**

Observe, 1. The character of the persons whom Christ pronounces blessed; such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness*. 2. Wherein their blessedness doth consist; *they shall be filled*. By righteousness we are to understand, 1. A righteousness of justification; the righteousness of the mediator imputed to us, by which we stand righteous in God's sight, being freed from condemnation. Dr. Hammond's Pract. Catech. 2. A righteousness of sanctification, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to act righteously. By the former there is a relative change in our condition; by the latter a real change in our constitution. Learn, 1. That all, and only such as do spiritually hunger and thirst after Christ and righteous-

ness are in a happy and blessed condition. 2. That to hunger after holiness, is to apprehend the worth of it, to be sensible of the want of it, to be desirous of it, and restless in endeavours after it, as men usually do that are pinched with hunger.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Here our blessed Redeemer recommends to us a compassionate regard towards the miseries of others, and that both in soul and body, name and estate; to be forward to pity and pardon, to relieve and help, to give and forgive. And as an encouragement he adds, That as we deal with others, God will deal with us; our charity towards men shall be crowned with mercy from God, and that in abundance too; for our rivulet of charity we shall partake of an ocean of mercy; *blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.* Learn, that the merciful man is a blessed man, and therefore blessed, because he shall obtain mercy, when he most wants it, and most desires it. Mercy, not wages.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Note here, 1. The duty required and called for, *purity of heart and life*: the first expressed, the other included: for a clean heart will be accompanied with a clean life. Where there is a principle of grace within, there will be the acting of grace without. Note, 2. The incentive to this duty; the pure in heart, and holy in life, shall see and enjoy God; the infinitely pure and perfectly holy God. They shall see him spiritually and mediately in this life, gloriously and immediately in the life to come.

9 Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God.

Observe, 1. The connexion between peace and purity; purity of heart and peaceableness of life accompany one another. There is no inward purity where there is not an endeavour after outward peace. 2. The duty exhorted to, namely, to love peace, and to labor after peace; to love it ourselves, and to promote it amongst others; to be not only peaceable, but peace-makers. Note, 3. The title of honor that is here put upon such as are of this peaceable and peace-making temper; they shall be called the children of God; that is, they shall be reputed and esteemed God's children, for their likeness to him who is the God of peace. And they shall be dignified and honored with the privileges of God's children; namely, grace here, and glory hereafter.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so
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persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Note here, 1. That all the disciples and followers of Christ, live they ever so holy and inoffensively in the world, yet must they expect suffering and persecution. 2. That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and falls heaviest on the prophets of God. 3. That such sufferings and such persecution as will afford a man solid comfort, and entitle him to real blessedness, must be endured and undergone for righteousness' sake. 4. That it is the will and command of Christ, that those which suffer for him, and for righteousness' sake, should not only be meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful: *rejoice, and be exceeding glad.* 5. That such a patient and cheerful suffering of persecution for Christ in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with the glory and blessedness of the life that is to come. *Great is your reward, &c.*

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Our Saviour compares christians in general, and his ministers in particular, unto salt, for a double reason. First, because it is the nature of salt to preserve things from corruption and putrefaction, and to render them savory and pleasant. Thus are the ministers of the gospel to labor and endeavour by the purity of their doctrine, to sweeten putrefying sinners, that they may become savory to God and man; and may be kept from being fly-blown with errors and false doctrine. Secondly, because salt has a piercing power in it, which subdues the whole lump, and turns it into its own nature: such a piercing power is there in the ministry of the word, that it subdues the whole man to the obedience of itself. As if Christ had said, "Ye are to be preachers and patterns to the world; ye are appointed by your pure doctrine, and good conversation, to purge the world from that corruption in which it lies: but if you lose either soundness of doctrine, or the savor of a good conversation, you will be wholly useless, as to these great ends, and must expect to be cast off by me, as unsavory salt is cast to the dunghill."

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid,

15 Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's doctrine. 2. The inference which he draws from it by way of application. The doctrine delivered is this, that christians in general

and the ministers of the gospel in particular, are the *light of the world*. But how? Not originally, but derivatively; not efficiently, but instrumentally. Christ himself is the *light of the world* by way of original, his ministers are lights by way of derivation, and participation from him. Farther, Christ teaches them the end why he communicated *light* unto them, namely, to enlighten, direct, and quicken others: even as the sun in the firmament, and a candle in the house, diffuses and disperses its light to all that are within reach of it; so should all christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, direct people in their way towards heaven. Observe, 2. The inference which our Saviour draws from the foregoing doctrine, *ye are the light of the world, therefore let your light shine before men*. Where note, 1. That our good works must shine, but not blaze; all vain glory and ostentation must be avoided in the good works we do. 2. Although we must abound in good works that men may see them, yet not to be seen of men. 3. That the glorifying of God, and doing good to mankind, must be the great end we propound in all the good works which we perform.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Our Saviour here informs his followers, that he had no design to abrogate any part of the moral law, or to loose mankind from the least measure of their duty, either towards God or man, but that he came to fulfil it: 1. By yielding a personal obedience to it. 2. By giving a fuller and stricter interpretation of it, than the pharisees were wont to give: for they taught, that the law did only reach to the outward man, and restrain outward actions. As if Christ had said; "Though I preach a more special doctrine than is contained even in the letter of the moral law, yet think not that I am come to destroy and dissolve the obligations of that law, for I came to fulfil the types and predictions of the prophets, and to give you the full sense and spiritual import of the moral law."

18 For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Another reason is here given by our Saviour why he had no intention to abrogate or abolish the law; and that is drawn from the duration and perpetuity, the unchangeableness and immutability of the law: sooner shall heaven and earth be abolished, than the authority and obligation of the moral law be dissolved. Learn, 1. That the law of God is an eternal and unchangeable rule of life and manners, and is to stand in force as long as the world stands, and the fame of heaven and earth endures. Learn, 2. That christianity is not contrary to the laws by which mankind had formerly been obliged. Christ commands nothing that the natural or moral law had forbidden, and forbids nothing which they had commanded, but has perfected the law, and set it higher than any of the most studied doctors did think themselves formerly obliged by it. To suppose that Christ has added to

the moral precepts of the first table, is to suppose that he has added to perfection; for that required the Jew to love God with all his heart, soul and strength: which is the same that Christ required of us christians here. Nor has Christ added to the duties of the second table, since that requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, which St. Paul tells us, Rom. xiii. 9. is the fulfilling of the law.

19 Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

To evidence yet farther, that the moral law is a perfect rule of life, our Saviour tells his disciples, that if any of them did either by their doctrine or practice, make void any one of the least of God's commands, either by allowing themselves in the omission of a known duty, or in the commission of any known sin, they shall never enter into the kingdom of God. Learn that such a professor of christianity as allows himself in the least voluntary transgression, either of omission or commission, and encourages others by his example to do the like, is certainly in a state of damnation.

20 For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Observe here, 1. A glorious prize or reward set before the christian as attainable, namely, *the kingdom of heaven*. Observe, 2. The means required in order to our obtaining of this prize, and laying hold of this reward; we must be holy and righteous persons: heaven is the reward of righteousness, a reward conferred only upon righteous persons. Observe, 3. Here is the special qualification of that righteousness expressed, which will entitle us to heaven and salvation: it must be a righteousness which *exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees*, and that these three ways; 1. In its principle and motive: love to God, and obedience to his command; not the applause and commendation of men. 2. In its aim and end; the pharisees made themselves, their own credit and esteem, their worldly gain and interest, their ultimate end; and not God's glory, their supreme aim. 3. In the manner of performance; the pharisees' duty wanted that purity and spirituality which the law of God required. They had respect only to the outward action, without any regard to the inward intention, and to that purity of heart which God required. Quest. In what things are we to exceed the scribes and pharisees? Ans. In sincerity, or by being that within which we seem to be without. In simplicity, or having holy ends in our religious actions. In humility, or having low and humble thoughts of ourselves, and our best performances. In charity, or having compassion on all distressed persons. In universality of obedience to all commands. Learn, that holiness of heart, and righteousness

of life, which God's law requires of us, is absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation.

21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment :

22 But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

Here our blessed Saviour begins to expound the spiritual sense and meaning of the law, and to vindicate it from the corrupt glosses of the pharisees: where observe, Christ doth not deliver a new law, but he expounds the old; doth not enjoin new duties, but enforces the old ones. The law of God was always perfect, requiring the sons of men to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbours as themselves. In this exposition of the law, Christ begins with the sixth commandment, *thou shalt not kill*; where he shows, that besides the actual taking away of life, a person may violate that command. 1. By rash anger. 2. By disgraceful and reviling words. Thence learn, that every evil motion of our hearts consented to against our neighbour, all unjust anger towards him, all terms of contempt put upon him, are forbidden by the law of God, no less than the gross act of murder itself. Learn, 2. That wrath and anger, without just cause, hath its degrees: and according to the degrees of the sin, will the degrees of punishment be proportionable in the next world. Learn, 3. That self murder is here forbidden, and in no case lawful, man having no more power over his own life than over another's; though life be ever so miserable and painful, yet must we wait God's time for our dismissal and release.

23 Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

For preventing the sin of rash anger, which in our Saviour's account is a degree of murder, he exhorts all his disciples and followers to brotherly agreement, and to seek

mutual reconciliation with each other. *Agree with thine adversary*: that is, thy offended or offending brother; agree with him, as becomes a man; quickly, as becomes a christian: implying, that it is a necessary duty for every christian to seek reconciliation sincerely and speedily, with such as have offended him, or have been offended by him. Observe, 2. The argument or motive with which Christ enforces his exhortation to brotherly reconciliation, drawn from the peril and danger of the neglect; and this is two-fold; the first respects our present duties and services, when we wait upon God at his altar, and attend upon him in holy offices. None of our performances will find acceptance with God, if there be found malice and hatred, anger and ill-will against our brother. Learn, that no sacrifice we can offer will be acceptable to God, so long as we ourselves are implacable to men. A second danger respects us, when we appear before God in judgment; then God will be our adversary, Christ our judge, satan our accuser, hell our tormentor: *if now from the heart we do not every one of us forgive our brother his trespasses*. Lord! how heinous then is this sin of inveterate anger, hatred, and malice in our hearts against any person! No gift, though ever so costly, no devotions, though ever so specious, will prevail with God to pass it by, whilst we live; and if we die with hearts full of rancor and bitterness, we can never expect to be encircled in the arms of him who is all love all mercy, all goodness and compassion: no reconciliation with God without an hearty goodwill to all men. Nay, farther, the text here speaks of a prison, which is the dismal dungeon of hell: into which the implacable and unreconciled person must be cast, and lie for ever without mixture of pity; and it is not men's scoffing at it that will secure them against the horror of it.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery;

28 But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Our Saviour next proceeds to explain the seventh commandment, which forbids adultery; by which the pharisees understood only the gross act of uncleanness, and carnal lying with a woman. But says our Saviour, whosoever secretly in his heart desires such a thing, and casts his eye upon a woman in order to such an act, entertaining only a thought of it with pleasure and delight, he is an adulterer in God's account. Learn, that such is the purity and spirituality of the law of God, that it condemns speculative wantonness, no less than practical uncleanness; and forbids not only the outward action, but the secret purpose and intention, and first-out-going of the soul after unlawful objects.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Our Saviour had condemned ocular adultery in the foregoing verse, or the adultery of the eye; *he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her, in his heart.* Where note, that the eye is an inlet to sin, especially the sin of uncleanness; lust enters the heart at the window of the eye. Now in these verses Christ prescribes a remedy for the cure of this eye malady: *if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out*: which is not to be understood literally, as if Christ commanded any man to maim his bodily members: but spiritually, to mortify the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye, which otherwise will prove a dangerous snare to the soul. Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided: it is our duty to avoid whatsoever leads to it, or may be an occasion of it; if we find the view of an ensnaring object will enflame us, we must, though not put out our eye, yet make a covenant with our eye that we will not look upon it. Note, 2. That the best course we can take to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affections and love to sin. This is to kill it in the root; and if once our inward affections be mortified, our bodily members may be spared and preserved; for they will no longer be weapons of sin, but instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

31 It hath been said whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

Our blessed Saviour still proceeds in vindicating and clearing the seventh commandment from the corrupt glosses of the pharisees. Almighty God had tolerated the Jews, in case of uncleanness, to put away their wives, by a bill of divorce. Deut. xxiv. 1. Hereupon the pharisees maintained it lawful to put away the wife upon every slight occasion. This abuse Christ corrects; and shows that divorce, except in case of adultery, is a certain breach of the seventh commandment. Learn, 1. That so indissoluble is the marriage-covenant betwixt two persons, that nothing but adultery, which violates the bands of marriage, can dissolve or disannul it. Learn, 2. When persons are unjustly put away, it is unlawful for them to marry to any other, or for others knowingly to marry to them.

33 Again, ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great king:

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black,

The next commandment which our Saviour expounds and vindicates, is the third, which requires reverent use of God's name. Now the pharisees taught, that perjury was the only breach of this commandment: and that swearing was nothing, if they did not forswear themselves: and that persons were only obliged to swear by the name of God in public courts of justice, but in their ordinary and common discourse they might swear by any of the creatures. Now in opposition to these wicked principles and practices, Christ says, *swear not at all*: that is, 1. Swear not profanely in your ordinary discourse. 2. Swear not unduly by any of the creatures; for that is to ascribe a deity to them. 3. Swear not lightly upon any trifling or frivolous occasion; for oaths upon small occasions are great sins: so that an oath is not here forbidden by our Saviour, but restrained. For though light and needless, common and ordinary swearing be a very great sin; yet to take an oath upon a solemn occasion, when lawfully called thereunto, is a christian and necessary duty. Christ by this prohibition doth not forbid all swearing, as a thing, absolutely evil; nor doth he forbid all assertory or promissory oaths in matters testimonial, when imposed by the magistrate; for Christ himself, when adjured by the high priest, did answer upon oath. But he forbids all voluntary oaths in common conversation, and in our ordinary discourse; because an oath is an act of religious worship: therefore to trifle with it, is a horrid provocation.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Here our Lord prescribes a proper mean and remedy for shunning the occasion and danger of rash swearing; and that is by using and accustoming ourselves in conversation to a true simplicity, and constant plainness of speech; either affirming or denying, according to the nature of the thing; letting oaths alone, till we are called to them upon great occasions, for ending strife between man and man. Learn, that the great end of speech being to communicate the sense of our minds to each other, we ought to use such plainness and simplicity in speaking, that we may believe one another without oaths, or more solemn and religious asseverations.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee

on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Our Saviour here vindicates the sixth commandment, which obliges us to do no wrong to the body of our neighbour. God hath given a law to the public magistrate, to require an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, when a person was wronged: hereupon the pharisees taught that a private person, wronged by another, might exact satisfaction from him to the same degree in which he had been wronged by him: if he had lost an eye by another, he might revenge it by taking away the eye of another; but says Christ, *I say unto you, resist not evil*; that is, seek not private revenge, but leave the avenging of injuries to God and the magistrate, and in trivial matters not to appeal at all, and when forced, not for revenge sake. Teaching us, that christians ought rather to suffer a double wrong, than to seek private revenge; christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently, rather than to revenge one privately. Religion indeed doth not bid us to invite injuries, but it teaches us to bid them welcome: we are not to return evil for evil, but rather to endure a greater evil, than to revenge a less.

42 Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Our Saviour here presses the law of charity upon his disciples: this is two-fold; a charity in giving to them that beg, and a charity in lending to them that desire to borrow. Christianity obliges all those who have ability to abound in works of charity of all sorts and kinds whatsoever. He that is truly charitable, doth not only give, but lend; yea, sometimes lends, looking for nothing again. It is not enough to act charity of one sort, but we must be ready to act in every kind, and to the highest degree that our circumstances and abilities will admit. Giving is a god-like thing, he is the giver of every good and perfect gift; he gives before we ask; and we must imitate God in giving; namely, by giving what we give cheerfully, sincerely, discreetly, proportionably, universally, in obedience to God's command, and with an eye at his glory. And there is sometimes as great charity in lending, as there is in giving; many a poor family, by our lending them a small matter, may raise themselves into a condition to live comfortably and honestly in the world.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy:

44 But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

(No. 2.)

that despitefully use you, and persecute you:

Another corrupt gloss which the pharisees had put upon the law of God, our Saviour here takes notice of: the law said, *thou shalt love thy neighbour*, Levit. xix. 18. This they interpreted to relate only to their own countrymen, he Jews; concluding, that they might hate all the uncircumcised nations, as enemies: but, saith our Saviour, I require you to love all men; for if enemies must not be shut out of your love, none must. *Love your enemies*; here the inward affection is required. *Bless them that curse you*; there outward civility, and affability is required. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness and charity are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*; these are the highest expressions of enmity that can be, calumny and cruelty; yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these two tenderest points, our reputation and our life. Learn, that christianity obliges us to bear a sincere affection towards our most malicious enemies; to be ready upon all occasions to do good unto them and pray for them.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

To encourage us to the foregoing duty of loving our enemies, our Saviour propounds the example of God himself to our imitation, *that you may be the children of your Father*: that is, that you may be known to be the children of your Father which is in heaven, by your likeness to him, and imitation of him. Note, 1. That the best evidence we can have of our divine sonship, is our conformity to the divine nature, especially in those excellent properties of goodness and forgiveness. Note, 2. That God doth good to them that are continually doing evil unto him. Rain and sun, fat and sweet, gold and silver, are such good things as their hearts and houses are filled with, who are altogether empty of grace and goodness.

46 And if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye; do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Yet farther to encourage us to this duty of loving our enemies, Christ assures his disciples, that he expects more from them than others; more than common humanity and civil courtesy towards friends; for even heathens by the light of nature were taught to love those that loved them: but he expected that christianity should teach them better, and lead them farther, even to *love their enemies, and to bless them that curse them*. Note, love for love is justice; love

for no love is favor and kindness; but love for hatred and enmity is divine goodness; a Christ-like temper, which will render us illustrious on earth and glorious in heaven. But, Lord! how do men confine their love to little sects and parties? and from thence comes that bitterness of spirit of one party towards another; and oh! how hard it is to find a christian of a true catholic love and temper.

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

That is, aim at perfection in all christian virtues and divine graces, but particularly in this of love, in imitation of your heavenly Father, who is the perfect pattern of all desirable goodness and adorable perfections. *To be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect*, is indeed impossible, as to equality, but not as to imitation. The word rendered here *perfect* by St. Matthew, is elsewhere by St. Luke rendered *merciful*, Luke vi. 36. implying, that charity is the perfection of a christian's graces; he that is made perfect in love, is perfect in all divine graces, in the account of God. Learn, 1. That there is no standing still in religion; he that will be saved must press on towards perfection. Learn, 2. That no less than perfect and complete perfection in grace, and particularly in the grace of love and charity, is and ought to be the aim of every christian in this life, and shall be his attainment in the next.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter is a continuation of our Saviour's incomparable sermon upon the mount, in which he cautions his disciples against the hypocrisy and vainglory of the pharisees, both in their almsgiving and prayers; the former in the first four verses of this chapter, which speaks thus:

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

3 But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

Observe here, 1. The duty directed to, almsgiving after a right manner; *do not your alms before men*: some copies read it, *do not your righteousness before men*:

because almsgiving is a considerable part of that righteousness and justice which we owe unto our neighbour: he that is uncharitable is unjust: acts of charity are acts of justice and equity. It also intimates to us, that the matter of our alms should be goods righteously gotten: to give them alms of what is gotten unjustly, is robbery, and not righteousness. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's cautionary direction is giving alms, *Take heed that ye do them not to be seen of men*. It is one thing to do our alms that men may see them, and another thing to do them that we may be seen of men. We ought to do alms before men, that God may be glorified: but not to be seen of men, that ourselves may be applauded. Observe 3. That particular sin which our Saviour warns his disciples against in giving their alms, namely, ostentation and vainglory, which the pharisees were notoriously guilty of: *sounding a trumpet* to call people about them when they gave their alms. Thence learn, that the doing any good work, especially any work of charity and mercy, vaingloriously, and not with an eye to God's glory, will certainly miss of the reward of well-doing in another world. Observe, 4. The advice given by our Saviour for the prevention of this sin and danger; and that is, to do our alms as secretly as we can: *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*; that is conceal it from thy nearest relations, and, if possible, from thyself. Note thence, that the secrecy of our charity is one good evidence of its sincerity. Hence the Egyptians made the emblem of charity to be a blind boy reaching out honey to a bee that had lost her wings.

5 ¶ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Here our Saviour warns his disciples against the same pharisaical hypocrisy in praying, which he had before reproved in almsgiving. It was lawful to pray in the synagogues, and to pray standing, and that before men; but to do this upon design to be applauded by men is condemned by Christ. Our business in prayer lies with God; we are not to concern ourselves how men like our performances; it is sufficient if God doth approve and will accept them. To cure the foregoing vanity, Christ directs to secret prayer, in our closets where God is the witness, and will be the rewarder of our sincerity. Note, that secret prayer is a commanded and encouraged duty, and when in sincerity performed, shall be attended with a public and glorious reward; *pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.*

7 But, when we pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do: for they think

that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be ye not therefore, like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

A vainglorious ostentation in prayer was condemned by our Saviour in the former verse; here a vainglorious multiplicity of words, by idle tautologies and impertinent repetitions is condemned also; after the manner of the heathens, who expected to have their prayers granted by God, for the multiplicity of words used by themselves. Hence note, that a christian's business in prayer being not to inform God (*for he knoweth what things we need before we ask him*) nor yet to move and persuade God (*for he is our Father*) it certainly argues an undue apprehension of God, when we lengthen out our prayers with vain repetitions and a multitude of words. Yet note, 1. That it is not all repetition of the same words in prayer which Christ here condemns, for he himself prayed thrice, using the same words, that the cup might pass from him. Note, 2. Are we to apprehend that prayers continued to a considerable length are forbidden by Christ; for Solomon's prayer was such, 1. Kings viii. Nehemiah's such, chapter ix. it is said, the people confessed, and worshipped for three hours; Christ continued in prayer all night; and the church, Acts xii. made prayers without ceasing for St. Peter's enlargement. And we read of St. Paul's praying night and day, 1. Thes. iii. 10. and of his commanding the churches to be continued in prayer, and to continue in prayer. But Christ here condemns prayers lengthened out upon an apprehension that we shall be heard for our much speaking, or can move God by arguments, whilst we continue in our sins. (Dr. Whitby.)

9 After this manner therefore, pray ye :

As if Christ had said, For preventing these, and all other faults in prayer, I will myself give you a complete form of prayer, and an exact pattern and platform, for your imitation when you pray. Note, that the Lord's prayer is both a perfect form of prayer, which ought to be used by us, and also a pattern and platform, according to which all our prayers ought to be framed. St. Matthew says, *after this manner pray ye*: St. Luke says, *when ye pray, say,*

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name:

10 Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:

11 Give us this day our daily bread!

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The sense and signification of this best of prayers is this: "O thou, our Father in Jesus Christ! who remainest in thy throne in heaven, and art there perpetually praised, and perfectly obeyed, by glorious angels and glorified saints; grant that thy name may be glorified, thy throne acknowledged, and thy holy will obeyed, here on earth below, by us thy sons and servants, most sincerely and readily, and in some proportion to what is done in heaven. And because by reason of the frailty of our natures we cannot subsist without the comforts and supports of life, we crave that such a proportion of the good things of this life may be given unto us, as may be sufficient for us; and that we may be content with our allowance. And knowing that thy holiness and justice oblige thee to punish sin and sinners, we plead with thee, for the sake of thy Son's satisfaction, to pardon us our daily trespasses, which we are guilty of in this state of imperfection, as we do freely and heartily forgive others that have offended and wronged us. And seeing that by reason of the frailty of our nature, we are prone to rush upon and run into temptation, we crave, that by the power of thy omnipotent grace, we may be kept from satan's temptations, from the world's allurements, from our own evil inclinations, and be preserved unblameable to thine everlasting kingdom; which is exalted over all persons, over all places, over all things, in all times past, present, and to come: and accordingly, in testimony of our desires, and in assurance to be heard and answered, we say, *Amen*: so be it, so let it be, even so, O Lord, let it be for ever." More particularly in this comprehensive and compendious prayer, the following severals are remarkable, Namely, 1. That the learned observe, that this prayer is taken out of the Jewish liturgies, in which it is entirely found, excepting those words, *as we forgive them that trespass against us*. From whence Grotius notes, how far Christ, the Lord of his church, was from affecting novelties, or despising any thing because it was a form; a piteous weakness amongst some at this day. Observe, 2. The persons to whom Christ directs us to make our prayers; namely, to God, under the notion of a father; teaching us, that in all our religious addresses to God, we are to conceive of him and pray unto him, under the notion and relation of a father; *our Father*, &c. So he is by creation, by a right of providence and preservation, by redemption, by outward and visible profession, by regeneration and adoption; and this relation which God stands in to us, may encourage us to pray unto him: for being our Father, we are sure that he is of easy access unto, and graciously ready to grant what we pray for. And whereas it is added, *which art in heaven*; this is not to be understood as if his essence were included, or his presence circumscribed and confined there, for he fills heaven and earth with the immensity of it: but he is said to be in heaven, because there is the special manifestation of his presence, of his purity, of his power and glory; and teaches us with what holy fear, with what humble reverence, and not without a trembling veneration, polluted dust ought to make their solemn approaches to the God of heaven. Observe, 3. That the three first petitions relate more immediately to God. 1. That *his name may be hallowed*. By the name of God, understand God himself, as made known to us in his attributes, words and works. This name is hallowed or sanctified by us three ways; by our lips, when we acknowledge his divine per-

fections, and tell of all his wondrous works; in our hearts, by entertaining suitable conceptions of God; and in our lives, when the consideration of these divine perfections engages us to suitable obedience. 2. That his *kingdom may come*. By which we are not to understand his general and providential kingdom, by which he ruleth over all the world, that being always come, and capable of no farther amplification; but principally the kingdom of grace, promoted in the hearts of his people by the preaching of the gospel. We may pray that God would dethrone sin and satan in our own and others souls, and increase grace and sanctification both in us and them, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened, and we may be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ in his kingdom. 3. That his *will may be done*. By which the perceptive rather than the providential will of God is to be understood: we are to obey the former universally, and to submit to the latter very cheerfully. It intimates, that it ought to be the prayer and care, the study and endeavour, of every christian that the commanding will of God may be so done by men upon earth, as it is by the glorified saints and glorious angels done in heaven; namely, with that alacrity and cheerfulness, with that speed and readiness, with that constancy and diligence, that the imperfection of human nature will admit of; imitating the blessed angels, who execute the divine commands without reluctance or regret. Observe, 4. The three last petitions respect ourselves, as the three former did Almighty God. The first of which is a prayer for temporal blessings; *give us this day our daily bread*; where note, the mercy prayed for, bread, which comprehends all the comforts and conveniences of life, and whatever is necessary for the supporting human nature. Also the qualification, it must be our *own bread*, not another's, what we have a civil right to as men, and a covenant right to as christians. Note farther, the kind of bread we ask and desire; it is daily bread. Hereby we are put in mind of our continual dependance upon God for our lives, and for all the supports of life which we enjoy: and also kept in mind of our mortality. And mark the way and manner of conveying good things to us; it is in a way of free gift. *Give us our daily bread*, we cannot give it ourselves; and when we have it of God, we receive it not as a debt, but as a free gift. The next petition is for spiritual blessings; *forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*. Where note, 1. Some things supposed; namely, that we are all sinners, and as such stand in need of pardon and forgiveness. 2. That our sins are debts, wilful debts, repeated debts, innumerable debts, inexcusable debts, debts difficultly discharged, and yet, if undischarged, undoing debts. 3. That we are obliged to pray every day for daily pardon, as we do for daily bread, for our sins are many and daily. 4. It is here supposed, that since we are to pray for forgiveness of sin, it is impossible ever to satisfy the justice of God for sin. Lastly note, the condition or qualification required, *forgive, as we forgive*; this requires, 1. That our minds be full of charity, free from rancor and ill-will, and all desires of revenge, and a secret grudge against another. 2. That we stand ready to help them, and do any office of love and service for them that have offended us. 3. That we admit our offending brother into friendship and fami-

liarity, which is called a forgiving from the heart; our heart must be towards him, as formerly it was. The sixth, and last petition follows, *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Here note, a double mercy prayed for; namely, preventing mercy, and delivering mercy. 1. Preventing mercy, *lead us not into temptation*. Hereby it is supposed, 1. That we are unable to keep ourselves from temptation, partly, through our natural depravity, partly through carnal security. 2. That it is God that must keep us from satan's assaults, his traps and snares, which every where he lays in ambush for us. 3. That it is our own daily duty to be earnest and instant with God in prayer, not to suffer us, by the subtraction of his grace, or in a way of punishment for sin, to run into the circumstances which may prove snares to us: but daily to afford such a measure of his grace as may keep us from falling by temptation, and not leave us falling under the temptation, but to recover us speedily by his power, and enable us to stand more firmly for the future. 2. We here pray for delivering mercy; *deliver us from evil*: by which may be understood, satan the evil one, but especially the evil of sin. We pray here, that God would graciously preserve us from those vicious inclinations of our minds, and evil dispositions of our hearts, which render us so prone to yield to the temptations of satan. Here we see the ugly and deformed face of sin: it is evil; evil in its author and original, it is of the devil, the evil one: evil in its effects and fruits, it doth debase and degrade us, pollute and defile us, befoul and deceive us, and without repentance, damns and destroys us. Observe, lastly, the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, which contains a complication of arguments to urge Almighty God with, for obtaining the mercy prayed for. 1. *For thine is the kingdom*: thou art the only absolute and rightful Sovereign, and all men are concerned to honour thee, and obey thy laws; thou art the supreme Governor of the world, and the king of thy church; therefore let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done. 2. *Thine is the power*, therefore give us thy daily bread, and forgive us our daily sins; for thou hast power to supply the one, and authority to pardon the other. The power of God is a mighty encouragement to prayer, and faith in the power of God has a mighty prevalence in prayer with God. 3. *Thine is the glory*: that is, thine will be the glory, as if we should say, "Lord! by enabling us to hallow thy name, by owning thy kingdom, by doing thy will, and by thy providing for us, and pardoning of us, thou wilt have much glory by us and from us." It teaches us, that as our prayers in general ought to be argumentative, so an argument in prayer drawn from the glory of God, is a mighty encouragement to hope for audience and acceptance. 4. *For ever and ever*; that is thy kingdom is eternal, thy power eternal; thy glory eternal; the God whom we pray to, is an eternal God, and this attribute of God is immoveable in prayer, an encouragement to expect the same blessings from God which others have done before us; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. *Amen*: a word used in all languages denoting an hearty assent to our own prayers, and an hearty desire to receive the mercies prayed for, and an humble assurance that we shall be heard and answered.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

There being no duty to which our corrupt natures are more backward than this of forgiving injuries, our Saviour repeats that duty over and over, and frequently inculcates it in the holy gospels ; assuring us, that forgiving others is the indispensable condition upon which we are to expect forgiveness from God. Learn thence, That every time we go to God in prayer, and beg forgiveness of him as we forgive others, if we do not forgive them heartily and sincerely, fully and freely, readily and willingly, we fly in the face of God, and our prayers are a sort of imprecations against ourselves. Note further, That although God promises us forgiveness if we forgive others, yet it is with this limitation, if no other condition of salvation be wanting ; for this virtue alone cannot obtain favor with God, unless other duties are performed.

16 ¶ Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face.

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The next duty which our Saviour instructs his disciples in, is that of religious fasting ; which is, a devoting of the whole man, soul and body, to a solemn and extraordinary attendance upon God, in a particular time set apart for that purpose ; in order to the depreciating of his displeasure, and for the supplicating of his favor, accompanied with an abstinence from bodily food and sensual delights, and from all secular affairs and worldly business. Now our Saviour's direction, as to this duty of fasting, is double : 1. He cautions us to beware of an abuse in fasting : *Be not as the hypocrites are ; of a sad countenance* : that is, do not affect a sullen sadness, ghastliness, and unpleasantness of countenance, like the hypocritical pharisees, who vitiate and discolor their faces, who mar and abolish their native complexion. Hypocrisy can paint the face black and sable, as well as pride with red and white. 2. He counsels us to take the right way in fasting ; *to anoint the head and wash the face* : that is, to look as at other times, using our ordinary garb and attire, and not to affect any thing that may make us look like mourners, when really we are not so. Where we may note, That though hypocrites by their dejected countenances and mortified habits do seek to gain an extraordinary reputation for piety and devotion, yet the

(No. 2.)

sincere christian is to be abundantly satisfied with God's approbation of his services, and with the silent applause of his own conscience.

19 ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Observe here, 1. Something implied ; namely, that every man has his treasure ; and whatsoever or wheresoever that treasure is, it is attractive, and draws the heart of men unto it : for every man's treasure is his chief good. 2. Something permitted, namely, the getting, possessing, and enjoying of earthly treasure, as an instrument of doing much good. 3. Something prohibited ; and that is, the treasuring up of worldly wealth as our chief treasure ; *Lay not up treasure on earth* ; that is, take heed of an inordinate affection to, of an excessive pursuit after, of a vain confidence and trust in, any earthly comfort, as your chief treasure. 4. Here is something commanded ; *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven* ; treasure up those habits of grace which will bring you to an inheritance in glory ; be fruitful in "good works, laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold of eternal life." Observe, 5. The reason assigned, 1. Why we should not lay up our treasures on earth ; because all earthly treasures are of a perishing and uncertain nature, that they are subject to moth and rust, to robbery and theft ; the perishing nature of earthly things ought to be improved by us, as an argument to sit loose in our affections towards them. 2. The reason assigned, why we should lay up our treasures in heaven, is this ; because, heavenly treasures are subject to no such accidents and casualties as earthly treasures are, but are durable and lasting. *The things that are not seen, are eternal.* The treasures of heaven are inviolable, incorruptible, and everlasting. Now we may know whether we have chosen these things for our treasure by our high estimation of the worth of them, by our sensible apprehension of the want of them, by the torrent and tendency of our affection towards them, and by our laborious diligence and endeavours in the pursuit after them. *Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.*

22 The light of the body is the eye : if therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

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In the foregoing verses our Saviour acquainted us what in our affections and judgments we should esteem as our chief treasure: now this judgment concerning our chief treasure, is by our Saviour here compared to the eye; as the eye is the candle of the body, that enlightens and directs it, so our understanding and judgment of the excellency of heaven, and the things above, will draw our affections towards them, and quicken our endeavours after them. Note thence, that such as our judgment is concerning happiness, such will our desires and endeavours be for the attainment of that happiness. Our affections are guided by our apprehensions; where the esteem is high, endeavours will be strong.

24 ¶ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Observe here, a two-fold master spoken of, *God and the world*. God is our master by creation, preservation, and redemption: he has appointed us our work, and secured us our wages. This world is our master by intrusion, usurpation, and a general estimation: too many esteeming it as their chief good, and delighting in it as their chief joy. Observe, 2. That no man can serve these two masters, who are of contrary interests, and issue out contrary commands; when two masters are subordinate, and their commands subservient, each to the other, the difficulty of serving both is not great; but where the commands interfere, and interests clash, it is impossible. No man can serve God and the world, but he may serve God with the world: no man can seek God and mammon both as his chief good and ultimate end; because no man can divide his heart betwixt God and the world. Learn, That to love the world as our chief good, and to serve the world as our chief and sovereign commander, cannot stand with the love and service which we bear and owe to God. The world's slaves, whilst such, can be none of God's freemen.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on; Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

The next sin which our Saviour cautions his disciples against, is immoderate care for the things of this life, such a solicitous and voracious care for food and raiment as is accompanied with diffidence and distrust of God's fatherly providence over us; and provision for us; and the arguments which our Saviour uses to dissuade from this sin, are many and cogent, laid down in the following verses. Learn here, 1. That Almighty God will provide for every servant of his, food and raiment, and a competency of the

comforts and conveniences of life. Learn, 2. That want of faith in God's promise and a distrust of his fatherly care, is a God-provoking and wrath-procuring sin. Learn, 3. That notwithstanding God's promise to supply our wants, we not only may, but must use such prudential and provident means as are in our power, in order to the supply of our own wants. Dr. Hammond's Pract. Catech.

27 Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Four arguments are here used by our Saviour to dissuade us from the sin of anxious care; it is needless, it is fruitless, it is heathenish, it is brutish. 1. It is needless; "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," and will certainly provide for you; and what need you take care and God too! 2. It is fruitless; "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" that is, by all our solicitous care, we can add nothing either to the length or comfort of our lives. 3. It is heathenish; "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." 4. It is brutish; nay, worse than brutish: the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, are fed by God; much more shall his children. Has not God a breakfast for every little bird, that comes chirping out of its nest; and for every beast in the wilderness, that comes leaping out of its den? and will he not much more provide for you, *O ye of little faith*? Surely he that feeds the ravens when they cry, will not starve his children when they pray. Naturalists observe of the raven, that she exposes her young ones as soon as they are hatched, and leaves them meatless and fatherless, to shift and struggle with hunger as soon as they come into the world: and whether by the dew from heaven, or flies, or worms, God feedeth them, when they gape and cry, they are provided for. From whence our Saviour infers, that man, being much better, that is, a more considerable creature than the fowls, the providence of God will

provide for him, though no solicitude and anxious thoughtfulness of his contributes thereunto.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

That is, let your first and chief care be to promote the kingdom of grace in this world, and to secure the kingdom of glory in the next; and in order unto both, seek after an universal holiness and righteousness, both of heart and life, and then fear not the want of these outward comforts, they shall be added in measure, though not in excess; to satisfy, though not to satiate; for health, though not for surfeit. Observe, 1. That christians must here on earth set themselves to seek heaven or the kingdom of God. 2. That God's kingdom cannot be sought without God's righteousness: holiness is the only way to happiness. 3. That heaven, or the kingdom of God, must be sought in the first place, with our chief care and principal endeavour. 4. That heaven being once secured by us, all earthly things will be superadded by God, as he sees needful and convenient by us.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Here our Saviour re-inforces his exhortation from solicitous care for worldly things, assuring us, that every day will bring with it a sufficient burden or trouble, and therefore we ought not to torment ourselves, by ante-dating our own sorrows, and foretelling what may or may not come to pass. Learn, That it is a painful, sinful, and unprofitable evil, to perplex ourselves with distrustful and distracting fears of what may come upon us: every day has its own duty and difficulty; and though sufferings must be expected and prepared for, yet we must not torment ourselves to-day with fears of what may be to-morrow; but every day cast our burden of care upon that God who daily careth for us.

CHAPTER VII.

Our blessed Saviour having continued his sermon on the mount in the former chapter, concludes it in this with an exhortation to several duties; the first of which is, to forbear rash judging of others.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. **2** For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Observe here, The prohibition, and the reason of that prohibition. Judge not, this is not meant of ourselves, but of our neighbour. Self-judging is a great duty; judging others a grievous sin; yet is not all judging of others condemned, but

a judging of our neighbour's state or person rashly and rigidly, censoriously and uncharitably: especially unrighteously and unjustly. And the reason of the prohibition is added: If we judge others rashly, God will judge us righteously. Learn thence, That a rash and censorious judging of others, renders a person liable and obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God. Note farther, That Christ doth not here forbid judicial judging by the civil magistrate, nor ecclesiastical judging by the church governors, whose office gives them authority so to do. Nor does he forbid one christian to pass a judgment on the notorious actions of another, seeing the duty of reproof cannot be performed without it; but it is such a rash and censorious judging our brother as is void of charity towards him, as is accompanied with contempt of him; especially if we have been guilty of the same or greater sins before him.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye,

By the mote in our brother's eye, is to be understood small and little sins, or some supposed sins: by the beam in our own eye, is meant some notorious sin of our own. Learn, 1. That those who are most censorious of the lesser infirmities of others, are usually most notoriously guilty of far greater failings themselves. 2. That those who desire others should look upon their infirmities with a compassionate eye, must not look upon the failings of others with a censorious eye. 3. That there is no such way to teach us charity in judging others, as to exercise severity in judging ourselves.

6 ¶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

By that which is holy, understand the word and ordinances in general, but admonition and reproof in particular; by dogs and swine, incorrigible and unreclaimable sinners, hardened scorers of holy things. It is a proverbial speech, expressing how sure charitable reprehensions are to be cast away upon incorrigible sinners. Learn, 1. That it is possible for sinners to arrive at such an height and pitch in wickedness and sin, that it may be a christian's duty not to admonish or reprove them. Observe, 2. How Christ provides, as for the honor of his word, so for the safety of those that publish it. As Christ will not have his word offered to some sinners, lest they should abuse it, so also lest they should abuse those that bring it: when sinners turn swine, and we are in danger of being rent by them, Christ himself gives us a permission to cease reproving of them.

7 ¶ Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you :

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, he will give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Observe here, a precept and a promise; the precept, or duty commanded, is importunity and constancy in prayer, we must *ask, seek, and knock*; the promise, or mercy insured, is audience and acceptance with God. Note, 1. That man is a poor, indigent, and necessitous creature, full of wants, but unable to supply them. 2. That God is an all-sufficient good, able to supply the wants and to relieve the necessities of his creatures, if they call upon him and cry unto him. 3. Yet if we do not presently receive what we *ask*, we must still continue to *seek and knock*; though prayer be not always answered in our time, yet it shall never fail of an answer in God's time. 4. That natural propensity which we find in our breasts to hear the desires and to supply the wants of our own children, ought to raise in us a confident expectation, that Almighty God will hear our prayers, and supply our wants, when we call upon him: if a father will give when a child asks, much more will God. *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, &c.* God loves to be giving, and to give good gifts is his delight. But prayer is the key that opens both his heart and hand: yet not every person nor every prayer shall find acceptance with God: the person praying must be a doer of God's will, St. John ix. 31. and not regard iniquity in his heart, nor entertain any grudge against his neighbours: the matter we pray for must be what is agreeable to God's will, and the manner of our prayer must be in faith, and with fervency, and unfeigned perseverance.

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Observe here, 1. An incomparable rule of life; always to do as we would be done by. Note, That the great rule of righteousness and equity in all our dealings with men is this, *To do as we would be done unto*; it is a short rule, a full rule, and a clear rule; both the light of nature and the law of Christ bind it upon us. Observe, 2. The commendation of

this rule. *It is the law and the prophets*: that is, the sum of the Old Testament, so far as concerns our duty to our neighbour, and the substance of the second table. Learn, That it is the design of the scriptures of the Old Testament, first to render men dutiful and obedient to God, and then righteous and charitable one to another. *This is the law and the prophets*, yea, the whole of the law and the prophets, to love God above ourselves, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

13 ¶ Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Observe here, 1. That every man is a traveller in a certain way. 2. That there are but two ways in which the race of mankind can travel; the one strait and narrow, that leads to life and salvation; the other broad and wide, which leads to hell and destruction. 3. That because of the difficulties in the way to salvation, and the easiness of the way to hell and destruction, hence it is that so few walk in the one, and so many in the other. 4. That christians having the strait way to heaven revealed to them, in and by the word of God, should choose rather to go in that way alone to life, than to run with the multitude in that broad way which leads down to the chambers of death and hell. 5. That the metaphor of a gate denotes our first entrance into a religious course of life, and its being strait denotes the difficulty that attends religion at first: evil habits to be put off, old companions in sin to be parted with; but when faith and patience have once smoothed our way, love will make our work delightful to us.

15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Observe here, 1. A caution given. *Beware of false prophets*: There were two sorts of deceivers which our Saviour gave his disciples a special warning of; namely, false *Christis* and false *prophets*: false *Christis* were such as pretended to be the true *Messias*: false *prophets* were such as pretended to own christianity, but drew people away from the simplicity of the gospel. Observe, 2. The ground of this caution: "They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves;" that is, they make fair pretences to strictness in religion, and to greater measures and degrees of mortification and self-denial than others. Whence we learn, That such who go about to seduce others, usually pretend to extraordinary measures of sanctity themselves, to raise an admiration among those who judge of saints more by their looks than by their lives; more by their expressions than by their actions. What heavenly looks and devout gestures, what long prayers and frequent fastings had the hypocritical Pharisees beyond what Christ or his disciples ever practised! Observe, 3. The rule laid down by Christ, whereby we are to judge of false teachers; *by their fruits ye shall know them*. Learn, That the best course we can take to judge of teachers pretending to be sent of God, is to examine the design and tendency of their doctrines, and the course and tenor of their conversations. Good teachers, like good trees, will bring forth good fruits of truth and holiness; but evil men and seducers, like corrupt trees, will bring forth error and wickedness in their life and doctrine.

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Not every one; that is, *Not any one that saith, Lord, Lord*; that is, that owneth me by way of profession, by way of prayer, and by way of appeal, shall be saved; *But he that doeth the will of my father* sincerely and universally. Learn hence, 1. That multitudes at the great day shall be really disowned by Christ, as none of his servants, that did nominally own him for their Lord and Master: many that have now prophesied in his name, shall then perish in his wrath; many that have cast out devils now, shall be cast out to devils then: such as have now done many wonderful works, shall then perish for evil workers. Note, 2. That a bare name and profession of christianity, without the practice of it, is a very insufficient ground to build our hopes of heaven and salvation upon. A profession of faith and purposes of obedience, without actual obedience to the commands of God, will avail no person to salvation. 3. That gifts, eminent gifts, yea extraordinary and miraculous gifts, are not to be rested in or depended upon as sufficient evidences for heaven (No. 3.)

and salvation. Gifts are as the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the temple that sanctifies the gold.

24 ¶ Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Christ here speaks of two houses, the one built upon a rock, the other on the sand; these two houses were alike skilfully and strongly built to outward appearance; while the sun shone and the weather was fair, none could discern but that the house upon the sand was built as well, and might stand as long, as that on the rock; but when the rain fell the foundation failed. Thus, where is the hypocrite with all his faith and fear, with all his show and appearance of grace, in a wet and windy day? His goodly outside is like the apples of Sodom, fair and alluring to the eye, but being touched, instantly evaporate into dust and smoke. An hypocrite stands in grace no longer than till he falls into trouble: and accordingly our Saviour here concludes his excellent sermon with an elegant similitude. The wise builder is not the frequent hearer, but the faithful doer of the word, or the obedient christian; the house is heaven, and the hope of eternal life; the rock is Christ; *The building upon the sand*, is rested in the bare performance of outward duties: the rains, the winds, and the floods, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings, and persecutions, that may befall us. Note, 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man, that builds his hope of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation. Note, 2. That such professors as rest in the outward performances of holy duties, are foolish builders, their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and uncertain. An outward profession of christianity, though set off by prophesying and doing miracles, will not avail any man towards his account at the great day, without that real and faithful, that universal and impartial, obedience to the laws of Christ, which the gospel requires.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine;

29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Here we have two things observable, 1. The manner of our Lord's teaching, it was *with authority*; that is, it was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. With what brevity, without darkness! with what gravity, without affectation! with what eloquence, without meretricious ornament, were our Lord's discourses. The majesty he showed in his sermons, made it evidently appear that he was a teacher sent of God, and clothed with his authority. Observe, 2. The success of his teaching: *The people were astonished at his doctrine*; affected with admiration, believing him to be an extraordinary prophet. Learn, that such is the power of Christ's doctrine, when accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, that it makes all auditors admirers, yea, believers; it causes astonishment in their minds, and reformation in their manners.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter is called by St. Ambrose, scriptura miraculosa, The miraculous scripture; there being several great miracles recorded in this chapter: as the cleansing the leper, the curing of the centurion's servant, the appeasing of the wind, &c. Our Saviour having delivered his doctrine in the former chapters, in this he backs his doctrine with miracles, for the establishment and confirmation of it.

WHEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

2 And, behold, there came a leper, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3 And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; Be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Note here, in general, that the Jews paid civil adoration to their kings and to their prophets; thus Saul stooped with his face to the ground to Samuel; Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel, and Obadiah before Elijah; from whence may be gathered, that the adorations given to Christ by them that knew nothing of his divinity, were paid him as a prophet sent from God. Only next, several particulars are here observable: as, 1. The petitioner, and that is a

leper; he came and worshipped Christ, and petitions him to heal him, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.* Where he discovers a firm belief of Christ's power, but a diffidence and distrust in Christ's will, to heal him. Learn, Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour grants his petition; *Jesus touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* Our Saviour, by touching the leper, showed himself to be above the law, as God; though subject to the law, as man; for by the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched. Yet it was a received rule among the Jews, that a prophet might vary from the punctilios of the ceremonial law, or change a ritual law; so did Elijah stretch himself on the dead child, and Elisha on the Shunamite's son; notwithstanding the prohibition of coming near the dead. But Christ's curing the leper by the word of his mouth, and the touch of his hand, showed his divine power, and proved himself to be truly and really sent of God; leprosy being called by the Jews the finger of God, a disease of his sending, and of his removing, our Saviour, therefore, as a proof of his being the Messiah, tells the disciples of John, *That the lepers were cleansed, Matt. xi. 5. and the dead raised.* Which being put together, intimates that the cleansing of the leper is as peculiar an act of divine power, as the raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2 Kings v. 7, said the king, "Am I a God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure; *immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power, and will to cure him miraculously who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. The charge and command given by Christ after the cure: first; *To tell it to no man*: wherein the modesty, humility, and piety, of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all the praise, honor, and glory should redound entirely to God; his care of his own safety, lest the publishing of this miracle should create him untimely danger from the pharisees. Christians, behold your pattern to do much good, and make but little noise. Christ affected no popular air, he did not spoil a good work by vain ostentation. When we work hard for God, take we great care that pride doth not blow either it or us. O how difficult it is for us to do much service, and not value ourselves too much for the services which we do! The second part of the charge which Christ gave the recovered leper, was, "To show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them;" that is, a testimony to the Jews, that he was the Messiah, and that he did not oppose the ceremonial law given by Moses. Where note, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood, he would have it observed. Here Dr. Lightfoot observes, that though the priesthood was much degenerated from its primitive institution, by human inventions, yet Christ sends the leper to submit to it; because though they did corrupt, yet they did not extinguish the divine institution.

5 ¶ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant do this, and he doeth it.

10 When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

The second miracle our Saviour works in this chapter, is the healing of the centurion's servant. Where observe, 1. The person that applies to our Saviour for help and healing: he was a gentile, an heathen, a Roman soldier, an officer or commander; yet he believes in, and relies upon the power of Christ. Note, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it extends itself to all sorts and ranks, to all orders and degrees of men, without exception. Even the bloody trade of war yields worthy clients to Christ: he doth not so much regard who we are, and whence we are, as what we are, and with what dispositions and inclinations we come unto him. Observe, 2. The person whom the centurion comes to Christ for; not for himself, not for his son, but for his servant. His servant is sick, he doth not drive him out of doors, nor stand gazing by his bed-side, but looks out for relief for him: a worthy example! Some masters have not so much regard to their sick servants as they have to their oxen or their swine; but he is not worthy of a good servant, that in a time of sickness is not willing to serve his servant. A conceit of superiority must beget in no man a neglect of charitable offices towards inferiors. Observe, 3. Unto whom the centurion seeks, and with what zeal and application; he seeks not to wizards and conjurers, but to the physician, for his poor servant; yea, to Christ, the best physician; and this not with a formal relation in his mouth, but with a vehement aggravation of the disease; *My servant is grievously tormented*: where the master's condolency and tender sympathy with his afflicted servant, is both matter of commendation and imitation also. Observe, 4. The happy mixture of humility and faith which was found in the centurion; he owns his unworthiness of having Christ come under his roof, yet he acknowledged Christ's power, that by speak-

ing of a word his servant might be healed by him. Humility is both the fruit of faith, and the companion of faith; an humble soul has an high esteem of Christ, and a low esteem of himself. Observe, 5. How our blessed Saviour exceeds both his desires and expectations; Christ says, not only will I heal him, but, *I will come and heal him*: wonderful condescension! In St. John. chap. iv. 47, we read of a certain nobleman and ruler that twice entreated our Saviour to come to his house and heal his son, but our Lord refused, and did not stir a foot, here the centurion doth but barely tell Christ of his poor servant's sickness, and Christ both unasked and undesired, says, *I will come and heal him*. O how far was Christ from seeming in the least to honor riches and despise poverty! he that came in the form of a servant, goes down and visits a sick servant upon his poor pallet-bed, that would not visit the rich couch of the ruler's son. How should we stoop to the lowest offices of love and kindness to one another, when Christ thus condescendingly abased himself before us! Observe, 6. The notice and observation which our Saviour takes of the centurion's faith: *he wondered at it* from him who had wrought it in him. Christ wrought this faith as God, and wondered at it as man; what can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder! We do not find our Saviour wondering at worldly pomp and greatness. When the disciples wondered at the magnificence of the temple, Christ rather rebuked them, than wondered with them: but when he sees the gracious acts of faith, he is ravished with wonder. Let it teach us to place our admiration where Christ fixes his; let us be more affected with the least measure of grace in a good man, than with all the gaieties and glory of a great man: let us not envy the one, but admire the other.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.

This was the first occasion that Christ took to speak of the calling of the Gentiles, and rejection of the Jews. Observe, here, That the unbelieving Jews are called *the children of the kingdom*, because born within the pale of the visible church: they presumed that the kingdom of heaven was entailed upon them, because they were Abraham's seed; they boasted of, and gloried in, their external and outward privileges. Note, thence, 1. That gospel-ordinances, and church privileges enjoyed, are a special honor to a people, admitted to the participation of them: our Saviour here styles the Jews upon that account. *The children of the kingdom*. 2. That such privileges enjoyed, but not improved, do provoke Almighty God to inflict the heaviest of judgments upon a people;

"The children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness," that is, into the darkness of hell, where shall be perpetual lamentations for the remembrance of the gospel kindly offered, but unthankfully rejected.

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

The next miracle which our Saviour wrought, was in curing Peter's wife's mother of a fever: the miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in the way and manner of curing; for, 1. It was by a touch of our Saviour's hand. 2. It was instantaneous and sudden: *immediately the fever left her*. 3. The visible effects of her recovery presently appeared; "She instantly arose and ministered unto them." That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous: that she could and did arise, and administer unto Christ, argued her thankfulness, and a great sense of his goodness upon her mind. Note here, 1. That marriage in the ministers of the gospel, yea, even in the apostles themselves, and in Peter, the chiefest of them, was neither censured nor condemned by our Saviour. St. Peter had a wife and family, which Christ condescends to visit. Observe, 2. That the first thing which Christ takes notice of in the house which he condescends to visit, is what aileth any in it; what need they stand in of his help and healing; and accordingly, together with his presence, he affords them relief. Learn, 3. That when Christ has graciously visited and healed any of his servants, it ought to be their first work and next care to administer unto Christ; that is, to employ their recovered health, and improve their renewed strength in his service; *She arose and ministered*.

16 ¶ When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

It was very common about the time of our Saviour's coming in the flesh, for the devil bodily to possess persons, and very grievously to torment them. This is one of the sad and dismal evils which sin has made us liable and obnoxious to, to be bodily possessed by satan; when we give satan the power of our hearts, it is a just and righteous thing with God, to give him the possession of our bodies. But who is the person that dispossesses satan? Christ Jesus: it is a stronger than the strong man that can cast out satan: our Jesus in whom we trust, by his powerful word alone can deliver us from satan's power, and all the sad effects and consequences thereof. But observe, with what condolency

and sympathizing piety he exercises these acts of mercy and compassion towards poor creatures; he is said to take our "infirmities upon himself, and to bear our sicknesses;" he bare the guilt, which was the cause of these griefs and sorrows; and he bare the sorrows themselves, by a tender sympathy with us under the burden of them. Christ considers our sufferings as his own; *he was afflicted in all our afflictions*, and pained with all our pains; in this sense, "he took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

18 ¶ Now, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Observe here, A person resolving to follow Christ; a good resolution, if made deliberately, and not rashly, nor for sinister ends and secular advantages; which it is to be feared was the case here, by the answer which our Saviour gives: for says he, *foxes have holes, &c.* that is, my condition in this world is very poor, worse than the birds of the air, for they have their fixed nests; or the beasts of the earth, for they have their dens and holes; but I have no fixed habitation. Note, 1. That many persons take up rash and sudden resolutions to follow Christ, before they have well considered what it will cost them; what they are likely to lose by being his disciples. 2. That such men may find themselves miserably mistaken, who expect to gain any thing by following of Christ, but their soul's salvation. Note, 3. The title given to Christ; he is styled here, and frequently elsewhere, *The Son of man*. 1. To show the truth of his humanity; the Son of man must be man. 2. To show the depth of his abasement; Christ humbled, yea, emptied himself, when being the Son of God he submitted to be made man: "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.

We must not suppose by this prohibition that Christ disallows or disapproves of any civil office from one person to another, much less of a child to a parent, either living or dying; but he lets us know, 1. That no office of love and service to man, must be preferred before our duty to God, unto whom we owe our first obedience. 2. That lawful and decent offices become sinful, when they hinder greater duties. 3. That such as are called to the work and employment of the ministry, must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons: as if

our Saviour had said, Others will serve well enough to bury the dead: but thou that art a consecrated person must do that unto which thou art consecrated and set apart. Under the law the priest might not come near a dead corpse, nor meddle with the interment of their own parents, unto which our Saviour probably alludes.

23 ¶ And when he was entered into a ship his disciples followed him.

24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep.

25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith! Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Observe here, 1. Christ and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but dangers attend and difficulties do accompany them: a tempest arose, and the ship was covered with waves. Learn thence, That the presence of Christ itself doth not exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and danger: here is a great tempest about the disciples' fears, though Christ was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when the tempest arose; he being weary on the land, was fallen asleep in the ship: our blessed Redeemer hereby sheweth himself to be truly and really man; as he took upon him our human nature, so he subjected himself to our human infirmities. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to him; they awake him with a sad outcry, *Lord save us: we perish*. Here was faith mixed with human frailty: they had faith in his power, that he could save them; but being asleep, they concluded he must awake before he could save them: whereas though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, That the prevalency of fear in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may argue weakness of faith, yet it is no evidence of want of faith: in the midst of the disciples' fears they believed Christ's power. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour (1.) To the winds and seas; next to the fears of his disciples; *He rebukes the winds, and seas, and instantly they are calm*; when the sea was as furious as a madman, Christ by his divine power calms it. Learn hence, That the most raging winds and outrageous seas cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ; if once he rebukes them, their rage is down: God lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act the most lawless part. (2.) Christ rebukes his disciples' fears: *Why are ye fearful?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears were up, and they were as much overset with their boisterous passions, as the vessel was with the tempestuous winds; and

(No 3)

accordingly Christ rebukes the tempest within, and then the tempest without: first he calms their hearts, and then the seas. From this instance we see, that great faith in the habit may appear little in act and exercise. The disciples' faith in forsaking all and following Christ, was great faith, but in this present act their faith was weak, through the prevalency of their fear. Note lastly, that the disciples' faith was lessened by their fear: fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear; as in things natural there is a circular generation, vapors beget showers, and showers vapors; so it is in things moral, nothing can cure us of fear till God cures us of unbelief: Christ therefore takes an effectual method to rid the disciples of their fears, by rebuking their unbelief.

28 ¶ And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way,

We read of few, if any, in the Old Testament, that were possessed with evil spirits; but of many in the New Testament. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; therefore he suffered satan to enter some human bodies, to show his divine power in casting them out. Note here, 1. That the evil angels by their fall, lost their purity, but not their power. 2. That they do no oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God. The devils cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time;

Observe, the devils knew Christ to be the Son of God, and that he came into the world to be a Saviour, but not their Saviour; and therefore they cry out, *What have we to do with thee?* or thou with us? O what an uncomfortable faith is this, to believe that Christ is a Saviour, and at the same time to know that he is none of our Saviour! But what is their outcry against Christ? *This, Art thou come to torment us before the time?* Learn, 1. That there are tortures appointed to the spiritual natures of evil angels. The fire of hell is conceived to be partly material, and partly spiritual; partly material, to work upon the bodies of evil men, and partly spiritual, to work upon the souls of men, and the spirits of evil angels. Learn, 2. That though the devils be now as full of discontent as they can be, yet they are not so full of torment as they shall be; their speech here intimates, that there will be a time when their torments shall be increased, when they shall have their fill of torments: therefore they pray, increase not our torments before the appointed time of their increase.

30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

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31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

Observe, here, 1. A notable evidence of satan's limited power, that a whole legion of devils had not power to destroy one man, nor were able to hurt the meanest creatures without permission. Observe, 2. The devils' acknowledgment of their own impotency, and Christ's power; their asking leave of Christ to go into the swine, shows that they could not go of themselves. Learn hence, 1. The restlessness of satan's malice; he will hurt the swine rather than not hurt at all. 2. That though satan's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; he cannot do all the mischief he would, so he shall not do all he can.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And, when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine; and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Although Christ seldom wrought any destructive miracle, and although he certainly foresaw that the swine would perish in the waters; yet that the people might see how great the power and malice of the devil would be, if not restrained by Christ, he permitted him to enter into the swine: *Christ said unto them, Go:* and how glad was satan of this permission to enter into the swine, in order to their destruction. Let it teach us our duty, by prayer to commit ourselves, and all that we have, morning and evening, into the hands of God's care; all that we have in the house, and all that we have in the field, that it may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing; and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and, when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Observe, 1. What a contrary effect this miracle which Christ wrought had upon these people: instead of believing on him for his miraculous cure of the possessed, the loss of their swine enrageth them, and makes them desire Christ to depart from them. Temporal losses are so great in worldly men's estimation, that spiritual advantages are nothing esteemed; carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour; and had rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profits. Observe, 2. How unanimous and importunate these Gadarenes were to get rid of Christ, the whole city came out, and are not only willing to his departure, but they beseech him to depart out of their coasts. Learn hence, That deplorably sad is the condition of such from whom Christ departs; more deplorably sad is their state

who say unto Christ, depart: but most deplorably sad is the cause of them that intreat and beseech Christ to depart from them. Thus did the Gadarenes, and accordingly Christ took ship and departed from them, and we never read of his return unto them.

CHAPTER IX.

AND he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter, The Gadarenes with one consent desire Christ to depart out of their coasts; here we find our Saviour, according to their desire, departing from them into his own city, which was Capernaum; for Bethlehem brought him forth, Nazareth brought him up, and Capernaum was his dwelling place. From their desire of Christ's departure, and from Christ's departing according to their desire, we learn, That the blessed Jesus will not long trouble that people with his presence who are weary of his company and desirous of his departure.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Observe, 1. The patient, *One sick of the palsy:* which being a resolution of the nerves, weakens the joints, and confines the person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out some incurable diseases (as the world accounts them) to work a cure upon, as the leprosy and palsy. 2. The physician, Jesus Christ; he alone is that wise, faithful, and compassionate physician, that can and doth cure both soul and body. Observe, 3. The moving and impulsive cause of this cure, *Jesus seeing their faith;* that is, their firm persuasion that he was clothed with a divine power, and able to help; together with their confidence in his goodness, that he was as willing as he was able; and no sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, that Christ did exert his divine power in healing. It was not the sick man's faith, but the faith of his friends: the faith of others may prevail for obtaining corporal benefits and temporal blessings for us: thus the centurion's faith healed his servant, and Jairus' faith raised his daughter. Observe, 4. The marvellous efficacy and power of faith: it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected: they desired only the healing of the body, but Jesus seeing their faith, heals body and soul too, saying, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;* intimating, that diseases proceed from sin, because Christ first speaks of forgiving them: yet it is conceived that Christ rather speaketh here of the temporal remission of the punishment, than of the eternal; because that depends on our own faith and not on others.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

See here, how the best of men are sometimes charged with saying and doing the worst of things; to do well,

and bear ill, was the portion of Christ himself, and may be the portion of the holiest of those that belong to Christ: the innocent Jesus was accused of blasphemy, of sorcery, and of the blackest crimes. Innocency itself can protect no man from slander and false accusations.

4 And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

5 For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk?

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house.

Our Saviour here gives the pharisees a two-fold demonstration of his godhead: first, by letting them understand that he knew their thoughts; for to search the hearts, and to know the thoughts of the children of men, is not in the power either of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. Secondly, By assuming to himself a power to forgive sins; the Son of man hath power to forgive sins. Our Saviour here, by forgiving sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his godhead: for, *Who can forgive sins but God only?*

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

8 But when the multitude saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Note here, The multitude marvelled, but not believed; they all admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe in him as the Son of God: they praise God, for giving such power to heal the bodies of men; but not for sending his Son into the world to save the souls of men. Learn hence, that the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in our soul, that requires the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit; the one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

9 ¶ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Observe here, The number of our Lord's apostles not being filled up, what a strange election and choice he makes; Matthew, a grinding publican is the man. Learn, Such is the freeness of God's grace, that it chooses, and such is the efficacy of it, that it overpowers and brings in the worst of sinners unto God; Matthew a publican; Zaccheus, an ex-

tortioner; Manasseh, a murderer; Paul a persecutor; all these are brought home to God by the power of converting grace. Observe, 2. Matthew's ready compliance with God's call, *He arose and followed Christ*. When the inward call of the spirit accompanies the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of God. (Bp. Hall.) Christ sometimes speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not: but when he speaks by his Spirit to our hearts, satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall arise, and follow our Lord and Master.

10 ¶ And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Observe here, Christ invites Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a feast; the servant invites his master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, where-ever Christ was invited to any table, and he refused to go; if a pharisee, if a publican invited, he constantly went; not for the pleasure of eating, but for the opportunity of conversing and doing good: Christ feasts us when we feast him. From Matthew's example, learn, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive of their love unto him. Such as before conversion disesteemed him, do afterwards kindly and respectfully entertain him: Matthew, touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe farther, How at this feast many publicans and sinners were present, of Matthew's acquaintance no doubt, and probably invited by him, they might also see Christ, and be partakers of the same grace with him. Whence we learn, That grace teaches a man to desire and seek the conversion of others; and such as are truly brought home to Christ themselves, will study and endeavour to bring in all their acquaintance to Christ also.

11 And when the pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

See here, what a grief it is to the wicked men to find others brought in to Christ: the wicked pharisees murmur, repine, and envy, instead of admiring Christ's condescension, and adoring his divine goodness; they censure him for conversing with sinners: but Christ tells them in the following verses, that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion.

12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

As if our Lord had said, "With whom should the physician converse, but with his sick patients? Now I come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men; surely then I am to take all opportunities to help and heal them: they that are sick need the physician: but for you pharisees, who are whole and well in your own opinion, and swelled with a conceit of your own righteousness, I have no hopes of doing any good upon you; for such as think themselves whole, desire no physician's help. Learn hence, 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease and malady. 3. That there are multitudes spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 4. That only such as are sensible of their spiritual sickness, are subjects capable of cure, and the persons whom Christ is a healing physician to; *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

14 ¶ Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment: for that which is put in to fill up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The pharisees themselves had a contention with our Saviour in the foregoing verses; here they set on the disciples of John, to contend with him about fasting; alledging that the disciples of John fasted often, Christ's disciples not at all: our Saviour owns it, that his disciples did not fast at present, for two reasons, 1. Because it was unsuitable to them. 2. Because it was intolerable for them. It was unsuitable to them, because of Christ's bodily presence with them: this made it a time of joy and feasting, not of mourning and fasting; whilst Christ the bridegroom is with them, they must feast and rejoice; when removed from them, there will be cause enough to fast and mourn. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church the bride, which he has espoused and married to himself; and whilst his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting were improper for her. Again, this discipline of fasting was at present intolerable for the disciples, for they were raw, green and tender, and could no more bear the severities of religion at present,

than an old garment could bear a piece of new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment come to a stretch; nor no more than old bottles can keep new wine. Thus says Christ, "My disciples are young and green, tender and weak, newly converted, they cannot bear the severer exercises of religion presently; but when I am ascended up into heaven, I will send my Holy Spirit, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins." Hence we may gather, that young converts, till grown up to some consistency in grace, must not be put upon the severer exercises of religion, but handled with that tenderness and gentleness, which becomes the mild and merciful dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here commends prudence to his ministers; that they put not their people upon duties beyond their strength; but consult their progress in christianity and the proficiency they have made in religion, and treat them accordingly.

18 ¶ While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.

19 And Jesus arose and followed him, and *so did* his disciples.

Observe the humble posture in which this man came unto Christ, namely, falling at his feet and worshipping him; which was not only a sign of tender affection towards his daughter, but an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; yet his confining Christ's power to his bodily presence, and to the touch of his hand, was a token of the weakness of his faith; *Come, says he, and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live.* As if Christ could not have cured her, without either coming to her, or laying his hand upon her. Note here, That although all that come to Christ are alike strong in faith, yet our blessed Redeemer refuses none that come unto him with a sincere faith, though in much weakness of faith. *Jesus arose and followed him.*

20 ¶ (And behold a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment.

21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22 But Jesus turned him about; and, when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.)

Whilst Christ is on his way to the ruler's house, a diseased woman comes behind him, touches his garment, and is instantly healed: the virtue lay not in her finger, but

in her faith, or rather in Christ, which her faith instrumentally drew forth. Observe here, How faith oftentimes meets with a sweeter welcome than it could expect. This poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing; Christ bids her, "Be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole."

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

24 He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

Our Saviour being come to the ruler's house, finds the people very busily preparing for the interment of the dead corpse, with music and other solemnities. The custom of having music at funerals came from the heathens, no mention is made thereof in the Old Testament; we read of tearing the flesh, shaving the head, eating the bread of mourners, also of funeral songs, but these were only sung with the voice: but instruments of music at funerals came from the pagans. Weeping and lamentation are the most proper funeral music: then, nothing sounds so well as a sigh, nor is any thing so much in season as a tear; yet are all demonstrations of immoderate and excessive mourning both hurtful to the living, and dishonorable to the dead; nor is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. Observe next, In what sense our Saviour affirms, that the damsel was not dead. *Mortua est nobis, mihi dormit*, says St. Jerom; "She is dead to you but asleep to me." I can as easily raise her from death, as you can awake her out of sleep. Her soul was separated from her body, but not yet fixed in its eternal mansion. Souls departed are under the conduct of angels, good or bad, to their several places of bliss or misery. Probably the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels near the dead body, waiting the pleasure of Christ in reference to it; either to restore it again to the body, or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Note here, That from these words of our Saviour, *The maid is not dead, but sleepeth*, the Jesuits plead for their doctrine of equivocations, and mental reservations, alledging, that when Christ said, *She is not dead*, he reserved in his mind, "in respect of my power. But the words of Christ were plainly spoken to those who were preparing for her interment and funeral rites; and accordingly only intimate, that she was not so dead, as that they needed to make these preparations, he being come to awake her out of sleep.

27 ¶ And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David have mercy on us.

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28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

30 And their eyes were opened, and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, see that no man know it.

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

The ruler, and others who came to Christ for cure and healing, believed him to be a man unto whom Almighty God had communicated divine power. But it is observable, That these poor blind men did believe him to be the Messias, by their calling him the Son of David; and according to their faith, so was their success; their faith capacitated them for a cure. But why did our Lord enjoin the blind men silence, and straitly charged them to tell no man of the cure? Herein the great modesty and humility of Christ appeared, in avoiding all ostentation and commendation; as also a due care of his own safety, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the pharisees,

32 ¶ As they went out, behold, they brought unto him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Still our Lord goes about doing good: before, he healed the diseased: here, he helps the possessed. Learn, 1. That amongst the many calamities which sin has rendered human nature liable and obnoxious to, this is one: to be bodily possessed by satan. This man's dumbness was caused by the devil's possession. Learn, 2. That one demonstration of Christ's divine power, and a convictive evidence of his being truly and really God, was his casting out devils by the word of his power.

34 But the pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

See here the dreadful and sad effects of blindness, obstinacy, and malice; the pharisees charge Christ with making a contract with the devil, affirming that he derived his power from him: but how unlikely was this, that satan should lend our Saviour a power against himself, and for the destruction of his own kingdom! O how dangerous is a wilful and obstinate oppression of the truth! it provokes God to deliver a person up to a final obduracy.

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues.

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and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 ¶ But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's great work and business in this world; it was doing good both to the bodies and souls of men; the most pleasant and delightful, the most happy and glorious work that a person can be employed about. Observe, 2. His unwearied diligence and industry in this great and good work: "He went about all the cities and villages, preaching the gospel and healing diseases:" he travelled from place to place, to seek occasions, and to lay hold upon all opportunities, of being useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 3. The particular instance of our Lord's goodness and compassion towards the people in those cities and villages where he travelled; they wanted the preaching of the gospel, that is, faithful dispensers of it. For though they had the scribes and pharisees to teach them, they instructed them rather in their own traditions than in the simplicity of the gospel; Christ pities the people as sheep without a shepherd. Thence learn, That idle and lazy, unskilful and unfaithful laborers in Christ's harvest, are no laborers in his account: "They were as sheep having no shepherd." He who doth not instruct his flock, and feed them with the sincere milk of the word, from an heart full of love to God, and of compassion to souls, deserves not the name of a true shepherd. Dr. Whitby.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.

38 Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

As if Christ had said, "There is a great number of people that are willing and prepared to receive instruction, but there are few that are able to instruct these poor people in the ways of righteousness and truth: therefore pray and plead with God, that he would provide skilful and faithful ministers to be sent out to preach the gospel throughout the world." Note here, 1. That God's church is an harvest-field. 2. That the ministers of God are laborers in his harvest, under God the Lord of the harvest. 3. That to God alone doth it belong to send forth laborers into his harvest: and none must thrust themselves in till God sends them forth. 4. That the number of faithful laborers in God's harvest is comparatively small and few. 5. That it is the church's duty to pray, and that earnestly and incessantly to the Lord of the harvest, to increase the number of faithful laborers, and also to increase their faithfulness.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter acquaints us with the first commission which our Saviour gave to his disciples to preach the gospel; he directs them, first, whither to go, and to whom to preach; namely, to the Jews, whom he calls the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He instructs them, secondly, as to the doctrine he would have them preach; namely, the doctrine of repentance. And lastly, he arms them against all the difficulties they might meet with in their ministry; and particularly fortifies them against the fears of poverty and persecution.

AND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so did the christian church become planted by twelve apostles; the person commissionating them was Christ. None are to undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those whom Christ appoints; and the persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles; to teach us, That Christ will have such as preach the gospel to be disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Note farther, The power here delegated by Christ to his apostles, *over unclean spirits, and for healing diseases*, in his name. And after Christ's resurrection, they were enabled to confer this miraculous power upon others, by laying their hands upon them; an eminent demonstration of the truth of the christian faith. Learn hence, That to the intent the apostles might preach the gospel with more authority and greater efficacy, Christ gave them a power of working miracles; namely to cast out devils, and heal all manner of diseases in his name; "When he had called together his disciples he gave them power against unclean spirits."

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother:

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;

4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Observe here, Of the twelve apostles Peter is named first, and Judas last. Peter is named first, because first called, Matthew iv. 18. or because probably elder than the rest. Or, because, for order sake, he might

speak before the rest: from whence may be inferred a primacy, but no supremacy; a priority of order, but no superiority of degree. As the foreman of a grand inquest has a precedency, but no pre-eminency. Judas is named last, with a brand of infamy set upon him, that he was the traitor, the person that betrayed his Lord and Master. Learn hence, That though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry: Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister. Inward holiness is not necessary to render the offices belonging to the ministerial function valid and effectual; Judas preaches Christ as well as the rest, and was not excepted when Christ said, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me.*

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not,

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This was only a temporary prohibition, whilst Christ was here upon earth; the Jews being Christ's own people, of whom he came and to whom he was promised, the gospel is first preached to them: but afterwards the apostles had a command to teach all nations, and after Christ's ascension, Samaria received the gospel by the preaching of Philip. From the character which Christ gives of the Jews, calling them *lost sheep*, we learn, 1. That the condition of a people, before brought home to Christ by the ministers of the gospel, is a lost condition; sinners are as lost sheep, wandering and going astray from God, till the ministry of the word finds them. 2. That the great work, and office of the ministers of the gospel, is to call home, and bring in, lost sheep unto Jesus Christ the great Shepherd. *Go, says Christ, to the lost sheep, &c.* Mark, Christ calls the Israelites sheep, though they were not obedient to the voice of their shepherd, because they were God's chosen people; and calls them lost sheep, because they were both lost in themselves, and also in great danger of being eventually and finally lost, by the ignorance and wickedness of their spiritual guides.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Observe here, 1. The duty enjoined the apostles in order to the bringing home of lost souls to Christ, and that is preaching; *As ye go, preach.* Note thence, That the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel is the special means appointed by Christ for the salvation of lost sinners. Observe, 2. The doctrine they are enjoined to preach, namely, that *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is, that the promised Messiah was come, and had set up his kingdom in the world, and expected their obedience to his laws. Where note, How the preaching of John, of Christ and his apostles, was one and the same: namely, the doctrine of repentance: *Repent, say they all, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is the time of

the Messiah's appearing, which has been so long expected, is now come.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give.

Here our Saviour impowers his apostles to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, but gives them a charge, to work them freely, without making any private advantage to themselves. Where observe, 1. How beneficial the miracles were (which Christ and his apostles wrought) to mankind. Moses' miracles were as great judgments as wonders; but these were beneficent; they delivered men from miseries, from bodily diseases, from the power and malice of evil spirits: *They healed the sick and cast out devils.* Observe, 2. That Je-us Christ to show himself a free Saviour, and that whatever came from him was the effect of free grace, gave his apostles a charge to dispense their power in working miracles freely, without money and without price.

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;

10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: (for the workman is worthy of his meat.)

This command of Christ was temporary, and extended only the apostles' first journey, which they were soon to dispatch: our Saviour encourages them to trust to God: first for protection; take no staves with you, that is, no striking or smiting staves for your own defence, preachers must be no strikers. Though a walking staff they might take with them: itinerant preachers might be wearied with travelling as well as speaking. Next for provision; he would not have them over-solicitous for that neither: saying, *The workman is worthy of his meat*, As it is a minister's great duty to trust to God for his maintenance; so it is the people's duty to take care of the minister's comfortable subsistence. "The laborer is worthy of his hire, and the workman is worthy of his meat."

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when you come into an house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, it shall be

more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Our Saviour proceeds to direct his disciples how to manage this their first journey in preaching the gospel: he enjoins them, 1. To observe the rules of decency in their going from one place to another: not like beggars wandering from house to house, but having entered a city, or village, to make inquiry who stood best affected to the gospel, and there turn in. 2. Our Saviour enjoins them civil and religious courtesy towards those whom they applied themselves unto. *When you come into a house salute it*: give it a civil salutation, but especially a christian and spiritual salute, wishing them mercy, grace and peace. 3. He encourages his apostles in the want of success, if they hear you not: *Shake off the dust of your feet*. This action was emblematical, and signified that Almighty God would in like manner shake off them, and esteem them no better than the vilest dust. Note, That those who despise the message which the ministers of the gospel bring, shall hereafter find the dust of their feet, and the ashes of their graves, to give a judicial testimony against them in the day of Christ. Wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony against them; for if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons must much more. Here Grotius well notes: That the sin of those who reject the gospel, must be a wilful sin, which it was in their power to avoid; because it rendered them obnoxious to greater punishment than Sodom and Gomorrah were to suffer at the day of judgment, and because committed against greater light, and greater confirmation of the truth. Doubtless, the higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall if they miscarry.

16 ¶ Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Our Saviour, in this and the following verses, arms his apostles against all the difficulties, dangers, and discouragements which they might meet with in the course of their ministry; he tells them he sent them forth as sheep amongst wolves; intimating thereby unto them that the enemies of the gospel have as great an inclination, from their malicious nature, to devour and destroy the ministers of Christ, as wolves have, from their natural temper, to devour sheep; he therefore recommends to them prudence and innocence; *Be ye wise as serpents*, to avoid the world's injuries; and *harmless as doves*, in not revenging them. The ministers of Christ must not be altogether doves, lest they fall into dangers; nor altogether as serpents, lest they endanger others: for as piety without policy is too simple to be safe, so policy without piety is too subtle to be good. Our Saviour in this text teaches us that wisdom and innocency should dwell together. Offend none by word or example.

17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.

18 And ye shall be brought before go-

vernors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given to you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Here our Saviour lets his apostles know, That for their owning him, and preaching his gospel, they should be brought before all sorts of magistrates, and in all kinds of courts; but he advises them, when they are brought before kings and princes, not to be anxiously thoughtful what they should say; for it should be given them in that hour what they should answer. Learn hence, That though truth may be opposed, yet truth's defenders should never be ashamed; and rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Spirit, and suggest such truths to their minds as all their opposers shall not be able to gainsay. Yet note, That Christ doth not here forbid all fore-thoughts what to say, but only distrustful thoughts, that they should not like orators or advocates, strive to make studied pleas, or rhetorical apologies for themselves, since the Spirit would be in their mouths, and give them immediate supplies. Note also, That because Christ here promised his apostles an immediate assistance from the Holy Spirit, how vain the anabaptists and quakers are, who, by virtue of this promise, do now expect the same assistance in praying and preaching! but they may as well expect to cast out devils as the apostles did, by virtue of the same assistance which the apostles had; whereas these extraordinary gifts are long ceased.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Our Saviour goes on in a farther discovery of the world's hatred and enmity against the gospel, and the preachers of it; and gives all christians in general, and his ministers in particular, to understand, that such is the enmity of the world against holiness and the professors of it, that it will overcome and extinguish even the natural affections of the nearest and dearest relations towards each other. Grace teaches us, *To lay down our lives for our brethren*: but corruption teaches a brother to take away the life of a brother: *The brother shall deliver the brother to death*. Yet observe, Our Saviour comforts his disciples, that there will be an end of these sufferings; and assures them, That if their faith and patience did hold out unto the end, they should be saved. This is our comfort, that if our sufferings for Christ end not in our life-time, they will end in our lives.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another : for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.

Our Saviour here directs his apostles to a prudent care of their own preservation, and allows them to flee in time of persecution ; assuring them, that before they had gone through all the cities of the Jews, preaching the gospel, he would certainly come in judgment against Jerusalem, and with severity destroy his own murderers and their persecutors. Learn, That Christ allows his ministers the liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. Surely it is no shame to fly when our Captain commands it, and also practises it, Mat. 2. Christ by his own example has sanctified that state of life unto us, and by his command made it lawful for us.

24 The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call them of his household?*

Our Saviour here teaches all christians, but especially ministers, how unreasonable and absurd it is for them to expect kinder usage from an unkind world, than he himself met with : are we greater, holier, or wiser than he ? Why then should we expect better usage than he ? Was he hated, persecuted, reviled, murdered, for the holiness of his doctrine and the usefulness of his life ? Why then should any of us *think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen us ?* 1 Pet. iv. 12. Is it not enough, *That the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord*, but must he hope to be above him ?

26 Fear them not therefore : for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; and hid that shall not be known.

27 What I tell you in darkness *that speak ye in light ; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.*

Christ here exhorts his disciples to a free profession and open publication of the doctrine of the gospel, from this consideration, that whatever they say or do shall be brought to light, proclaimed and published to the world. I will make the excellency of your doctrine and the innocency of your lives shine as the light : your integrity in despising of it, and patience in suffering for it, shall redound to God's glory and your commendation, at the revelation of your Lord from heaven. As wicked men have cause to fear, because their evil deeds shall be made evident, so good men have cause to rejoice, because their goodness and good deeds shall be made manifest. Let it be our care to do good, and it shall be Christ's care to disco-

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ver the goodness which we do, to vindicate it from misconception, and set it in its clearest light.

28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Observe here the following particulars, 1. An unwarrantable fear condemned : and that is the sinful, servile, slavish fear of impotent man ; *Fear not him that can kill the body.* 2. An holy, awful, and prudential fear of the omnipotent God commanded ; *Fear him that is able to kill both the body and soul.* 3. The persons that this duty of fear is recommended to and bound upon. Christ's own disciples, yea, his ministers and ambassadors ; they both may and ought to fear him : not only for his greatness and goodness, but upon the account of his punitive justice ; *as being able both to cast soul and body into hell* : such a fear is not only lawful but laudable, not only commendable but commanded, and well becomes the servants of God themselves. This text contains a certain evidence that the soul dies not with the body : none are able to kill the soul, but it continues after death in a state of sensibility : it is granted that men can kill the body, but it is denied that they can kill the soul : it is spoken of temporal death ; consequently then the soul doth not perish with the body, nor is the soul reduced into an insensible state by the death of the body ; nor can the soul be supposed to sleep as the body doth till the resurrection : for an intelligible, thinking, and perceiving being, as the soul is, cannot be deprived of sensation, thought, and perception, no more than it can lose its being ; the soul after the death of the body being capable of bliss or misery, must continue in a state of sensation.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not, therefore : ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Observe here, 1. The doctrine which our Saviour preaches to his disciples ; and that is, the doctrine of divine providence ; which concerns itself for the meanest creatures : even the birds of the air, and the hairs of our head, do fall within the compass of God's protecting care. 2. Here is the use which our Saviour makes of the doctrine ; namely, to fortify the spirits of his disciples against all distrustful fears and distracting cares. Learn, That the consideration of the divine care and gracious providence of God over us and ours, ought to antidote our spirits against all distrustful fears whatsoever. If an hair from the head falls not to the ground without a providence, much less shall the head itself : if the very excrements of the body (such are the hairs) be taken care of by God, surely the more noble part of the body, and especially the noble part of ourselves, our souls, shall fall under his particular regard.

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32 Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. That not to confess Christ, in his account is to deny him: and to deny him is to be ashamed of him. 2. That whosoever shall deny, disown, or be ashamed of Christ, either in his person, in his gospel, or in his members, for any fear or favor of man, shall with shame be disowned, and eternally rejected by him at the dreadful judgment of the great day. Christ may be denied three ways; doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; verbally, by oral expressions; vitally, by a wicked and unholy life. But woe to that soul that denies Christ any of these ways.

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household.

We must distinguish here betwixt the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. His intentional aim was to propagate and promote peace in the world; but through the corruption of man's nature, the accidental event of his coming is war and division: not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only. Note, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world, though it be not the natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion of much of that war and tumult, of much of that distraction and confusion which the world abounds with.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Note here, That by worthiness we are not to understand the meritoriousness of the action, but the qualification of the person. He that cometh to Christ, (that is, will be his disciple) must by a deliberate act of the understanding, and well advised choice of the will prefer him before all the world and his dearest relations whatsoever; not that our Saviour, by these expressions, doth condemn natural

love and affection, either to our relations, or to our own lives, but only regulates and directs it: and shows that our first and chief love must be bestowed upon himself. We may have tender and relenting affections towards our dear relations; but then the consideration of Christ's truth and religion must take place of these; yea, of life itself; nay, when these come in competition, we are to regard them no more than if they were the objects of our hatred. Luke xiv. 26. *If a man hate not his father, &c.* Learn hence, That all the disciples of Christ should be ready and willing, whenever God calls them to it, to quit all their temporal interests and enjoyments, even life itself, and to submit to any temporal inconvenience, even death itself, and all this willingly, cheerfully, and patiently, rather than disown their relation to Christ, and quit the profession of his truth and religion. 2. That such as, for secular interest, and the preservation of temporal life, do renounce their profession of Christ and his religion, they do not only greatly hazard their temporal life, but expose their eternal life to the greatest danger. *He that findeth his life shall lose it, &c.*

40 He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward: and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Here in the close of the chapter, our blessed Saviour encourages his apostles to faithfulness in their office, by assuring them that he should reckon and esteem all the kindness shown to them as done unto himself: and to encourage the world to be kind to his disciples and ministers, he assures them, that even a cup of cold water should meet with a liberal reward: how cold is their charity who deny a cup of cold water to the ministers and disciples of Christ! Learn, 1. That there is some special and eminent reward due to the faithful prophets of God above other men. 2. That he who shall entertain a prophet, and do any good office for him, under that name, that is for his office sake, shall be partaker of that reward. 3. That the least office of love and respect, of kindness and charity, which we show to any of the ministers or members of Jesus Christ for his sake, Christ accounts it as done unto himself, and it shall be rewarded by himself.

CHAPTER XI.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his

twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

Our blessed Saviour having sent forth his twelve apostles in the foregoing chapter, to plant and propagate the gospel, we find him, in this chapter, following them himself in that great and necessary work; "He departed to teach and to preach in their cities." Christ, the great bishop and shepherd of souls, sent not forth the apostles as his curates, to labor and sweat in the vineyard, whilst he took his ease at home; but he followed them himself: his word of command to them was, *Præite, sequar: Go ye before, I will follow after.* Note, 1. That preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and pre-eminency in the church be what it will. None of the servants are above their lord. 2. That if there be a distinction betwixt teaching and preaching, as some apprehend, they are both the work of Christ's ministers, who are obliged from their master's example to perform both: teaching is in order to the conversion of sinners, and preaching in order to the edification of saints.

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples.

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

It was not for John's information that he sent his disciples to Jesus, but for their satisfaction; that he was the true and promised Messiah: John was assured of it himself by a sign from heaven at our Saviour's baptism, chap. iii. 17. But John's disciples, out of great zeal to him their master, envied Christ himself, and were unwilling to believe any person greater than their master, (Archbishop Tillotson, vol. 5.) therefore John, out of a pious design to confirm his disciples in the belief of Jesus being the true Messiah, sends them to our Saviour, to hear the doctrine which he taught, and to see the miracles which he wrought. Learn hence, what a pious desire there is in such as know Christ experimentally themselves, to bring all that belong to them to a saving acquaintance with him.

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things ye do hear and see;

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Observe here, 1. The way and means which our Saviour takes for the conviction and satisfaction of John's disciples, that he was the true Messiah; he appeals to the miracles wrought by himself, and submits the miracles wrought by him to the judgment of their sense; "Go and show John the miracles which you hear and see." Observe, 2. The miracles themselves. "The blind receive their sight, the

lame walk, the deaf hear," &c. Christ was all this in a literal sense, and in a mystical sense also; he was an eye of understanding to the ignorant, a foot of power to the weak; he opened an ear in deaf hearts, to receive the word of life; and the poor are evangelized, that is, turned into the spirit and temper of the gospel; the rich hear the gospel, but the poor receive; that is, they feel the powerful impressions of it: as we say, such an one is Italianized, when his carriage is such as if he were a natural Italian. The passive verb *Ἐυαγγελίζονται* denotes, *non actum prædicationis, sed effectum evangelii prædicati*; the good effect which the gospel had upon the hearts and lives of the poor, transforming them into the likeness of itself. Learn, It is a blessed thing, when the preaching of the gospel has such a powerful influence upon the minds of men, that the temper of their minds and the actions of their lives are a willing transcript of the spirit and temper of the holy Jesus. Note, That as it was prophesied of the Messiah, that he should preach the gospel to the poor, Isaiah lxi. 1. accordingly they were the poor whom Christ preached unto; for the pharisees and rabbies neglected them as the people of the earth, Job vii. 49. And Grotius says, that they had a proverb, That the spirit of God never rests but upon a rich man. Besides, the pharisees and rabbies' doctrines, which they preached, were vain traditions, allegorical interpretations, and cabalistical deductions, which transcended the capacities of the vulgar, so that they could profit very little by repairing to their schools, and by hearing their interpretations of the law; and therefore our Saviour in the close of this chapter, calls the people off from them to learn of him, verse 28. *Come unto me, &c.*

6 And blessed is *he* whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Our Saviour here, by pronouncing them *blessed that are not offended in him*, doth intimate the misery of those who stumble at him, and to whom he is the rock of offence. Some are offended at the poverty of his person, others at the sublimity and sanctity of his doctrine. Some are offended at his cross, others are offended at his free grace; but such as, instead of being offended at Christ, believe in him, and bottom their expectations of heaven and salvation upon him, are in a happy and blessed condition: *Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.*

7 ¶ And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in King's houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Our Saviour having given satisfaction to John's disciples, next enters upon a large commendation of John himself: where observe, 1. The persons whom he commended him before; not John's own disciples, for they had too high an opinion of their master already, and were so much addicted to John, that they envied Christ for his sake: see John iii. 26. *Behold the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him.* It was a great eye-sore that Christ had more hearers and followers than John; therefore not before John's disciples, but before the multitude, Christ commends John; for as John's disciples had too high, so this multitude had too low an opinion of him, possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings. There was a time when the people had high thoughts of John, but now they undervalued him. Learn hence, The great uncertainty of popular applause; the people condemn to-day whom they admired yesterday; he who to-day is cried up, to-morrow is trodden down. The word and the ministers are the same; but this proceeds from the fickleness and inconstancy of the people: nothing is so immutable as the mind of man, nothing is so variable as the opinion of the multitude. Observe, 2. The time when our Saviour thus commended John; not in the time of his prosperity and greatness, when the people flocked after him, and Herod got him to court, and revered him; but when the giddy multitude had forsaken him, and he was fallen into disgrace at court, and had preached himself into a prison: now Christ vindicates his innocency, and maintains his honor, proclaims his worth, and tells the people that the world was not worthy of such a preacher as John was. Learn thence, That Christ will stand by, and stick fast to, his faithful ministers, when all the world forsake them. Let the world slight and despise them at their pleasure, yet Christ will maintain their honor, and support their cause; as they bear a faithful witness to Christ, so Christ will bear witness to their faithfulness for him. Observe, 3. The commendation itself. Our Saviour commends John, 1. For his constancy; he was not a *reed shaken with the wind*; that is, a man of unstable and unsettled judgment, but fixed and steadfast. 2. For his sobriety and high measures of mortification; he was no delicate, voluptuous person, but grave, sober, and severe; he was mortified to the glory and honor, to the ease and pleasures of the world. John wrought no miracles; but his holy conversation was as effectual as miracles to prevail with the people. 3. For his humility; he might have been what he would, the people were ready to cry him up for the Messiah, the Christ of God; but John's lowly spirit refuses all; *He confessed and denied not, saying I am not the Christ*, but a poor minister of his, willing, but not worthy to do him service. This will commend our ministry to the consciences of our people, when we seek not our own glory, but the glory of Christ. 4. Our Saviour commends John for his clear preaching and revealing of Christ to the people. *He was more than a prophet*, ver. 9. because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any before him. The ancient prophets saw Christ afar off; John be-

held him face to face; he prophesied of him; he pointed at him, saying, *This is he*. Whence learn, That the clearer any ministry is in discovering of Christ, the more excellent it is.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Our Saviour having highly commended John in the foregoing verses, here sets bounds to the honors of his ministry, adding, That though John was greater than all the prophets that went before him, seeing more of Christ than all of them, yet he saw less than they that came after him. The meanest evangelical minister that preaches Christ to come is to be preferred before all the old prophets, who prophesied of Christ to come. That minister who sets forth the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, *is greater in the kingdom of heaven*, that is, has an higher office in the church, and a more excellent ministry, than all the prophets, yea, than John himself. The excellency of a ministry consists in the light and clearness of it. Now though John's light did exceed all that went before him, yet he fell short of them that came after him: and thus he that was *least in the kingdom of grace* on earth, much more he that is *least in the kingdom of glory* in heaven, *was greater than John*. Not that the meanest christian but the meanest evangelical prophet, or preacher of the christian doctrine, is greater than John; partly in respect of his doctrine, which is more spiritual and heavenly; partly in respect of his office, which was to preach Christ crucified and risen again; and partly in respect of divine assistance, for John did no miracle, but the apostles that succeed him "went forth, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Add to this, that the Holy Ghost fell not upon John, and he spake not by any extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, as the apostles did; thus he that was least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Our Saviour goes on commending John's ministry, from the great success of it: it had that powerful influence upon the consciences of men, that no soldiers were ever more violent and eager in the storming and taking a strong hold, than John's hearers were in pursuing the kingdom of heaven. Never any minister (before) discovered the Messiah and his kingdom so clearly as John did; and therefore never was there such zeal to press into the kingdom amongst any as the hearers of John had. Learn hence, 1. That the clearer knowledge any people have of the worth and excellency of heaven,

the more will their zeal be inflamed in the pursuit of heaven. 2. That all they who intend and resolve for heaven must offer violence in the taking of it: none but the violent are victorious; *they take it by force*. Which words are both restrictive and promissive. They are the violent, and none other that take it; and all the violent shall take it. Though careless endeavours may prove abortive, vigorous prosecution shall not miscarry. There is also another exposition of those words; *The violent take the kingdom of heaven by force*; that is, the publicans and sinners, and poorer sorts of people, who were looked upon by the scribes and pharisees as persons who had no right to the blessings of the Messiah; these as violent invaders and bold intruders, embrace the gospel, and do as it were take it by force from the learned rabbies, who challenged the chiefest place in this kingdom: and accordingly our Saviour tells them, St. Matt. xxi. 31. The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you; for you believed not John coming to you in the way of righteousness, but the publicans and harlots believed him, when at the same time the pharisees and lawyers rejected, &c. being not baptized of him.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

Here is still a farther commendation of John. The law and the prophets till the coming of John, did foretel the Messiah, but not so determinately, not so nearly, not so clearly as John did: and accordingly, he was that Elias which Isaiah and Malachi foretold should be the harbinger and forerunner of Christ. But why hath John the Baptist the name of Elias? Possibly because they were alike zealous in the work of God; they were alike successful in that work, and they were alike persecuted for their work: the one by Jezebel, the other by Herodias.

16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Our Saviour in these words describes the perverse humor of the pharisees, whom nothing could allure to the embracing of the gospel, neither John's ministry nor Christ's. This our Saviour sets forth two ways. 1. *Allegorically*, ver. 16, 17. *Properly*, ver. 18, 19. By way of allegory (No. 4.)

he compares them to sullen children, whom nothing would please, neither mirth nor mourning; if their fellows piped before them, they would not dance; if they sung mournful songs to them, they would not lament: that is, The pharisees were of such a censorious and capricious humor, that God himself could not please them, though he used variety of means and methods in order to that end. Neither the delightful airs of mercy, nor the doleful ditties of judgment, could affect or move their hearts. Next, our Lord plainly interprets this allegory, by telling them, That *John came to them neither eating nor drinking*; that is, not so freely and plentifully as other men, being a very austere and mortified man, both in his diet and in his habit: and all this was designed by God, that the austerity of his life, and severity of his doctrine might awaken the pharisees to repentance: but instead of this, they censure him for having a devil, because he delighted in solitude, and avoided converse with men; according to the ancient proverb, that every solitary person is either an angel or a devil, either a wild beast or a god. John being thus rejected, Christ himself comes to them, who being of a free and familiar converse, not shunning the society of the worst of men, even of the pharisees themselves, but complying with their customs, and accompanying with them at their feasts, yet without the least compliance with them in their sins; but the freedom of our Saviour's conversation displeased them as much as John's reservedness of temper; for they cry. *Behold a man gluttonous*. Christ's affability towards sinners, they call approbation of their sins; and his sociable disposition, looseness and luxury. Learn hence, 1. That the faithful and zealous ministers of God, let their temper and converse be what it will, cannot please the enemies of religion, and the haters of the power of godliness; neither John's austerity, nor Christ's familiarity, would gain upon the pharisees. It is our duty in the course of our ministry to seek to please all men for their good: but after all our endeavours to please all, we shall please but very few; but if God and conscience be of the number of those few we are safe and happy. Observe, 2. That it has been the old policy of the devil, that he might hinder the success of the gospel, to fill the minds of persons with an invincible prejudice against the ministers and dispensers of the gospel. Observe, 3. That after all the scandalous reproaches cast upon religion, and the ministers of it, such as are wisdom's children, wise and good men, will justify religion; that is, approve it in their judgments, honor it in their discourses, and adorn it in their lives. *Wisdom is justified of her children*.

20 ¶ Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin: woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you.

Our Saviour having gone through the cities of Galilee, preaching the doctrine of repentance, and confirming his doctrine with miracles, and finding multitudes, after all his endeavours, remain in their impotency, he proceeds to upbraid them severely for their contempt of gospel-grace; *Then began he to upbraid their cities, &c.* Where observe, 1. The cities upbraided, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum: in their pulpits he daily preached, and those places were the theatres upon which his miracles were wrought; other cities only heard, these saw; but where he preached most, he prevailed least; like some fishermen, he caught least in his own pond. Observe, 2. What he upbraids them for; not for disrespect to his person, but disobedience to his doctrine; because they repented not. The great design of Christ both in the doctrine which he preached, and the miracles which he wrought was to bring men to repentance; that is, to forsake their sins, and live well. Observe, 3. Whom he upbraids them with; Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, nations rude and barbarous, out of the pale of the church, ignorant of a Saviour, and of the ways of salvation by him. Learn, that the higher people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. They who have been nearest in conversion, and yet not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. Capernaum's sentence shall exceed Sodom's for severity, because she exceeded Sodom in the enjoyment of means and mercy. The case of those who are impenitent under the gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their damnation shall be heaviest and most severe. Sodom, the stain of mankind, a city soaked in the dregs of villany; yet this hell upon earth shall have a milder hell at the last day of judgment, than unbelieving Capernaum, as the next verse informs us, ver. 23.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

This city lying under greater guilt than the rest, Christ names it by itself, without the rest: nay, he doth not only name it, but notify it, as being lifted up to heaven by signal favors and privileges, namely, Christ's presence, Christ's preaching and miracles. Observe, 1. Capernaum's privileges enjoyed, though a poor obscure place in itself, yet she was by the person, ministry, and miracles of Christ, lifted up in heaven. Learn thence, That gospel ordinances and church-privileges enjoyed are a mighty honor and advancement to the poorest persons and obscurest places. Observe, 2. An heavy doom denounced, *Thou shalt be brought down to hell*: that is, thy condition shall be as sad as that of the worst of men, for thy non-proficiency under the means enjoyed. Learn thence, That gospel-ordinances and church-privileges enjoyed but not improved, provoke Almighty God to inflict the sorest of judgments upon a people. *Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.*

24 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Observe here, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. There are degrees of punishment among the damned. 3. That the worst of heathens, who never heard of a Saviour, nor ever had an offer of salvation by him, shall fare better in the day of judgment than those that continue impenitent under the gospel. Christ here avouches, that Capernaum's sentence shall exceed Sodom's for severity.

25 ¶ At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight.

In these verses our Saviour glorifies his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his gospel-grace to the meanest and most ignorant; whilst the great and learned men of the world undervalued and despised it. By *wise and prudent*, Christ means worldly-wise men, particularly scribes and pharisees, from whom God in judgment did hide the mysteries of the gospel, and said ye shall not see; because they had closed their eyes, and said, we will not see. By *babes*, understand such as are at the greatest distance in natural considerations from a capacity for such rich and heavenly manifestations. By *hiding these things from the wise and prudent* we are not to understand God's putting darkness into them, but his leaving them to their own darkness, or denying them that light which they had no desire to see; plainly intimating, that God judiciously hides the mysteries of heavenly wisdom from worldly-wise men. Learn, 1. That till God reveals himself, his nature and will, no man can know either what he is, or what he requires: *Thou hast revealed*. 2. That the wise men of the world have in all ages despised the mysteries of the gospel, and therefore been judiciously given up by God to their own wilful blindness: *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent*. 3. That the most ignorant and most humble, not the most learned, if proud, do stand ready to receive and embrace the gospel revelation: *thou hast revealed them unto babes*. 4. That this is no less pleasing to Christ, than it is the pleasure of the Father; *Even so, Father, as it seemeth good in thy sight*. As if Christ had said, Father, thy election and choice pleaseth me, as being the choice and good pleasure of thy wisdom.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

In this verse our Saviour opens his commission, and declares, 1. His authority; that all power is committed to him, as a Mediator from God the Father. 2. His office; to reveal his Father's mind and will to a lost world. *No man knoweth the Father, but the Son*: that is, the essence and nature of the Father, the will and counsel of the

Father, only as the Son reveals them. Learn, That all our saving knowledge of God is in and through Jesus Christ: he, as the great Prophet of the church, reveals the mind and will of God unto us for our salvation: and no saving knowledge without him.

28 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Here we have a sweet invitation, backed with a gracious encouragement: Christ invites such as are weary of the burden of sin, of the slavery of satan, of the yoke of the ceremonial law, to come unto him for rest and ease; and as an encouragement assures them, that upon their coming to him they shall find rest. Learn, 1. That sin is the soul's laborious burden; *Come unto me, all ye that labor.* Laboring supposes a burden to be labored under; this burden is sin's guilt. 2. That such as come to Christ for rest must be laden sinners. 3. That laden sinners not only may, but ought to come to Christ for rest; they may come, because invited; they ought to come, because commanded. 4. That the laden sinner, upon his coming, shall find rest. *Come, &c.* Note here, That to come unto Christ in the phrase of the New Testament is to believe in him, and to become one of his disciples. John vi. 35. *He that cometh unto me shall not hunger: he that believeth on me shall not thirst.*

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Here note, That the phrase of *take the yoke* is judaical; the Jewish doctors spake frequently of the yoke of the law; the yoke of the commandments: and the ceremonies imposed upon the Jews are called a *yoke*, Acts xv. 10. Now as Moses had a yoke, so had Christ: and accordingly, observe, 1. Christ's disciples must wear Christ's yoke. This yoke is two-fold; a yoke of instruction; and a yoke of afflictions; Christ's law is a yoke of instruction; it instructs; it restrains our natural inclination, it curbs our sensual appetites; it is a yoke to corrupt nature: this yoke Christ calls *his yoke*, *Take my yoke upon you*: 1. Because he, as a Lord, lays it upon our necks. 2. Because he, as a servant bore it upon his own neck first, before he laid it upon ours. Observe, 2. That the way and manner how to bear Christ's yoke must be learnt of Christ himself. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me*; that is, learn of me, both what to bear and how to bear. Observe, 3. That Christ's humility and lowly mindedness, is great encouragement to christians to come unto him, and learn of him, both how to obey his commands, and how to suffer his will and pleasure. *Learn of me, for I am meek.*

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light

Observe here, 1. Christ's authority and greatness; he has power to impose a yoke, and inflict a burden. *My yoke; my burden.* 2. His clemency and goodness, in imposing an easy yoke, and a light burden. *My yoke is easy, my burden is light*: that is, my service is good and gainful, profitable and

useful; not only tolerable but delightful: and as is my yoke such is my burden; The burden of my precepts, the burden of my cross, both light, not absolutely, but comparatively; the weight of my cross is not comparable with the glory of my crown. Learn, That the service of Christ, though hard and intolerable to corrupt nature, yet is a most desirable and delightful service to grace or renewed nature; Christ's service is easy to a spiritual mind. 1. It is easy, as it is rational service; consonant to right reason, though contradictory to depraved nature. 2. Easy, as it is a spiritual service; delightful to a spiritual mind. 3. Easy, as it is an assisted service; considering that we work not in our strength, but in God's. 4. Easy, when once it is an accustomed service; though hard to beginners, it is easy to progressors; the further we walk, the sweeter is our way. 5. Easy as it is the most gainful service; having the assurance of an eternal weight of glory; as the reward of our obedience. Well therefore might our holy Lord say to his followers; *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

CHAPTER XII.

Our blessed Saviour in this chapter takes occasion to instruct his disciples in the doctrine of the sabbath: showing, that works of necessity and mercy may be performed upon that day, without any violation of the divine command.

AT that time Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

Observe here, The poor estate and low condition of Christ's own disciples in this world; they wanted bread, and are forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger. God sometimes suffers his dearest children in this world to fall into straits, and to taste of want, for the trial of their faith, and dependance upon his power and providence.

2 But when the pharisees saw it, they said unto him; Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath-day.

Observe here, 1. The persons finding fault with this action of the disciples the pharisees; many of whom accompanied our Saviour, not out of any good intentions, but only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with, every thing that either Christ or his disciples said or did. Observe, 2. The action which they found fault with; *The disciples plucking off the ears of corn on the sabbath-day.* Where note, It is not theft which the disciples are accused of by the pharisees! for to take, in our necessity, so much of our neighbour's goods, as we may reasonably suppose that if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft: but it was a servile labor on the sabbath, in gathering the corn, that the pharisees scrupled: plucking the ears was looked upon as a sort of reaping. Learn thence, How zealous hypocrites are

for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the weightier; and how superstitiously addicted to the outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungry, and they that were with him:

4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the show-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath-day the priests in the temple profane *the* sabbath, and are blameless?

6 But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

In these words our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in plucking the ears of corn in their necessity, by a double argument: 1. From David's example; necessity freed him from fault in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat; for in cases of necessity, a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty: works of mercy and necessity, for preserving our lives, and the better fitting us for the sabbath services, are certainly lawful on the sabbath-day. 2. From the example of the priests in the temple, who upon the sabbath do break the outward rest of the day, by killing their sacrifices and many other acts of bodily labor, which would be accounted sabbath profanation, did not the service of the temple require and justify it. Now saith our Saviour, if the temple-service can justify labor on the sabbath, I am greater than the temple, and my authority and service can justify what my disciples have done. From the whole we learn, That acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done on the sabbath-day.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Learn hence, That the law of mercy is much more excellent than the law of ceremonies; and where both cannot be observed, the less must give place to the greater. God never intended that the ceremonies of his service in the first table, should hinder works of mercy prescribed in the second table. All God's commands are for man's good. Where both cannot be obeyed, he will have the moral duty performed, and the ceremonial service omitted. *He will have mercy and not sacrifice*; that is, he will have mercy rather than sacrifice, where both cannot be had.

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day.

As if Christ had said, "I, who am Lord of the sabbath, declare to you, that I have a power to dispense with the observation of it; and it is my will that the sabbath, which

was appointed for man, should yield to man's safety, and welfare." Christ the Son of man was really the Son of God; and as such, had power over the sabbath, to dispense with it, yea, to abrogate and change it at his pleasure.

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.

10 ¶ And behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered: and they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days? that they might accuse him.

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out?

12 How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days.

Here we have another dispute between our Saviour and the pharisees concerning the sabbath; whether it be a breach of that day, mercifully to heal a person having a withered hand? Christ confutes them from their own practice, telling the pharisees, that they themselves judged it lawful to help out a sheep, or an ox, if fallen into a pit on that day; how much more ought the life of a man to be preferred? Here we may remark, how inveterate a malice the pharisees had against our Saviour, when they could find no crime to charge him with, they blamed him for working a merciful and miraculous cure upon the sabbath-day. When envy and malice (which are evermore quick-sighted) can find no occasion of quarrel, they will invent one against the innocent.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand: and he stretched it forth; and *it* was restored whole, like as the other.

14 ¶ Then the pharisees went out, and held a counsel against him, how they might destroy him.

15 But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.

16 And he charged them, that they should not make him known.

Observe, 1. The merciful and miraculous cure wrought by our Saviour's power upon the impotent man; "He said unto him, Stretch out thine hand, and his hand was restored." Observe, 2. What a contrary effect this cure had upon the pharisees; instead of convincing them, they conspire against him. Christ's enemies; when arguments fail, fall to violence. Observe, 3. The prudent means which our Saviour uses for his own preservation, *He withdrew himself*. Christ's example teaches his ministers; their

duty to avoid the hands of persecutors, and prudently to preserve their lives, unless when sufferings are like to do more good than their lives. Observe, 4. The great humility of Christ in concealing his own praises; he had no ambition that the fame of his miracles should be spread abroad, for he sought not his own glory; neither would he by the noise of his miracles enrage the pharisees against him to take away his life; knowing that his time was not yet come, and he had much work to do before his death.

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying.

18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

That is, our blessed Saviour did those good acts before spoken of, that it might appear that he was the true Messiah prophesied of by Esaias the prophet, chap. xlii. 1, 2. Behold my servant whom I have set apart for accomplishing the work of salvation for a lost world; he, by the fulness of my Spirit, shall teach the nations the way of truth and righteousness; he shall not subdue men by force and violence, but, as the Prince of Peace, shall deal gently with the weak, and cherish the least measures of grace, and degrees of goodness. Observe here, 1. A description of Christ as Mediator: he is God the Father's *servant*, employed in the most noble service, namely, that of instructing and saving a lost world. Observe, 2. With what meekness and gentleness Christ sets up his spiritual kingdom in the world: he doth not with noise and clamor, with force and violence, subdue and conquer, but with meekness and gentleness, gains persons' consent to his government and authority. Observe, 3. The gentle carriage of Christ in treating those of infirmer grace: he doth and will graciously preserve, and tenderly cherish the smallest beginnings, the weakest measures and the lowest degrees, of sincere grace, which he observes in any of his children and people. By the bruised reed and smoking flax, understand, such as are broken with a sense of sin, such as are weak in faith, such as are so much overpowered by corruption, that they do rather smoke than burn or shine; such as are thus low and mean in spirituals, Christ will not break with his power, nor quench with his rebukes, till he has perfected their conversion, and their weak grace is become victorious.

22 ¶ Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb:

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and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?

24 But when the pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

As a farther instance of Christ's miraculous power, he healeth one whom the devil hath cast into a disease which deprived him both of speech and sight: at this miracle the multitude wondered, saying, *Is not this the Son of David?* that is, the promised Messiah. The pharisees hearing this, with great bitterness and contempt said, "This fellow casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils." Observe from hence, how obstinacy and malice will make men misconstrue the actions of the most holy and innocent; Christ *casteth out devils*, say the pharisees, *by the help of the devil*. There never was any person so good, nor any action so gracious, but they have been subject both to censure and misconstruction. The best way is to square our actions by the right rule of justice and charity, and then let the world pass their censures at their pleasure. When the holy and innocent Jesus was thus assaulted, what wonder is it if we his sinful servants be branded on all sides by reviling tongues? Why should we expect better treatment than the Son of God?

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city and house divided against itself shall not stand.

26 And if satan cast out satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

29 Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Our blessed Saviour, to clear his innocence, and to convince the pharisees of the unreasonableness of this their calumny and false accusations, offers several arguments to their consideration. 1. That it was very unlikely that

satan should lend his power to use it against himself. As satan has a kingdom, so he has wit enough to preserve his kingdom, and will do nothing to weaken his own interest. Now if I have received my power from satan for destroying him and his kingdom, then is satan divided against himself. 2. Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reason attribute all miracles to the devil, as those that were wrought by him. There were certain Jews among themselves, who cast out devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Christ asks the pharisees, by what power these their children cast them out? They acknowledged that those did it by the power of God, and there was no cause, but their malice, why they should not acknowledge that what he did was by the same power. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you;" that is, the Messias is come: because he wrought the miracles to prove that he was the Messias. 3. Another argument to prove that the miracles which Christ wrought were by the power of God, and not by the help of satan, is this; the devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power but God's only that is stronger than his: now, says Christ, if I were not assisted by a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man, who reigns in the world as in his house: it must be stronger than the strong man that shall bind satan; and who is he but the God of Strength?

31 ¶ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost* shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

Observe, 1. How our Saviour makes a difference betwixt speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost. *By speaking against the Son of man*, are meant all those reproaches which were cast upon our Saviour's person as man, without reflecting upon his divine power as God, which he testified by his miracles. Such were, their reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, their censuring him for a wine-bibber and a glutton, and the like. But, *By speaking against the Holy Ghost*, is meant, their blaspheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his miracles; which was an immediate reflection upon the Holy Spirit, and a blaspheming of him. Observe, 2. The nature of this sin of speaking against the Holy Ghost: it consisteth in this, that the pharisees seeing our Saviour work miracles, and cast out devils by the Spirit of God contrary to the conviction of their own minds, they maliciously ascribed his miracles to the power of the devil, charging him to be a sorcerer and a magician, and to have a familiar spirit by whose help he did those mighty works; when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God. Observe, 3. That this sin above all others is called unpardonable, and upon what account it is so. The case of such blasphemers of the Holy Spirit,

is not only dangerous but desperate; because they resist their last remedy, and oppose the best means for their conviction. What can God do more to convince a man that Jesus Christ is the true Messias, than to work miracles for that purpose? Now if when men see plain miracles wrought, they will say it is not God that works them, but the devil; as if satan would conspire against himself, and seek the ruin of his own kingdom; there is no way left to convince such persons, but they must and will continue in their opposition to truth to their inevitable condemnation.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

These words may either refer to the pharisees, or to Christ himself. If to the pharisees, the sense is, you hypocritical pharisees show yourselves what you are by your words and actions, even as the fruit sheweth what the tree is. If they refer to Christ, then they are an appeal to the pharisees themselves, to judge of our Saviour and his doctrine by the miracles which he wrought. If he wrought by the devil, his works would be as bad as the devil's; but if his works were good, they must own them to be wrought by the power of God. The expression implies, that a man may be known by his actions, as a tree may be known by his fruit; yet not by a single action, but by a series of actions; not by a particular act, but by our general course.

34 O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Note here, 1. The fervency and zeal of our Saviour's Spirit, in the compellation given to the pharisees, he calls them a *generation of vipers*: intimating, that they were a venomous and dangerous sort of men. Learn hence, That it is not always railing and indiscreet zeal to call wicked men by such names as their sin deserves. Observe farther, From our Saviour's saying, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" that the heart is the fountain both of words and actions: according as the heart is, so is the current of men's words and actions; either good or evil.

35 A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

Observe here, a double treasure discovered in the heart of man. 1. An evil treasure of sin and corruption, both natural and acquired, from whence proceed evil things. Now this is called a *treasure*, not for the preciousness of it, but for the abundance of it; a little doth not make a treasure; and also for the continuance of it: though it be perpetually overflowing in the life, yet doth the heart continue full: this treasure of original corruption in man's nature may be drawn low in this life, by sanctifying grace, but it can never be drawn dry. 3. Here is a good treasure of grace discovered in a sanctified and renewed man: which is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow. For as

the heart of man by nature is the fountain from whence all sin springs, so the heart renewed by grace is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

I say unto you: I, that have always been in my Father's bosom, and fully know his mind: I, that am constituted Judge of quick and dead, and understand the rule of judgment; I, even, I, do assure you, that every word that has no tendency to promote the glory of God, or some way the good of others, will fall under censure at the great day, without an intervening repentance. Note here, That there are two sorts of words for which we must be judged; sinful words, and idle words. Sinful words are blasphemous words, censorious words, lying and slandering words. Idle words are such as savor nothing of wisdom and piety; that have no tendency to make men either wiser or better; how light soever men make of their words now, yet in God's balance another day they will be found to weigh very heavy. What a bridle should this text be to extravagant tongues? see Col. iv. 6. *Let your speech be always seasoned with salt: that is, with wisdom &c for our words may mischief others a long time after they are spoken; how many years may a frothy or filthy word, a profane scoff, an atheistical jest, stick in the minds of them that hear it, after the tongue that spake it is dead! A word spoken is physically transient, but morally permanent.*

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Observe here, The argument which our Saviour uses to move us to watchfulness over our words; *By our words we shall be justified: not meritoriously but declaratively: good words declare goodness in ourselves, and we shall be declared good to others by our words, if our words and actions do correspond and agree with one another. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; that is, according to the right and wrong using of the tongue, we may judge and gather whether men are dead or alive as to God, and bound for heaven or hell. Doubtless justification or condemnation will pass on men at the day of judgment, according to the state of the person, and frame of the heart; now our words will justify or condemn us in that day, as evidences of the state and frame of the soul. We used to say, such witnesses hanged a man, that is, the evidence they gave cast and condemned him. O think of this seriously; if words evidence the state of thy soul, what an hellish state must thy soul be in, who hast injured thyself to the language of hell, to oaths and curses; sins whereby the devil cheats men more than by any sins whatsoever! They are damned for them, yet get nothing by them, neither profit nor pleasure.*

38 ¶ Then certain of the scribes and of the pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh

after a sign; and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear of the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Observe here, 1. The request which the pharisees make to Christ; *Master, we would see a sign from you*. But had not Christ showed them signs enough already? What were all the miracles wrought in their sight, but convincing signs that he was the true Messiah? But infidelity mixed with obstinacy is never satisfied. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's answer to the pharisees' request: he tells them that they should have one sign more, to wit, that of his resurrection from the dead: "for as Jonas lay buried three days in the whale's belly," and was then wonderfully restored, so should (and did) our Saviour continue in the grave part of three natural days, and then rise again. Observe, 3. How Christ declares the inexcusableness of their state, who would not be convinced by the former miracles he had wrought that he was the true Messiah; nor yet he brought to believe in him by this last sign or miracle of his resurrection. The Ninevites shall condemn the pharisees; *They repent at the preaching of Jonas: but these would not be convinced by the preaching and miracles of Jesus. The queen of Sheba who also came from the south to hear and admire the wisdom of Solomon, shall rise up in judgment against those that reject Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father; and the doctrine delivered by him, which was the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Learn, That the sins of infidelity and impenitency are exceedingly heightened, and their guilt aggravated, from the means afforded by God to bring a people to faith and obedience. The sin of the pharisees in rejecting Christ's miracles and mercy, was by far greater than that of the Ninevites, had they rejected Jonas, his message and ministry sent by God amongst them.*

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when

he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

The design and scope of this parable, is to show that the pharisees, by rejecting the gospel, and refusing to believe in Christ, were in a seven-fold worse condition than if the gospel had never been preached to them, and a Saviour had never come among them; because by our Saviour's ministry satan was in some sort cast out; but for rejecting Christ and his grace, satan had got a seven-fold stronger possession of them now than before. From this parable, learn, 1. That satan is an unclean spirit: he has lost his original purity, his holy nature in which he was created, and is become universally filthy in himself, no means being allowed him by God for purging off his filthy and unclean nature. Nay, he is a perfect enemy to purity and holiness, maligning all that love it, and would promote it. 2. That satan is a restless and unquiet spirit; being cast out of heaven, he can rest no where; when he is either gone out of man through policy, or cast out of a man by power, he has no content or satisfaction, till he returns into a filthy heart, where he delights to be as the swine in miry places. 3. That wicked and profane sinners have this unclean spirit dwelling in them; their hearts are satan's house and habitation; and the lusts of pride and unbelief, malice and revenge, envy and hypocrisy, these are the garnishing of satan's house. Man's heart was God's house by creation, it is now satan's by usurpation and judiciary tradition. 4. That satan, by the preaching of the gospel, may seem to go out of persons, and they become sober and civilized: yet may he return to his old habitation, "and the last end of that man may be worse than the beginning."

46 ¶ While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered, and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

49 And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren.

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Observe here, 1. The verity of Christ's human nature; he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him called his brethren, that is, his cousin-germans. 2. That the holy virgin herself was not wholly free from failings and infirmities: for here she does untimely and unseasonably interrupt our Saviour when preaching to the people, and employed about his Father's business. 3. That Christ did not neglect his holy mother, nor disregard his near relations: only showed, that he preferred his Father's service before them. Learn. 4. How dear believers are to Jesus Christ: he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural. Alliance in faith, and spiritual relation to Christ, is much nearer and dearer than alliance by blood: to bear Christ in the heart is much better than to bear him in the womb. Blessed be God, this greatest privilege is not denied to us even now; though see Christ we cannot, yet love him we may; his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied us. Though Christ be not ours, in house, in arms, in affinity, in consanguinity; yet in heart, in faith, in love, in service, he is, or may be ours. Verily, spiritual regeneration brings men into a more honorable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother, sister, and mother."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying,—

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of an awakening sermon preached to the pharisees. In this chapter we are acquainted with the continuance of his preaching to the multitude: where three things are observable. 1. Our Lord's assiduity and unwearied diligence in preaching the gospel; for this sermon was made the same day with that in the former chapter, ver. 1. "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side." A good pattern for the preachers of the gospel to follow. How ashamed may we be to preach once a week, when our Lord preached twice a day! Observe, 2. The place our Saviour preached in, a ship; not that he declined the temple or the synagogue, when he had the opportunity; but in the want of them, Christ thought a house, a mountain, a ship, no unmeet place to preach in. It is not the place that sanctifies the ordinance, but the ordinance that sanctifies the place. Observe, 3. The manner of our Lord's preaching; it was by parables and similitudes; which was an ancient way of instruction amongst the Jews; and a very convincing way, at once working upon men's minds, memories, and affections: making the mind attentive, the memory retentive, and the auditors inquisitive after the interpretation of the parable. Some are of opinion that our Saviour's parables

were suited to his hearers' employments; some of whom being husbandmen, he resembles his doctrine to seed sown in the field: for he speaks:

—Behold a sower went forth to sow.

4 And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth.

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them.

8 But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold,

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The scope of this parable is to show, that there are four several sorts of hearers of the word, and but one sort only that hear to a saving advantage: also to show us the cause of the different success of the word preached. Here observe, 1. The sowers, Christ and his apostles, he the prime and principal sower, they the secondary and subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own field, his ministers sow his field; he sows his own seed, they sow his seed. Woe unto us, if we sow our own seed and not Christ's. Observe, 2. The seed sown, the word of God. Fabulous legends, and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, these are not seed but chaff; or their own seed, not Christ's. Our Lord's field must be sown with his own seed, not with mixed grain. Learn, 1. That the word of God preached is like seed sown in the furrows of the field. As seed has a fructifying virtue in it, by which it increases and brings forth more of its own kind; so has the word of God a quickening power, to regenerate and make alive dead souls. Learn, 2. That the seed of the word, where it is most plentifully sown, is not alike fruitful. As seed doth not thrive in all grounds alike, so neither doth the word fructify alike in the hearts of men. There is a difference both from the nature of the soil, and from the influence of the Spirit. Learn, 3. That the cause of the word's unfruitfulness is very different, and not the same in all: in some it is the policy of satan, that bird of prey, which follows God's plough, and steals away his precious seed. In others, it is a hard heart of unbelief; in others, the cares of the world, like thorns choke the word, overgrow the good seed, draw away the moisture of the earth, and the heart of the soil, and hinder the influences of the sun. The far greater part of hearers are fruitless and unprofitable hearers. Learn, 4. That the best ground doth not bring forth fruit alike; some good ground brings forth more, and some less; some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold. In like manner a person may be a profitable hearer of the

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word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion of fruit as others, provided he brings forth as much as he can.

10 And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's answer. Their question is, *Why speakest thou to the people in parables* which they do not understand? They cannot see the soul of thy meaning, through the body of thy parables. Christ answers, "*To you, my disciples, and such as you are, who love the truth, and desire to obey it, the Spirit gives you an affective, operative, and experimental knowledge, not barely to know these things, but to believe them, and feel the power of them in and upon your own hearts; but the generality of hearers do satisfy and content themselves with a bare and notional knowledge of what they hear; a parable therefore is well enough for them.*" Learn, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are mysterious. 2. That it is a matchless and invaluable privilege, practically and savingly to understand and know gospel-mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in or partakers of, but only those to whom it is given; "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it is not given."

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

That is, whosoever improves the measures of grace received, shall obtain farther measures and degrees of it: *But from him that doth not improve what he has already received, shall be taken away that which to himself or others he seemed to have, his common gifts and moral endowments.* Learn, That where there are beginnings of true grace, and a right and wise improvement of it, God will make rich additions of more grace to the present stock which we have received.

13 Therefore speak I unto them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive.

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time

they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

These words of our blessed Saviour, as I conceive, have a peculiar reference and relation to the pharisees, who attended upon Christ's ministry, not with an honest simplicity of mind, to be instructed by it, but to carp and cavil at it. Our Saviour tells them, he had formerly spoken things very plainly and clearly to them, and also wrought miracles before them, to convince them of the divinity of his person, and of the verity of his doctrine: but they would not believe either his person or his doctrine to be from God; and therefore he would now speak to them in dark parables, that they may be judicially blinded; they sinfully shut their eyes against the clearest light, and said they would not see; and now Christ closes their eyes judicially, and says they shall not see. Learn hence, To acknowledge the divine justice, which speaks darkly to them that despise the light: such who see and yet see not, they shall see the shell but not the kernel; they shall hear the parable, but not understand the spiritual sense and meaning of it. When wilful blindness of mind is added to natural blindness, it is a just and righteous thing with God to superadd judicial blindness, and give them obstinacy of heart, his curse unto them.

16 But blessed are your eyes; for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Here our Saviour pronounces such of his disciples and followers blessed, who received the truths of the gospel so far as they were already taught them: he assures them that they shall receive farther light and fuller measures of spiritual illumination: *Blessed are your eyes, for they see.* Learn, That such as have received the least measures of spiritual knowledge and saving illumination, and do improve it, are in a happy and blessed condition; for as they are capable of farther measures of divine knowledge, so shall they be partakers of them.

18 ¶ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*: which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

As if our Lord had said, "You, my disciples, who are not satisfied with a sound of words, I will explain to you the sense and signification of this parable: the scope of which is to show the different effects which the word of God has upon men's hearts, and the reason of that difference. The seed is the word, the sower is the preacher, the soil is the heart and soul of man." Now our Saviour assures us, that the hearts of some hearers are like *highway ground*, in which the seed is not covered with the harrow of meditation; others are like *stony ground*, in which the word has no root; no root in their understandings, memories, conscience, will, or affections: but *they are offended*, either at the depth and profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity and strictness of it, or at the plainness and simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to *thorny ground*. Thorns are covetous desires, which choke the good seed, shadow the blade when sprung up, keep off the influences of the sun, and draw away the fatness of the soil from the seed. All these effects have thorns in and among the seed; and the like effects have worldly affections and covetous desires in the heart of man rendering the word unfruitful and unprofitable. But the good christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it steadfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit with patience and perseverance; fruit that will redound to his account, in the great day of account. Learn, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good hearers of the word, but such as bring forth the fruits of a holy, humble, and peaceable conversation. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word, if he brings forth the best fruit he can, though it be not in so great a proportion as others do: as some ground brings forth thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold: in like manner do all the sincere hearers of the word, they all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity and reality, though not all to the same degree, and none to perfection. Observe lastly, Satan is here compared to the fowls of the air, which pick up the seed before it takes any root in the earth. The devil is very jealous of the success of the word, and therefore labors all he can to destroy the word before it comes to operate upon the heart; which he doth sometimes by the cares of the world, sometimes by vain companions, who prove mere quench-coals

unto earthly convictions; if he can steal away the word, or choke it, he has his desire and design.

24 ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

25 But while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence, then, hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay: lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.

The design and scope of this parable is, to show that there is no expectation of universal purity in the church of God in this life; but as the tares and the wheat grow together in the same field, so hypocrites and sincere christians are and will be intermixed in the same church, and can hardly be discerned one from the other. St. Jerome observes, That in the eastern countries, the tares and the wheat were so like one another, whilst they were in the blade, that there was no knowing them asunder. Learn, 1. That in the outward and visible church there ever has been and will be a mixture of good and bad, of saints and sinners, of hypocrites and sincere christians, *until the day of judgment*. 2. That in that day Christ will make a thorough and perfect separation, and divide the tares from the wheat; that is, the righteous from the wicked. 3. That in the mean time none ought to be so offended at this mixture in the church, as to separate from the church communion on that account: until the harvest, it is not to be expected that the tares and the wheat should be perfectly separated. Yet observe, 4. That though the tares are forbidden to be plucked up when sown, yet it is the church's duty, all she can, to hinder their sowing. Though we must not root the wicked up, yet we must prevent the rooting of wickedness all we can. Our Saviour, that forbade to pluck up the tares, did not forbid to hinder their sowing. Note here, How vain is

the collection of the *Erastians* from hence, that the wicked are not to be cut off by excommunication from the communion of the church; nor doth this text prove that the magistrates may not cut off evil doers; seeing this was not spoken to them, but to the ministers of the church.

31 ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree: that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

33 ¶ Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables: and without a parable spake he not unto them;

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Our Saviour's design in this parable, is to show how the gospel, from small and little, from unlikely and contemptible beginnings, shall spread and increase, fructify and grow up; like as mustard-seed, one of the smallest grains, grows up to a considerable tallness: and as a little leaven turns a great heap of meal into its own nature; so the gospel shall spread and increase, nations and countries becoming christians. Learn, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God, it has had, and shall have, a wonderful increase.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house; and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed, is the Son of man.

38 The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered

and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.

42 And he shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The parable of the tares of the field, Christ is pleased to explain to his disciples after this manner. The person sowing good seed was himself, *The Son of man*, who first planted the gospel; the field in the which the seed was sown was the world; that is, the church in the world: the *good seed*, called *The children of the kingdom*, are sincere christians: the *tares*, called *The children of the wicked one*, are profane sinners, and unsound hypocrites: the *enemy* is the devil, the *harvest* is the end of the world, and the *angels* are the reapers. Learn, 1. That the mixture of the tares and the wheat, of the righteous and the wicked, must and shall remain in the church unto the end of the world. 2. That in the end of the world the angels shall perform the works of separation, gathering the righteous from among the wicked; when every one's harvest shall be according to his fruit; "The righteous shining in the kingdom of our Father, the wicked cast into a furnace of fire."

44 ¶ Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field.

45 ¶ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls:

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

By the treasures hid in the field, and the pearl of great price, are understood, Christ, the grace of the gospel, and the way to life and salvation therein discovered; he that is thoroughly convinced of the worth and excellency of Christ's grace, will part with all that he has to purchase and obtain it. Learn, That the sinner who will have interest in Christ, and a part in the gospel grace, must part with all that he has to purchase and to obtain them, even with his goods and lands, with his wife and children; for Christ and his grace are a real good, a substantial good, a durable good; he outbids all the offers the world can make, and therefore it is our wisdom to part with all for him, and especially our sins, dearer to us than all the rest.

47 ¶ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea; and gathered of every kind;

48 Which when it was full they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The design and scope of this parable also is to set forth the state of the gospel church, which is like a floor, where chaff is mixed with wheat; a field, where tares are mixed with good corn; a net where bad fishes are involved with the good. As the wheat must not be removed out of the floor before the time of winnowing; nor the tares gathered out of the field before the time of reaping; nor the good fishes break through the net to get from the bad before the time of separation; so must not christians forsake a church's communion, because of the present mixture of good and bad in the church. For a mixed communion, in the church, and the good christians communicating with bad, do neither defile the ordinances of Christ, nor pollute those that sincerely join in them.

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them. Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Observe here, 1. The title which our Saviour puts upon gospel ministers; they are household-stewards. 2. He points out the office of those stewards; and that is, to provide for the household both with plenty and variety, *He must bring forth out of his treasure in plenty; and things new and old* for their variety. There are two essential qualifications in a steward, faithfulness and prudence: he must be honest and faithful, in bringing out of his own treasure, not another's; and he must be prudent, in bringing things new as well as old; not new truths, but old truths in a new dress; lest the household, by always feeding upon the same dish, do nauseate it, instead of being nourished by it.

53 ¶ And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were all astonished, and

said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?

55 Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all these things?

57 And they were offended in him —

Observe here, 1. Christ's tender and compassionate regard to his own countrymen, the people of Galilee and Nazareth: he preached to them in their synagogue. 2. The effect which his doctrine had upon them. *They were astonished at it*, but not converted by it: they admired, but did not believe. 3. The cause of their rejecting Christ's ministry was the meanness of his person, the contemptibleness of his outward condition, the poverty of his relations: *Is not this the carpenter's son?* Mark vii. 3, he is called the carpenter; whence the fathers concluded, that our Saviour, during the time of his obscure privacy wrought at the trade of Joseph his reputed father; and Justin Martyr says, he made ploughs and yokes. Sure we are our Lord spent no time in idleness, though we are not certain how he employed his time before he entered upon his public ministry. Note, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition was that which multitudes stumbled at; and which kept many, yea most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in an humble Saviour: *Is not this the son of the carpenter?* 2. That it is no impediment to, or hindrance of, our faith, that we never saw Christ's person in the flesh, nor knew his parentage and education; for here are his own countrymen, who daily saw his person, heard his doctrine, and were witness of his holy conversation, yet instead of believing in him they were offended at him.

—But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Our Saviour tells them, he doth not wonder that so many of his own countrymen, to whom he had been so familiarly known, did despise his person and reject his doctrine; a prophet generally has least esteem where he has been brought up; because, perhaps the follies of his childhood, and indecencies of his youth, are remembered and reported to his disparagement. Learn, 1. That there is a real tribute of honor due and payable to every prophet, or faithful minister of Jesus Christ. 2. That the ministers of Christ, for the most part, have least honor from their own countrymen, to whom they are best known. 3. That although it be so, yet this may not be through their own fault, for Christ was so amongst his.

58 And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

This sin not only locks up the heart of a sinner, but also binds up the hands of a Saviour. Unbelief obstructed Christ's miraculous works when on earth, and it obstructs his gracious works now in heaven. Ah! cursed unbelief!

(No. 4)

which shuts up, O sinner, thy heart, and shuts out thy Saviour, and will effectually shut thee out of heaven, and not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it! Mark xiv. 16. Christ was unable, because they were unwilling; his impotency was occasioned by their infidelity; he did not, because he would not; and that he would not, proceeded from a defect in their faith, not from any deficiency in Christ's power; their unbelief bound his hands, and hindered the execution of his power.

CHAPTER XIV.

The former part of this chapter gives an account of the death of John the Baptist, together with the occasion of it, which was his plain and faithful reproving of Herod for the uncleanness he lived in.

AT that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.

2 And said unto his servants. This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

Observe here, 1. How strange it was that Herod should not hear of the fame of Jesus till now; all the country and adjoining regions had rung of his fame, only Herod's court hears nothing. Miserable is that greatness which keeps princes from the knowledge of Jesus Christ. How plain is it from hence that our Saviour came not to court: he once sent indeed a message to that fox (Herod) whose den he would not approach; teaching us by his example, not to affect, but to avoid outward pomp and glory. The courts of princes are too often a very bad air for piety and religion to thrive in. Observe, 2. The misconstruction of Herod, when he heard of our Saviour's fame: this, says he, is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded. His conscience told him he had offered an unjust violence to an innocent man; and now he is afraid that he is come again to be revenged on him for his head. A wicked man needs no worse tormentor than his own mind. O the terrors and tortures of a guilty conscience! How great are the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine displeasure, than which nothing is more stinging and perpetually tormenting.

3 ¶ For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have him put to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him a prophet.

Observe here, 1. The person that put the holy Baptist to death: it was Herod, it was Herod the king, it was Herod that invited John to preach at court, and heard him gladly. 1. It was Herod Antipas, son to that Herod, who sought Christ's life, chap. ii. cruelty runs in the blood. Herod the murderer of John, who was the forerunner of Christ, de-

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scended from that Herod who would have murdered Christ himself. 2. It was Herod the king. Sad! that princes, who should always be nursing-fathers to, should at any time be the bloody butchers of, the prophets of God. 3. It was Herod that heard John gladly; John took the ear and the heart of Herod, and Herod binds the hands and feet of John. O how inconstant is a carnal heart to good resolutions; the word has oft-times an awakening influence, where it does not leave an abiding impression upon the minds of men. Observe, 2. The cause of the Baptist's death; it was for telling a king of his crime. Herod cut off that head whose tongue was so bold as to tell him of his faults. The persecutions which the prophets of God fall under, is usually for telling great men of their sins: men in power are impatient of reproof, and imagine their authority gives them a licence to transgress. Observe, 3. The plain dealing of the Baptist, in reproving Herod for his crime, which, in one act was adultery, incest, and violence. Adultery, that he took another's wife; incest, that he took his brother's wife; violence, that he took her in spite of her husband. Therefore John does not mince the matter, and say, it is not convenient; but, *It is not lawful for thee to have her*; it is not the crown and sceptre of Herod that could daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in God's ministers, both courage and impartiality. Courage, in fearing no faces; impartiality, in sparing no sins. For none are so great, but they are under the authority and command of the law of God.

6 But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask.

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them that sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

10 And he sent and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

Severable observables are here to be taken notice of. 1. The time of this execrable murder: it was upon Herod's birth-day. It was an ancient custom among the eastern kings to celebrate their birth-days: Pharaoh's birth-day was kept Gen. xl. Herod's here; both with blood; yet these personal stains do not make the practice unlawful. When we solemnize our birth-day with thankfulness to our Creator and Preserver, for life and being, for protection and preservation to that moment, and commend ourselves to the care of his good providence for the

remainder of our days, this is an act of piety and religion. But Herod's birth-day was kept with revelling and feasting, with music and dancing: not that dancing which in itself, is a set, regular, harmonious motion of the body, can be unlawful; any more than walking or running: circumstances may make it sinful. But from this, although disorderly banquet on Herod's birth day, we learn that great men's feasts and frolics are too often, a season of much sin. Observe, 2. The instigator and promoter of the Holy Baptist's death, *Herodias and her daughter*; that good man falls a sacrifice to the fury and malice, to the pride and scorn, of a lustful woman, for being a rub in the way of her licentious adultery. Resolute sinners, who are mad upon their lusts, run furiously upon their gainsayers, though they be the prophets of God themselves, and resolve to bear down all opposition they meet with in the gratification of their unlawful desires. Observe, 3. With what reluctance Herod consented to this villainy; *The king was sorry*: wicked men oft-times sin with a troubled and disturbed conscience; they have a mighty struggle with themselves before they commit their sins: but at last their lusts get the mastery over their consciences. So did Herod's here; for, 4. Notwithstanding his sorrow, he commands the fact: *He sent and beheaded John in the prison*. And a threefold cord tied him to this performance. 1. The conscience of his oath. See his hypocrisy: he made conscience of a rash oath, who made no scruple of real murder. 2. Respect to his reputation, *Them that sat with him* heard his promise, and will be witness of his levity, if he do not perform. Insisting upon punctilios of honor has hazarded the loss of millions of souls. A loathsomeness to discontent Herodias and her daughter. O vain and foolish hypocrite, who dreaded the displeasure of a wanton mistress, before the offending of God and conscience! Observe, 5. These wicked women not only require the Baptist to be beheaded, but that his head be brought in a charger to them. What a dish is here to be served up at a prince's table on his birth-day! A dead man's head swimming in blood! How prodigiously insatiable is cruelty and revenge! Herodias did not think herself safe till John was dead; she could not think him dead till his head was off; she could not believe his head was off till she had it in her hand. Revenge never thinks it has made sure enough. O how cruel is a wicked heart, that could take pleasure in a spectacle of so much horror! How was that holy head tossed by impure and filthy hands! That true and faithful tongue, those impure eyes, those mortified cheeks are now insultingly handled by an incestuous harlot, and made a scorn to the drunken eyes of Herod's guests. From the whole learn, 1. That neither the holiest of prophets, nor the best of men, are more secure from violence, than from natural death. He that was sanctified in the womb, conceived and born with so much miracle, lived with so much reverence and observation, is now at midnight obscurely murdered in a close prison. Learn, 2. That it is as true a martyrdom to suffer for duty, as for faith: he dies as truly a martyr that dies for doing his duty, as he that dies for professing the faith, and bearing witness to the truth.

12 And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

13 ¶ When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship, into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

The disciples of John hearing that their holy master was thus basely and barbarously murdered, took up his dead body and buried it. Whence we learn, That the faithful servants of God are not ashamed of the suffering of the saints, but will testify their respect unto them both living and dead. Observe farther, our blessed Saviour, upon the notice of John's death, flies unto the desert for the preservation of his own life. Jesus knew that his hour was not yet come, and therefore he keeps out of Herod's way. It is no cowardice to fly from persecutors, when Christ our captain both practises it himself, and directs us to it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, flee, &c.*

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Observe here, With what condolency and tender sympathy the compassionate Jesus exercised acts of mercy and compassion towards the miserable and distressed. *He was moved with compassion*; that is, touched with an inward sense and feeling of their sorrow; *And he healed their sick*. Those that came to Christ for healing, found three advantages of cure, above the power and performance of any earthly physician: to wit, certainty, bounty, and ease. Certainty, in that all comers were infallibly cured: bounty, in that they were freely cured without charge; and ease, in that they were cured without pain.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past: send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Note here, 1. The disciples' pity towards the multitude that had been long attending upon Christ's ministry in the desert: they presuming the people hungry, having fasted all the day, requested our Saviour to dismiss them, that they may procure some bodily refreshment. Learn hence, That it well becomes the ministers of Christ to respect the bodily necessities, as well as to regard the spiritual wants of their people. As the bodily father must take care of the soul of his child, so must the spiritual Father have respect to the bodily necessities of his children. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make on behalf of the multitude, *Send them away, that they may buy victuals*. Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith. A strong charity in that they desire the people's relief: but a weak faith, in that they suppose that they could not be otherwise relieved, but by sending them away to buy victuals; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could as easily feed them miraculously, if he pleased: all things being equally easy to omnipotency.

16 But Jesus said unto them, they need not depart: give ye them to eat.

Ob-serve here, 1. Our Saviour's strange answer to the disciples' motion: *They need not depart*, says Christ. *Need not!* Why? the people must either feed or famish. Victuals they must have, and this being a desert place, there was none to be had. Surely then there was need enough, But, 2. Christ's command was more strange than his assertion: *Give ye them to eat*. Alas, poor disciples! they had nothing for themselves to eat, how then should they give the multitude to eat! When Christ requires of us what of ourselves we are unable to perform, it is to show us our impotency and weakness, and to provoke us to look to him that worketh all our works in us, and for us.

17 And they said unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes.

Note here, What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth has for his household and family; five loaves, and those barley; two fishes, and they small: teaching us, That these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered. Our belly must not be our master, much less our God. We read but twice that Christ made any entertainments, and both times his guests were fed with loaves and fishes, plain fare and homely diet. The end of food is to sustain nature, we stifle it with gluttonous variety: meat was ordained for the belly, the belly for the body, the body for the soul, and the soul for God. Observe farther, As the quality of the victuals was plain and coarse, so the quantity of it was small and little: *Five loaves and two fishes*. Well might the disciples say, *What are these among so many?* The eye of sense and reason sees an impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce.

18 He said, bring them hither to me.

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Observe, 1. How the master of the feast marshals his guests, he commands them *all to sit down*: none of them reply, "Sit down, but to what? Here are the mouths, but where is the meat? We can soon be set, but whence shall we be served?" Nothing of this; but they obey and expect. O how easy is it to trust to God, and rely upon Providence, when there is corn in the barn, and bread in the cupboard! But when our stores are all empty, and nothing before us, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, is a true and noble act of faith. Observe, 2. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour. "He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples and they to the multitude." 1. He *blessed*. Teaching us by his example, in all our wants to look up to heaven for a supply, to wait upon God for his blessing, and not to sit

down to our food as a beast to his forage. 2 He brake the loaves. He could have multiplied them whole, why would he rather do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us, that we are to expect his blessing in the distribution, rather than in the reservation of what he gives us. Scattering is the way to increasing: not grain hoarded up in the granary, but scattered in the furrows of the field, yields increase. Liberality is the way to riches, and penuriousness the road to poverty. 3. Christ gave the bread thus broken to his disciples that they might distribute it to the multitude. But why did not our Lord distribute it with his own hand, but by the hands of his disciples? Doubtless to win respect to his disciples from the people. The same course doth our Lord take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the world by his immediate hand, chooses rather by the hands of his ministers to divide the bread of life to all hearers.

20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

They did all eat, not a crumb or bit but to satiety and fulness! *They did eat and were filled*, yet twelve baskets remained; more was left than was at first set on. So many bellies, and yet so many baskets filled. The miracle was doubled by an act of boundless omnipotency. It is hard to say, which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. If we consider that they ate, we may justly wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they ate any thing. Observe farther, These fragments, though of barley bread and fish bones must not be lost; but by our Saviour's command, gathered up. The liberal housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orls. O how fearful then will the account of those be, who have large and plentiful estates to answer for as lost, being spent upon their lusts in riot and excess!

22 ¶ And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Jesus constrained them; that is, he commanded them to go away before him. No doubt but they were very loath to leave him, and to go without him; both out of the love which they bare to him and themselves. Such as have once tasted the sweetness of Christ, are hardly drawn away from him; however, as desirous as the disciples were to stay with Christ, yet at his word of command they depart from him. Where Christ has a will to command, his disciples and followers must have a will to obey.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone,

Observe here, 1. Christ dismisses the multitude, and then retires to pray; teaching us, by his example, when we have to do with God, to dismiss the multitude of our affairs and employments, of our cares and thoughts. O how unseemly it is to have our tongues talking to God, and our thoughts taken up with the world! Observe, 2. The place Christ retires to for prayer, a solitary mountain; not so much for his own need, for he could be alone, when he was in company, but to teach us, that when we address ourselves to God in duty, we are to take all the helps, furtherances and advantages we can, for the doing of it. When we converse with God in duty, O how good is it to get upon a mountain, to get our hearts above the world, above worldly employments and worldly cogitations! Observe, 3. The occasion of Christ's prayer: he had sent the disciples to sea, he foresaw the storm arising, and now he gets into a mountain to pray for them, that their faith might not fail them when their troubles were upon them. Learn hence, That it is the singular comfort of the church of God, that in all her difficulties and distresses Christ is interceding for her: when she is on the sea conflicting with the waves, Christ is upon the mountain praying for her preservation.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Note here, The great danger the disciples were in, and the great difficulties they had to encounter with; they were in the midst of the sea, they were tossed with the waves, the wind was contrary, and Christ was absent. The wisdom of God often suffers his church to be tossed upon the waves of affliction and persecution, but it shall be swallowed by them: often is the ark of the church upon the waters; seldom off them; but never drowned.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea.

Christ having seen the distress of his disciples on the shore, he hastens to them on the sea. It was not a stormy and tempestuous sea that could separate betwixt him and them; he that waded through a sea of blood, and through a sea of wrath, to save his people, will walk upon a sea of water to succour and relieve them. But observe, The time when Christ came to help them, not till the fourth watch, a little before the morning. They had been many hours upon the waters, conflicting with the waves, with their fears and dangers. God oftentimes lengthens out the troubles of his children before he delivers them; but when they are come to an extremity, that is the season of his succour. As God suffers his church to be brought into extremities before he helps her, so he will help her in extremity. "In the fourth watch Jesus came," &c.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear.

See how the disciples take their deliverer to be a destroyer: their fears were highest when their deliverer

and deliverance were nearest. God may be coming with salvation and deliverance for his church, when she for the present cannot discern him.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

Observe, When the disciples were in the saddest condition, how one word from Christ revives them: it is sufficient support in all our afflictions to hear Christ's voice speaking to us, and to enjoy his favorable presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I*; and then let evils do their worst; that one word, *It is I*, is enough to lay all storms, and to calm all tempests.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Observe here, 1. The mixture of Peter's faith and distrust; it was faith that said, *Master*; it was distrust that said, *If it be thou*: it was faith that said, *Bid me come to thee*: it was faith that enabled him to step down on the watery pavement: it was faith that said, *Lord, save me*: but it was distrust that made him sink. O the imperfect composition of faith and fear in the best of saints here on earth! Sincerity of grace is found with the saints here on earth; perfection of grace with the saints in heaven. Here the saints look forth, fair as the moon, which has some spots in her greatest beauties: hereafter they shall be clear as the sun, whose face is all bright and glorious. Observe, 2. That whilst Peter believes, the seas as firm as brass under him; when he begins to fear, then he begins to sink. Two hands upheld Peter; the hand of Christ's power, and the hand of his own faith. The hand of Christ's power laid hold on Peter, and the hand of Peter's faith laid hold on the power of Christ. If we let go our hold on Christ, we sink: if he lets go his hold on us, we drown. Now Peter answered his name Cephaz, and he sunk like a stone.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Observe here, 1. The mercy of Christ is no sooner sought, but found: "Immediately Jesus put forth his hand and caught him." O with what speed, and with what assurance,

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should we flee to that sovereign bounty, from whence never any sutor was sent away empty. Observe, 2. Though Christ gave Peter his hand, yet with this hand he gave him a check; "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Though Christ likes believing, yet he dislikes doubting. A person may be truly believing, who nevertheless is sometimes doubting, but his doubting eclipses the beauty of his believing.

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Observe, 1. Our Saviour's unwearied diligence in going about to do good: he no sooner landeth, but he goeth to Gennesaret, and healeth their sick. Observe, 2. The people's charity to their sick neighbours, in sending abroad to let all the country know that Christ the great physician was come amongst them. Observe, 3. Where lay the healing virtue: not in their finger, but in their faith: or rather in Christ whom their faith apprehended.

CHAPTER XV.

THEN came to Jesus, scribes and pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with a great contest between our Saviour and the pharisees, about their traditions and old customs, which they valued more than the commandments of God: they accused the disciples with eating bread with unwashed hands, which, though it were in itself but a decent custom, the pharisees made it a religious rite: for which reason our Saviour and his disciples would not observe it. Whence we learn, That what is in itself and may without offence be done as a civil custom, ought to be discountenanced and opposed when men require it of us as a religious act, or place religion in it. The pharisees placed so much religion in washing their hands before meat, that they looked upon it as highly criminal to neglect it as to lie with a whore. One of them being in prison, and not having water enough to drink and to wash his hands too, chose rather to die with thirst, than to transgress the tradition of the elders.

3 But he answered and said unto them,

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Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father, or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me,

6 And honor not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Observe here, 1. The heavy charge which our Saviour brings in against the pharisees; namely, for violating an express command of God, and preferring their own traditions before it: you make void the *commandments of God by your traditions*. Observe, 2. The command which our Saviour instances in, as violated by them; it is the fifth commandment, which requires children to relieve their parents in their necessity. Now though the pharisees did not deny this in plain terms, yet they made an exception from it, which if children had a mind, rendered it void and useless. For the pharisees taught, that in case any would give a gift to the temple, which gift they called *corban*, and of which they themselves had a great share; that then children were discharged from making further provision for their poor, or impotent parents; and might say unto them after this manner, "That which thou askest for thy supply, is given to God, and therefore I cannot relieve thee." So that covetous and graceless children looked upon it as the most frugal way, once for all to fine to the temple, rather than pay the constant rent of daily relief to their poor parents. Learn, That no duty, gift, or offering to God, is accepted, where the duty of charity is neglected. It is more acceptable to God to refresh the bowels of his saints, who are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, than to adorn material temples with gold and silver.

7 *Ye hypocrites!* well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Our Saviour reproves the hypocritical pharisees for these things: 1. That they preferred human traditions before the divine precepts. 2. That by their human traditions they made void the worship of God. It is God's undoubted prerogative to prescribe all the parts of his own worship; and whoever presumes to add thereunto, they worship him in

vain. Our Saviour farther shows, that all this proceeded from the insincerity of their hearts: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Whence learn, 1. That the removing of the heart far from God in worship, is a great sin, and an high degree of hypocrisy. 2. That whatever outward show or profession of religion men make, if their hearts be not right with God, and what they do proceeds not from an inward principle of love and obedience to God, they are under the reign and power of hypocrisy. "Ye hypocrites, in vain do ye worship me" Learn, 3. That we must not be forward, from Christ's example, to pronounce men hypocrites; because we have neither that authority nor knowledge of the heart which Christ had, to authorize us so to do. Christ here calls the pharisees hypocrites, 1. Because they placed holiness and religion in ceremonies of human invention. 2. Because being so superstitiously careful to avoid bodily pollution, they left their hearts within full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

10 ¶ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand:

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Our blessed Saviour leaving the pharisees with some dislike, applies himself to the multitude, and shows them the true spring and original fountain of all spiritual pollution and uncleanness; namely, the filthiness and impurity of man's heart: and nature, which boiling in the heart, the scum runs out at the mouth; thereby informing the multitude, that not that which is eaten, but that which is spoken, defiles a man: not the meat eaten with the mouth, but the wickedness of the heart vented by the mouth, pollutes a person in God's account.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, knowest thou that the pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?

13 But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Observe here, 1. How the disciples wonder that our Saviour did so little regard the displeasure of the pharisees: "Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended?" Although nothing vexed the pharisees more than the discovery of their false doctrine before the multitude, yet our Saviour did not stick to detect their errors, and to declare the truth, let the effects of their displeasure be what they would: sinful man-pleasing is froiless and endless. 2. Observe, Our Lord's answer, which shows a double reason why he thus slighted the offence taken by the pharisees. 1. He compares the pharisees' doctrine and tradition to noisome weeds in the church, planted there,

not by God, but themselves; and consequently shall certainly be rooted up. In matters of religion, if men will act according to the dictates of their own fancies, and not walk by the rule of God's word, they may please themselves perhaps, but they can never please their Maker. Divine institution is the only sure rule of religious worship. 2. Christ compares the pharisees themselves to blind guides; *They are blind leaders of the blind*; leaders and followers both blind, who will certainly and suddenly *fall into the ditch* of temporal and eternal destruction. Learn, 1. That ignorant, erroneous and unfaithful ministers, are the heaviest judgments that can befall a people. 2. That the following of such teachers and blind guides will be no excuse to people another day, much less free them from the danger of eternal destruction.

15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies;

20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

The disciples desiring the interpretation of the foregoing parable, our Saviour gives it them; but withal expostulates with them, that they do not understand a thing so obvious and plain; *Are ye yet without understanding?* As if he had said, "Have ye sat thus long under my ministerial teaching, and enjoyed the benefit of my company and conversation, and are yet no farther proficient in knowledge?" Whence learn, That our Lord expects a proficiency in knowledge from us, answerable to the opportunities and means of knowledge enjoyed by us. Next he gives them the sense and signification of the parable; telling them, that it is out of a sinful heart that all sin proceeds; the heart is the cage or nest, which is full of those unclean birds, and from whence they take their flight. Though the occasions of sin are from without, yet the source and origin of sin is from within. Learn, That the heart of man is the sink and seed-plot of all sin, and the fountain of all pollution; the life could not be so bad, if the heart were not worse; all irregularity of our lives flows from the impurity of our hearts and natures.

21 ¶ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou Son of David*: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

Observe here, The constant employment of our Saviour, *He went about doing good*, from place to place. In the borders of Tyre and Sidon he finds a faithful woman of the race of the Canaanites, who becomes an humble suppliant to Christ, while the Jews neglected so great a salvation. Yea, she not only speaks, but cries unto him. Were we duly affected with our spiritual wants, we could speak to God in no other language than that of cries and tears; nothing but cries can pierce heaven. Observe, 2. Though all Israel could not example the faith of this Canaanite, yet was her daughter tormented with a devil. Learn, That neither truth, nor strength of faith, can secure us either against Satan's inward temptations, or outward vexations; and consequently, the worst of bodily afflictions are no sufficient proof of divine displeasure. Observe, 3. The daughter did not come to Christ for herself, but the mother for her. Perhaps the child was not sensible of its own misery, but the good mother feels both the child's sorrow and her own. True goodness teaches us to appropriate the afflictions of others to ourselves; it causes us to bear their griefs, and to sympathize with them in their sorrows.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came, and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Strange! That a miserable suppliant should cry and sue, whilst the God of mercy is speechless. What! is the fountain of mercy dried up? O Saviour! we have oft found cause to wonder at thy words, but never till now at thy silence. Learn hence, That Christ doth sometimes delay to return an answer to a well qualified prayer. Sometimes his people do not pray earnestly enough; sometimes they pray too earnestly, for some outward and temporal mercy; sometimes the mercy they pray for is not good for them, or it may be it is not yet good for them. Let us not then judge of God's hearing prayer, by his present answer.

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Observe, When our Saviour doth answer, he gives not one word of comfort, but rather a repulse. Christ has often-times love in his heart to his people, when they can read none in his countenance, nor gather it from his discourse. Observe, The answer itself, Christ says not, *I am sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Adam*, but *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. The Jews are compared unto sheep, the Gentiles unto dogs. Christ insinuates that though she were a lost sheep of Adam, yet not being one of the lost sheep of Israel, he could do nothing for her. It was a common saying among the Jews, "That the nations of the world were likened to dogs, whereas they were God's sons and daughters."

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.

Yet hath not this poor woman done; Christ's former silence and his present denial, cannot silence her. She comes, she worships, she cries, *Lord, help me.* O what an undaunted grace is the grace of faith! It has a strong heart and a bold forehead, peremptory denials cannot dismay it. This woman will not despond, though her prayer of faith, from the knees of humility, succeed not.

26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.

Observe here, The seeming severity of Christ to this poor woman; he calls her not a woman but a dog; and as it were, spurns her from his feet with a harsh repulse. Did ever so severe a word drop from those mild lips? What shall we say? Is the lamb of God turned a lion? That a woman in distress imploring pity, yea, a good woman, and an humble suppliant, should be thus rated out of Christ's presence for a dog! Learn hence, That Christ put the strongest faith of his own children upon the severest trials: the trial had never been so sharp, if her faith had not been so strong. Usually, where God gives much grace, he tries grace much.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Observe, How her humility grants all, her patience overcomes all, she meekly desires to possess the dog's place: not to crowd to the table, but to creep under it, and to partake of the crumbs of mercy that fall from thence. Indeed she showed one of the best qualities of a dog, in keeping her hold where she had once fastened: not letting go, or giving over, until she had gotten what she desired. Learn hence, That nothing is so pleasing unto Christ, as to see his people following him with faith and importunity, when he seems to withdraw from them.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

The disciples observing her behaviour, might have been ready to say, O woman, great is thy patience, great is thy humility: but says Christ, *Great is thy faith*; he sees the root, we the branches. Nothing but faith could thus temper the heart, thus strengthen the soul, thus charm the tongue. O powerful grace of faith, which Christ himself could no longer withstand, but cries out as a person overcome by the prevalency of it; *O woman, great is thy faith.* Note, That no grace ever goes away from Christ uncrowned: though we may wait long for mercy, yet the hand of faith never knocked in vain at the door of heaven. Mercy is as surely ours, as if we had it, if we have but faith and patience to wait for it. This good woman found it so to her unspeakable comfort; and the same shall we find, in the exercise of the same grace. Quest. But how doth this poor woman's faith appear to be great faith?

Ans. Because having no promise to rely upon, and suffering so many repulses with seeming contempt, she still retained a good hope of Christ's kindness and mercy. Learn hence, 1. That the faith of those who, depending on God's goodness, do place an humble confidence in God, and are not by great temptations or discouragements removed from that confidence; such faith is deservedly styled great faith. 2. That the faith of believing Gentiles was not only praiseworthy and well-pleasing to God, but more excellent and better pleasing than that of the Jews, to whom the promises did belong.

29 ¶ And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them;

31 Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Observe here, 1. The charity, 2. The faith, of the multitude, in bringing the blind, the deaf, and the dumb to Christ: their charity in lending eyes to the blind, and a tongue to the dumb; who could neither come to Christ themselves, nor speak for themselves. Every man has a tongue to speak for himself, happy is he that has a tongue to pray and intercede for other: this charity did the people exercise here. Observe also their faith; they laid the lame and blind down at Jesus' feet, relying upon his power, and believing his willingness to help and heal them. Observe farther the effect of this miracle upon the multitude; it was twofold: 1. They were struck with admiration and wonder, to see such cures wrought as exceeded the course of nature, and the power of art. 2. *They glorified the God of Israel*; that is, they acknowledged it to be a wonderful work of the power and mercy wrought by that God whom Israel worshipped. Whence we learn, That the miraculous works of Christ, which he wrought before the multitude, were obvious to their senses; and did constrain the beholders (if not blinded with pharisaical obstinacy) to acknowledge the power of God communicated to Christ, and to praise him for it: "The multitude marvelled, and glorified God!"

32 ¶ Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence shall we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?

34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? and they said seven, and a few little fishes.

35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And he took the seven loaves, and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Here we have the second miracle of Christ's compassion feeding the hungry multitude. Chapter xiv. we read of five thousand fed *with five loaves and two fishes*; here Christ feeds four thousand *with seven loaves and a few small fishes*. Where observe, That Christ had fewest, when he had most provision; when he had *seven loaves*, he fed but four thousand; when he had *five loaves*, he fed five thousand. Thus the wisdom and power of Christ is glorified by him as he pleases. The feeding of one thousand with *one loaf*, was as true a miracle as the feeding seven thousand. Our Saviour did put forth the power of his godhead in working miracles, after what manner seemed best to his own wisdom. Observe farther, A double action performed by our Saviour. 1. *He gave thanks*; that is, he prayed for a blessing upon the food. Teaching us our duty, That if the Son of God did look up to heaven, and bless his food, we should not sit down to our food as a beast to his fodder, without craving a blessing upon it. The next action was, *He gave to his disciples*. But why did he distribute the loaves by the hands of his disciples? Ans. Because the disciples questioned, through the weakness of their faith, whether such a multitude as four thousand could be fed with so small a provision as seven loaves. Now our Saviour, to convince them how easily he could do that thing which they had judged impossible, distributes the bread by them: making use of their own eyes and hands, for their conviction and satisfaction. Thus Christ to shame the unbelief of his disciples, makes them not only spectators but actors in that work which they judged impossible to be effected.

37 And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full.

38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

They did all eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to fulness and satisfaction: yet *seven baskets* remain; answering the number of the *loaves*, as the *twelve* baskets in the former miracle answered the *twelve* apostles: in both, more is left than was at first set on: it is hard to say, which was the

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greater miracle, the miraculous eating, or miraculous leaving. If we consider what they eat, we may justly wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they ate any thing. (Dr. Fuller.) Observe lastly, Christ would not have these fragments lost but gathered up; the great housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. O how dreadful will the account of those be, who have large and plentiful estates to answer for as lost, being spent upon their lusts in riot and excess.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE pharisees also with the sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*

3 And in the morning, *It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering.* O ye hypocrites, ye can *discern* the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times?

4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed.

Observe here, 1. The persons demanding of our Saviour a sign, the pharisees and sadducees, persons of contrary opinions and interests; yet both agree in tempting and opposing Christ. Learn thence, That the wicked men, how opposite soever they are one to another, yet can agree together in opposing Christ, and undermining his truth. Observe, 2. The sign demanded: *Show us a sign from heaven*: as if they had said, Put us not off with such earthly signs as we have seen, in multiplying loaves; but let us see a miracle from heaven, such as Moses and Elias wrought. This they desired, not so much for their satisfaction, as out of curiosity, nay wicked treachery. Learn thence, That to demand a sign, not to confirm our faith, but to harden ourselves in our unbelief, is a dangerous tempting of Christ. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's rejection of this demand of the pharisees to give them a sign; O ye hypocrites, says he, ye can *discern the face of the sky*, but ye cannot *discern the signs of the times*. As if Christ had said, "Did not malice and obstinacy blind your eyes, ye might as easily see and discern that these are the times of the Messias, and that I am he, by the miracles wrought by me, as you can make a judgment of the weather, by looking upon the sky." Learn, that to pretend more ignorance and uncertainty in discerning the signs of gospel times, than the signs of the weather, is great hypocrisy: "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Observe lastly, That our Saviour doth not condemn the stu-

dy of nature, or making observation of the state of the weather, from the face of the sky. All that our Saviour blamed was, that they were better skilled in the signs of the weather, than in the signs of the times. As God by natural signs gives us warning of a change in natural things: so by his providential dispensations he gives us warning of a change in civil things. *He that is wise, will observe these things: and by their observation will come to understand the pleasure of the Lord.*

5 ¶ And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the pharisees and of the sadducees.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread.

8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

9 Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 How is it that ye do not understand, that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the pharisees and of the sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the pharisees and of the sadducees.

Observe here, 1. How dull the disciples of Christ were under Christ's own teaching, how apt to put a carnal sense upon his words; they apprehended he had spoken to them of the leaven of bread, what he intended of the leaven of the pharisees' doctrine. Observe, 2. That smart and sharp reproof which Christ gave his disciples, for not understanding the sense and signification of what he spake. The Lord Jesus Christ is much displeased with his own people, when he discerns blindness and ignorance in them after more than ordinary means of knowledge enjoyed by them; *How is it that ye do not yet understand?* Observe, 2. The metaphor which Christ sets forth the corrupt doctrine of the pharisees by; he compares it to leaven, partly for its sourness and partly for its diffusiveness. Leaven is a piece of sour dough, that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread

with which it is mixed. From whence our Saviour intimates, that the pharisees were a sour and proud sort of people; and their doctrines, like themselves, poisonous and pernicious in their consequences; the contagion of which our Lord warns his disciples to avoid and shun. Whence learn, That error is as damnable as vice; persons erroneous in their judgments are to be avoided, as well as those that are lewd and wicked in their conversations. He that has a due care of his soul's salvation, must as well beware of erroneous principles as of debauched practices. Observe, 4. Our Saviour does not command his disciples to separate from communion with the pharisees, and oblige them not to hear their doctrine; but only to beware of the errors that they mixed with their doctrine. We may and ought to hold communion with a church, though erroneous in doctrine, if not fundamentally erroneous. Separation from a church is not justifiable upon any other ground than that which makes a separation between God and that church: which is either the apostasy of that church into gross idolatry; or in point of doctrine into damnable heresy, or imposing sinful terms of communion.

13 ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say, that I, the Son of man, am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon-Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's question, and the disciples' answer. Our Saviour's question is twofold: 1. *Whom do men say that I am?* Not that the Son of God was ignorant what men said of him: but he had an intention more firmly to settle and establish his disciples in the belief of his being the promised Messiah. And therefore, 2. He puts the question to them, *Whom do you, my disciples, say that I am?* "You that have heard the holiness of my doctrine, and seen the divinity of my miracles: what say you to me? And what confession do you make of me?" Christ expects greater measures of grace and knowledge, and higher degrees of affiance and faith from those that have enjoyed the greatest means of grace and knowledge. The disciples were eye and ear-witnesses of his doctrine and miracles, and accordingly he expects from them a full confession of his divinity. Observe, 2. The answer returned, 1. By the apostles in general; "and they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias: some Jeremias." It is no new thing, it seems to find diversity of judgments and opi-

nions concerning Christ and the affairs of his kingdom. We find, that when our Saviour was amongst men, who daily both saw and heard him, yet there was then a diversity of opinions concerning him. 2. Peter, in the name of the rest, and as the mouth of the apostles, makes a full and open confession of his being the Son of God; *thou art the Christ the Son of the living God*. Whence note, that the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of his disciples' faith from seeing him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Man; *thou art Christ the Son of the living God*. Observe, 3. How highly pleased our Saviour was with this confession; he pronounces Peter, and the rest in him *Blessed*, who had by him made this christian confession; *Blessed art thou Simon*; and tells him, 1. What did not enable him to make that confession, *Not flesh and blood*; that is, not man, nor the wisdom and reason of man: 2. But positively, *God the Father*, by the operation of his Spirit, and the dispensation of the gospel, has wrought this divine faith in you, and drawn forth this glorious confession from you, that I am indeed the Son of God. Thence learn, That no man can savingly believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, but he in whom God himself by his Holy Spirit has wrought such a persuasion by the ministry of the gospel.

18 And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Observe here, 1. As Peter confessed Christ, so Christ confesses him; Peter said, *Thou art Christ*: Christ says, *Thou art Peter*, alluding to his name, which signifies a rock; he having made good that title, by the strength, stability, and firmness of his faith. Observe, 2. A double promise made by Christ to Peter. 1. For the building. 2. For the upholding of his church. For the *building* of his church; 1. *Upon this rock will I build my church*. Upon what rock? "Upon Peter, the rock confessing, say the papists: but if so, no more is said of Peter here, than of all the apostles elsewhere." Galat. ii. 9. James and John are called pillars as well as Peter. So that Peter's superiority over the rest of the apostles can with no show of reason be from hence inferred. "Upon Christ, the rock confessed" say the protestants; for Christ is the foundation-stone upon which his church is built; Ephes. ii. 20. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." So then, not upon Peter the rock confessing, but upon Christ the rock confessed, and upon the rock of Peter's confession, that fundamental truth, that Christ is the Son of the living God, is the church built. *Upon this rock will I build my church*. *Super hanc confessionis tue Petram edificabo*. Ecclesiam meam. Yet Christ may here be said to build his church upon Peter, because he used St. Peter's ministry in laying the foundation of a christian church among the Jews and Gentiles; he being the first preacher of that faith which he here confessed first to the Jews, Acts ii. and then to the Gentiles, Acts x. And accordingly St. Peter's conversion of three thousand souls by his ministry, Acts ii. 41. is looked upon by some as a punctual fulfilling of this promise here made unto him. He was styled the rock, because he laid

the foundations of faith among the nations, that is, the first foundations of a christian church in the world. Whence it appears, that in this matter St. Peter neither had nor can have a successor; but if the Pope will pretend to be his successor in this affair, he must not sit at Rome, lording it there over God's heritage, but must go in person to the unbelieving Jews, and unconverted Heathens, as Peter did; and labor by his preaching to bring over the Turk, the Jew, and the Infidel to christianity. Observe next, Our Saviour's promise for the upholding, as well as the building, of his church; *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; that is, all the policy and power of the devil and his instruments shall neither destroy my church, nor extinguish the light of this divine truth which thou hast now made confession of; namely, "That I am the true Messias, the Son of the living God." Note, 1. That Jesus Christ is the builder, and will be the upholder of his church. 2. That the church upheld by Christ's power and promise, shall never be vanquished by the devil's policy or strength; *upon this rock, &c. and the gates, &c.* By the gates of hell understand, 1. The wisdom of hell, gates being the seat of council. 2. The censures and sentence of hell, gates being the place of judicature. 3. By the gates of hell, understand the arms and powers of hell, gates being a place of strength and guards. So that when Christ secures against hell, he secures against all that receive their commission from hell; neither hell nor any convened by hell, shall prevail against my church.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whosoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Observe here, 1. The person to whom this promise is made, namely, to Peter, with the rest of the apostles; the confession being made by him in the name of the rest. Elsewhere we find the same authority and power given to them all, which is here committed unto Peter: John xx. 23. "Whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted." Although there might be a priority of order among the apostles, yet no superiority of power was founded in any one of them over and above the rest. Observe, 2. The power promised: *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; that is, the key of doctrine, and the key of discipline, or full power and authority to preach the gospel, to administer sacraments, and execute church censures. The speech is metaphorical, and alludes to stewards and officers in great houses, to whose trust the keys of the household are committed. Christ's ministers are the stewards of his house, into whose hands the keys of his church are committed by Christ; the Pope would snatch them out of all hands, and keep them in his own; he snatches at Peter's keys, but makes shipwreck of faith, arrogating Peter's power, but abrogating his holy profession. Learn, 1. That the authority and power which the ministers of the gospel do exercise and execute, is from Christ: *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom*. 2. That this power of the keys Christ dispensed promiscuously to all his apostles, and never designed it as peculiar for St. Peter. As they made

the same profession of faith by Peter, so they all received the same authority and power with Peter. And accordingly the apostles exercised their office independently upon Peter, in converting those of the circumcision as well as he. And St. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, opened the kingdom of heaven to far more Gentiles than ever Peter did; and therefore had this key of the kingdom of heaven given to him, as much as to St. Peter.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

That is, till after his resurrection. It may seem strange, that our Saviour should charge his disciples to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ, seeing the knowledge of it was so necessary. The reason is conceived to be: 1. Because the glory of his godhead was not to be fully manifested till after his resurrection, and then to be published by himself, and confirmed by his own miracles. 2. Lest the knowledge of it should have hindered his death; for "had the rulers known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." Learn, That Christ has his own fit times and proper seasons, in which he reveals his own mysteries to the world. 3. That Christ was so intent upon his laying down his life for sinners, that he would not have his death hindered by an untimely declaration of his being truly and really God; after his death it was, "that he declared himself to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead."

21 ¶ From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Observe, 1. The wisdom of our Saviour, in acquainting his disciples with the nearer approach of his death and sufferings. This he did for several reasons: 1. To let them understand that he was really God, (as they had just before confessed him to be) by his fore-knowing, and fore-telling things to come. 2. To convince them of their error, in apprehending that his kingdom was of this world, and that he was to reign here as a temporal prince. 3. To prevent their being offended at his sufferings, and to prepare them for their own, that they might not shrink at them, nor sink under them. Observe, 2. The persons foretold by Christ, that should be the bloody actors in the tragedy of his death; namely, the rulers and chief priests; it was the poor that received Christ, and embraced the gospel; it was the great ones of the world that rejected him, and set him at nought; and the rulers both in church and state condemned and crucified him.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

No doubt Peter spake all this out of a sincere intention, and a singular affection towards our Saviour; but pious in-

tentions and good affections will not justify unwarrantable actions. From this counsel of St. Peter to Christ, we learn, 1. How ready flesh and blood is to oppose all that tends to suffering; *Master spare thyself*. 2. What need we have to be fortified against the temptations of friends as well as of enemies! for satan can make good men his instruments to do his work, when they little think of it. Peter little suspected that satan set him on work to hinder the redemption of mankind, by dissuading Christ from dying. But observe in the next verse with what indignation Christ rejects Peter's advice.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Christ looked upon Peter with anger and displeasure; Christ heard satan speaking in Peter. It was Peter's tongue, but satan tuned it; therefore Christ calls Peter by satan's name. They that will do the devil's work shall have the devil's name too. He that would hinder the redemption of mankind, is satan, an adversary to mankind. From our Saviour's smart reproof given to Peter, Learn, that no love or respect to men's persons or piety must draw us to flatter them in their sins, or cause us to speak lightly of their sins. From our Saviour's resolution not to favor himself, notwithstanding Peter's advice, Learn, That so intent was the heart of Christ upon the great work of man's redemption, that he could not bear the least word that should obstruct it, or divert him from it.

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recommends his religion to every man's choice; not attempting by force and violence to compel any to the profession of it. *If any man will come after me*, that is, if any man choose and resolve to be a christian. 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded: 1. Self-denial, *Let him deny himself*. By which we are not to understand the denying and renouncing of our senses in matters of faith, nor yet the renouncing of our reason in matters of religion; but by self-denial is meant, that we should be willing to part with all our earthly comforts, and quit all our temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion. 2. Gospel-suffering, *He must take up his cross*. An allusion to a Roman custom, that the malefactor, who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Where note, Not the making of the cross for ourselves, but the patient bearing of it when God lays it upon our shoulder, is the duty enjoined: *let him take up his cross*. 3. Gospel-service, *He must follow me*: that is obey my commands, and follow my example; he must set *my* life and doctrine continually before him, and must be daily correcting and reforming his life by that rule and pattern. See on Luke ix. 23.

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Observe here, 1. That the love of this temporal life, is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and renounce his holy religion. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life is cheerfully to lay down a mortal life, when the glory of Christ and his service calleth us thereunto.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Learn, 1. That God has intrusted every one of us with a soul of inestimable worth and preciousness, capable of being saved or lost and that to all eternity. 2. That the gain of the whole world is not comparable with the loss of one precious soul. The soul's loss is an incomprehensible and irrecoverable loss.

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

There is a twofold judgment spoken of by this evangelist St. Matthew, namely, a particular coming of Christ to execute vengeance on the Jews, at the destruction of Jerusalem; and a general coming at the day of judgment. If we understand this place of the latter, we have then, 1. The Judge described, "The Son of man," he who was and is both God and man, shall judge both angels and men. 2. The splendor of that day declared. "He shall come in glory with his holy angels." The attendance of angels shall be required by Christ not for necessity but for majesty. 3. The work and business of that day demonstrated, and that is, "To render to every man according to his work." Learn, That the judgment of the great day will be most glorious and righteous: Christ will be glorious in his person, and glorious in his attendance: and judgment will be according to righteousness, "Without respect of persons, according to what has been done in the body."

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

A threefold sense and interpretation is given of these words. 1. Some will have them refer to our Saviour's transfiguration mentioned in the next chapter: as if he had said, "Some of you, as Peter, James, and John, shall shortly see me upon mount Tabor, in such glory as I will come unto judgment." 2. Others understand the words of Christ's exercising his kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; which St. John did live to see. 3. Others refer the words to the time of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel (No. 5)

was propagated and spread far and near, according to St. Mark is. 1. There are some standing here, that shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power;" that is, till they see the increase and enlargement of the church by the gospel. Thence note, That where the gospel is powerfully preached, and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom.

CHAPTER XVII.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.

2 And was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The former part of this chapter gives us an account of our Saviour's glorious transfiguration, he laid aside as it were the garments of frail humanity and mortality aside for a little time, and assuming to himself the robes of majesty and glory, the rays of his divinity darted forth, his face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment was such a glorious lustre, as did at once both dazzle and delight the eyes of the beholders. Here observe, 1. The reason of our Lord's transfiguration; 1. To demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity; that "he was Christ the Son of the living God;" according to St. Peter's confession just before. This divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature. 2. Christ was thus transfigured, to prefigure the glory of his second coming to judgment, "when he shall be admired of his saints," as here he was admired by his disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witnesses of his transfiguration, his three disciples, Peter, James, and John. But why disciples? Why three disciples? Why these three? 1. This transfiguration was a type and shadow of the glory of heaven: Christ therefore vouchsafes the earnest and first-fruits of that glory only to saints; upon whom he intended to bestow the full harvest. 2. Three disciples were witnesses sufficient to testify this miracle. Judas was unworthy of this favor, yet lest he should murmur or be discontented at his being left out, others are also left out besides him. 3. These three rather than others; because, 1. These disciples are more eminent for grace, zeal, and love to Christ; and consequently, are most highly dignified and honored by him. The most eminent manifestations of glory are made by God to those that are most eminent in grace. 2. These three were witnesses of Christ's agony and passion, to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision from mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terrors of mount Calvary. Learn, That those whom God singles out for the greatest trials, he will fit beforehand with the best enablements.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

Observe here, The glorious attendance upon our Saviour at his glorious transfiguration; they were two men, Moses and Elias. This being but a glimpse of Christ's glory, not a full manifestation of it, only two of the glorified saints attend upon Christ at it; when he shall come in his full glory, ten thousand of thousands shall attend him. These two attendants were two men, not two angels; because men were more nearly concerned in what was done; they were not only spectators but partners. Man's restoration was Christ's principal aim: the angel's confirmation his less principal design. But why Moses and Elias? 1. Moses the giver of the law, and Elias the chief of the prophets, attending both upon Christ, did show the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their fulfilling and accomplishment in him. 2. Because these two were the most laborious servants of Christ, both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore are highly honored by Christ. "Such as honor him, he will honor."

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Observe here, 1. The person supplicating, Peter. No doubt the other two, James and John, were much affected, but Peter is more fervent and forward; yet there is no arguing with the papists from his fervency to his superiority; his personal prerogatives were not hereditary. Observe, 2. The person supplicated, Jesus; not Moses, nor Elias; the disciples make no prayer, no suit to them, but to Christ only. Prayers to saints departed are both vain and unlawful. Observe, 3. The supplication itself, and that was for their continuance where they were. "It is good for us to be here." O what a ravishing comfort is the fellowship of the saints! but the presence of Christ among them renders their joys transporting. Observe, 4. Their proffer of service to farther this continuance; "Let us make three tabernacles." This motion was well meant and devout. St. Peter will stick at no cost or pains for the enjoyment of Christ's presence, and his saints' company, yet was the motion unadvised and rash. St. Peter erred in desiring a perpetuity of that condition which was but transient and momentary. This vision was only a taste of glory, not a full repast. He errs, in that he would bring down heaven to earth, and take us with Tabor instead of heaven. He errs, in that he would enter upon the possession of heaven's glory, without suffering, and without dying. "Peter would be clothed upon, but was not willing to be unclothed." Learn, 1. That a glimpse of glory is enough to wrap a soul into ecstasy, and to make it out of love with worldly company. 2. That we are apt to desire more of heaven upon earth than God will allow; we would fain have the heavenly glory come down to us, but we are unwilling to go by death to that; we know not what we say, when we talk of felicity in tabernacles upon earth.

5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold,

a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.

Observe here, 1. A cloud was put before the disciples' eyes for two reasons. 1. To allay the lustre and resplendency of that glory which they were swallowed up with. As we cannot look upon the sun in its full brightness, but under a cloud by reflection; so the glory of heaven is insupportable, till God veils it, and shelters us from the sarcharge of it. 2. A cloud overshadows them to hinder their farther prying and looking into the glory. We must be content to behold God here through a cloud *darkly, ere long we shall see him face to face.* Observe, 2. The testimony given by God the Father out of the cloud concerning Jesus Christ his son; *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* Here note, 1. The dignity of his person, he is a *son* therefore, for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, for duration co-eternal, with the Father; and a *beloved son*, because of his likeness and conformity to him. A father's likeness is the cause of love; an union of wills causes a mutual endearing of affections. Note, 2. The excellency of his mediation, *In whom I am well pleased.* Christ in himself was most pleasing to God the Father, and in and through him he is well pleased with all believers. Christ's mediation for us makes God appeasable to us. Note, 3. The authority of his doctrine: *Hear him, not Moses and Elias* who were servants but Christ my Son, whom I have commissioned to be the great Prophet and Teacher of my church: therefore adore him as my Son, believe in him as your Saviour, and hear him as your lawgiver. He honors Christ most, that obeys him best. The obedient ear honors Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue, *This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.*

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

9 And, as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Observe here, 1. The effects which this voice from heaven had upon the apostles, it cast them into a passion of horror and amazement. *They were sore afraid, and fell on their face.* Learn thence, That such is the majesty and glory of God, that man in his sinful state cannot bear so much as a glimpse of it, without great consternation and fear. How unable is man to hear the voice of God! and yet how ready to despise the voice of man: if God speaks by himself, his voice is too terrible; if he speaks by his ministers, it is contemptible. Observe, 2. The person by whom the dis-

ciples were recovered out of these amazing fears into which they were cast; namely, by Christ; "Jesus came and said, be not afraid." It is Christ alone who can raise and comfort those whom the terrors of the Almighty have dejected and cast down. Observe, 3. The manner how Christ recovered them out of this passionate amazement, it was threefold: 1. By his gracious approach, "he came unto them. Christ will come with comfort unto his children, when they are disabled from coming to him with comfort. 2. By his comfortable touch; "He came and touched them." Christ comforts believers by a real and close application of himself unto them. An unapplied Christ saves none, comforts none. 3. By his comforting voice, "He said, "Be not afraid." It is a word of assurance, that there is no ground or cause of fear: and it is a word of assistance. It is *verbum operatorium*: he that said unto them. "Arise be not afraid," did by his spirit breathe life and convey strength into their souls, to enable them to arise. Observe, 4. The strict injunction given by Christ to his disciples, not to publish or proclaim this vision till after his resurrection, for two reasons: 1. Lest it should hinder his passion; for had the rulers of the world known him to be the Lord of life and glory, they would not have crucified him;" therefore Christ purposely concealed his deity to give way to his passion. 2. Christ being now in a state of humiliation, would have his majesty veiled, his glory concealed, and consequently forbids that the glorious vision of his transfiguration should be published, and accordingly charges his disciples, "That they tell the vision to no man till he was risen." As if Christ had said, Tell no man the things which you have seen; not the residue of his disciples, that they be not troubled, that they were not admitted to see with you; nor those believers which now follow me, that they be not scandalized at my suffering after so glorious a transfiguration.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

11 And Jesus answered, and said unto them; Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things;

12 But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not; but have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise shall, also, the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's answer. They ask our Saviour, how the observation of the Jewish doctors holds good, that Elias must come before the Messiah come? We see the Messiah, but we see no Elias; our Saviour answers, that Elias was come already: not Elijah in person, but one in the spirit and power of Elias; one of his spirit and temper; to wit John the Baptist, who

was prophesied under the same name of Elias. And great indeed was the resemblance between the Elias of the Old Testament, and the New, namely, John the Baptist; they were both born in bad times; they were both zealous for God and religion; they were both undaunted reprovers of the faults of princes; and they were both hated and implacably persecuted for the same. Learn, That hatred and persecution, even unto death, has often been the lot and portion of such as have had zeal and courage to reprove the faults of princes; "Elias is come, and they did unto him whatsoever they would."

14 ¶ And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 Lord have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

Observe, 1. A sick patient brought to Christ, the great physician, for cure and healing. A lunatic, that is a person, at certain times of the moon, afflicted with the falling sickness. 2. This sickness of his was aggravated by satan, who bodily possessed him, and cruelly cast him into the fire and into the water, but rather for torture than dispatch. O how does satan, that malicious tyrant, rejoice in doing hurt to mankind! Lord abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. Observe, 3. The person who brought him forth for cure, his compassionate father, who kneeled down and cried out; need will make a person both humble and eloquent. Every one has a tongue to speak for himself; happy is he that keeps a tongue for others. 4. The physicians that he was first brought unto: first to the disciples: and when they could not cure him, then to Jesus. We never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we begin to despair of the creature's help.

17 Then Jesus answered, and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.

These words are a severe rebuke given by Christ to his own disciples. Where observe, The persons upbraided, his disciples: and the sin upbraided with, unbelief. O faithless generation! Yet was it not the total want of faith, but the weakness and imperfection of faith, that they were upbraided with and reprov'd for. Hence learn, 1. That secret unbelief may lie hid and undiscerned in a person's heart, which neither others nor himself may take notice of, until some trial doth discover it. The disciples were not sensible of that unbelief which lay hid in them, till this occasion did discover it. Learn, 2. That the great obstacle and obstruction of all blessings both spiritual and temporal, coming to us, is our unbelief: O faithless generation! Others

conceive that these words were not spoken to the disciple but to the scribes, which St. Mark chap. ix. says, at this time were disputing with Christ's disciples, and perhaps insulting over them, as having found out a distemper which could not be cured by Christ's name and power; and these he called now, as he had done heretofore, a generation of rippers.

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Observe here, With what facility and ease our Saviour cured this poor man, who was bodily possessed by satan: with one word speaking, he delivered the distressed person from the malice and power of satan. Thence learn, That how long soever, and how strong soever satan's possession has been in a person, Christ can eject and cast him out both easily and speedily.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Observe here, How ashamed the disciples were of this open rebuke given them by their Master; they privately asked him the cause of their ill success, "Why they could not cast out satan," according to the power promised them to work miracles? Our Saviour tells them, that their power to work this miracle now failed them for a double reason. 1. For their unbelief, by which we are to understand the weakness of their faith, not the total want of faith. 2. Because they neglected the special means appointed by God, in order to that end, to wit, *fasting and prayer*: that is, a fervor of devotion, joined with faith and fasting. Thence learn, That fasting and prayer are two especial means of Christ's appointment, for enabling us victoriously to overcome satan, and cast him out of ourselves and others. We must set an edge upon our faith by prayer, and upon our prayer by fasting. Quest. But what are we to understand by faith as a grain of mustard-seed, or a faith as strong and active in heart as mustard-seed, is on the palate. And by *removing mountains*, understand the performing things that are most difficult; as if Christ had said, did your faith increase as a grain of mustard-seed grows it would enable you to surmount all difficulties whatsoever. Others by faith as a grain of mustard-seed, understand, the least degree of sincere faith on God, it being a proverbial speech among the Jews, used *pro re minima*, for the least thing; as if Christ had said, "Had you the least measure of that faith which casts

out fear and doubting of success in the discharge of your office, you might perform things most difficult, and even this faith in its effects would be mighty." Dr. Whitby.

22 And, while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men;

23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Observable it is, how frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings. All was little enough to arm them against the scandal of the cross, and to reconcile them to the thoughts of what he was to suffer for them, and they were to suffer with him. Learn, That we can never hear too much of the doctrine of the cross; nor can we be too often instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering condition. As Christ went by his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers likewise.

24 ¶ And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and, when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Observe here, 1. The question put to Peter; *Doth your master pay tribute?* This tribute-money originally was a tax paid yearly by every Jew to the service of the temple, to the value of fifteen pence a head. But when the Jews were brought under the power of the Romans, this tribute-money was paid to the emperor, and was changed from a homage-penny to God, to a tribute-penny to the conqueror. The collectors of this tribute-money asked Peter, whether his master would pay it or not. Observe, 2. The answer returned, positively and suddenly, *He does pay*. Peter consults not first with our Saviour, whe-

ther he would pay it; but knowing his readiness to render to all their due, he says, Yes. There was no truer pay-master of the king's dues, than he that was King of Kings. He preached it, and he practised it: *Give unto Cesar, the things that are Cesar's.* Yet observe, 3. Our Saviour insinuates his own exception, privilege, and freedom from paying this tribute-money, as he was the Son of God, the Universal King; subjects pay tribute, but king's children are free. Though Christ was free from paying tribute by a natural right, yet he would not be free by a voluntary dispensation. Therefore observe, To prevent all scandal and offence, he works a miracle, rather than the tribute money should go unpaid. Whether Christ by his almighty word created this piece of money in the mouth of the fish, (which was half a crown for himself and St. Peter, who had a house in Capernaum, and was there to pay his poll) or whether Christ caused the fish to take up this piece of money at the bottom of the sea, is not necessary to inquire, nor possible to determine. Our duty is reverentially to adore that Omnipotent power, which could command the fish to be both his treasurer to keep his silver, and his purveyor to bring it to him. 2. Industrious to imitate his example, in shunning all occasions of offence especially towards those whom God has placed in sovereign authority over us. Observe lastly, The poverty of our holy Lord, and his contempt of all worldly wealth and riches: he had not so much as fifteen-pence by him to pay his poll. Christ would not honor the world so far as to have any part of it in his own possession. The best man that ever lived in the world had not a penny in his purse, nor a house to hide his head in, which he could call his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had so often told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world, yet they still dreamed of a temporal and earthly kingdom, which he as the Measias, should show forth the glory of: in which there should be distinct places of honor and offices, one above another: and accordingly, at this time the ambition of the disciples led them to inquire of our Saviour, who should have the chief place of honor and dignity under him, in that his kingdom, who should be the principal officers of state; concluding it must be some of them, though they could not agree who were fittest for those high posts of honor and service. Learn hence, that the best and holiest of men are too subject to pride and ambition, to court worldly dignity and greatness, to affect a precedence before, and a superiority above others; the disciples themselves were tainted with the itch of ambition, which prompted them to inquire of their Master, *Who should be the greatest in his kingdom of the church?*

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

(No 5.)

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our Saviour intending to cure this pride and ambition in his disciples, first preaches to them the doctrine of humility, and to enforce his doctrine he sets before them *a little child*, the proper emblem of humility; assuring them that unless they be converted, or turned from this sin of pride and ambition, and become as a little child in lowliness of mind, and contempt of worldly greatness, they cannot be saved. Learn hence, 1. That no sins are more odious and abominable in the sight of God, than pride and ambition; especially amongst the ministers of the gospel. Learn. 2. The persons already converted do stand in need of farther conversion: they that are converted from a state of sin, may want to be converted from a particular act of sin; this was the disciples' case here; they were turned from a course of sin, but they wanted conversion, from a particular act of sin; to wit from ambition. Learn. 3. That conversion, though sincere, may be very imperfect. Converts still have remains of corruption, some lust often breaking forth, which they must take special care to resist and subdue.

4 Whosoever therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

As if our Lord had said, "That apostle, or minister, who thinks as meanly of himself as a little child, and is humble and lowly in his own esteem, he deserves the highest place of dignity and honor in my church." Note, That the truly humble person, who is freest from affecting pre-eminency, is most worthy of the highest dignity and eminency in the church of God; and in the account of Christ, the way to be honorable is to be humble, *Before honor is humility.*

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea,

Our Saviour having declared, that the humblest persons should be always highest in his esteem: he next declares how exceeding dear and precious such christians are to him, who resemble little children in humility of heart, and innocency of life: assuring the world, that whatever kindness and respect is shown to such for his sake, he reckons shown to himself; and all the disrespect and unkindness which is offered to them, he accounts as done unto himself: so near is the union, and so dear the relation, betwixt Christ and his members, that whatever good, or evil, is done unto them, he reckons as done unto himself.

7 ¶ Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Two things are here observable: 1. The necessity of scandalous offences; *It must needs be that offences come*; 2. The misery and mischief that comes by them: *Woe unto the world because of offences*; Woe unto such as give offence: this is *vox indignantis*, the woe of one denouncing; and woe to such as stumble at offences given, this is, *vox dolentis*, the woe of one lamenting. From the whole, Note, 1. That scandals, or offensive actions in the church of Christ will certainly fall out among those that profess religion, and the name of Christ. *Offences will come*; Their necessity is partly from the malice of satan, partly from the wickedness and deceitfulness of men's own hearts and nature, God permitting those to have their natural effects. 2. That scandalous and offensive actions from such as profess religion and the name of Christ are baneful and fatal stumbling-blocks to wicked and worldly men. 3. That the offence which wicked men take at the falls of the professors of religion, to the hardening of themselves in their wicked practices, is matter of just and great lamentation: *Woe unto the world because of offences*.

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee cut them off, and east *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.

This command of Christ is not to be understood literally, as if it were our duty to maim our bodily members; but the exhortation is, to cut off all occasions that may betray us into sin: and to mortify our darling and beloved lust, though as dear to us as our right eye. Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided. It is our duty to avoid whatever leads unto it, or may be the instrument or occasion of it. 2. That the best way to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affection and love to sin. If our love and affection to sin be mortified, our bodily members may be preserved, for they will no longer be weapons of sin, but instruments of holiness.

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Observe here, 1. A cautionary direction given by Christ to the men of the world concerning his members: "take heed

that ye offend not one of my little ones;" that is, that ye do not undervalue and neglect, much less injure and afflict them. 2. A reason assigned, "Because their angels being constantly and immediately in the presence of God," are perpetually ready to execute his will, by revenging any wrongs and injuries done unto his friends and children. Learn, 1. What is the office and employment of the glorious angels; namely, to be the immediate attendants upon the royal person of the supreme King and Sovereign of the world. Learn hence, 2. In what esteem good men are with God, and what a mighty regard he has for the meanest of his children, that he commits the care and preservation of them to the holy angels, who are nearest to him, and in the highest favor and honor with him. It is St Jerome's note upon this place, That great is the dignity of these little ones, seeing every one of them from his birth, hath an angel delegated to preserve him. But though others think that the opinion of a tutelary angel, or of one particular angel having the custody of one particular saint, as his continual charge, has not a sufficient foundation in the holy scriptures; yet all the angels in heaven are ministering spirits unto them: and though they do not always attend upon their persons (for they stand before the face of God) yet it is to receive his commands, either to help them in their exigences, or punish those that injure them.

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

12 How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily, I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep* than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Here our Saviour continues his argument against giving offence to his children and members; he came into the world to redeem and save them: therefore none ought to scandalize and offend them. And to illustrate this, he compares himself to a good shepherd, who regards every one of his sheep: and if any wander or go astray, he seeks to recover it with desire and joy. Learn, 1. That the natural condition of mankind is like to that of wandering sheep; they err and go astray from God, their chief good, and the object of their complete happiness. 2. That it was the work and business, the care and concern of Jesus Christ, to seek and recover lost souls, as the shepherd doth lost sheep. 3. That the love and care of Christ towards his sheep, in seeking to save and preserve them, is a forcible argument unto all, not to scandalize and offend them, much less to persecute and destroy them.

15 Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

In these words our Saviour gives us an excellent rule for the duty of fraternal correction, or brotherly admonition. Where note, 1. That brotherly reproof and admonition is a duty incumbent upon church members. 2. That it may be administered successfully, it must be administered privately and prudently. 3. When private admonition prevails not, Christ has appointed church-governors to execute church-censures on the obstinate and irreclaimable. 4. Persons justly falling under the censures of the church, and rightly excommunicated, are to be looked upon as obstinate and contumacious offenders, and the members of the church to shun society and conversation with them; "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and as a publican was among the Jews;" wholly neglected, and not thought fit to be conversed with.

18 Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

That is, whosoever the officers of my church shall justly excommunicate upon earth, shall, without repentance, be shut out of heaven; and whosoever upon their true repentance, shall be absolved on earth, shall be absolved in heaven. Learn, That Christ will ratify in heaven whatsoever the church assembled doth in his name upon earth: whether to the censuring of the guilty or the absolving of the penitent. This power of binding and loosing is by Christ committed to his church.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Here we have a gracious promise made by Christ of his presence with all his members in general, and with his ministers in special, whenever they meet together in his name, that is by his authority, in obedience to his command, and

with an eye to his glory. Whenever they celebrate any sacred institution of his, or execute any church censures, he will be in the midst of them, to quicken their prayers, to guide their counsels, to ratify their sentence, to accept their endeavours. Learn, 1. That Christ will be graciously present with and amongst his people, whenever they assemble and meet together in his name, be it ever so small a number. 2. That Christ will, in a special manner, be present with the guides and officers of his church, to direct their censures, and to confirm the sentence passed in his name, and pronounced by his authority upon obstinate offenders.

21 ¶ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Here St. Peter puts a question to our Saviour, how often christians should forgive offences to their brethren professing repentance: Christ answers that there should be no end of our mutually forgiving one another, but we are to multiply our pardon as our brother manifests his repentance. Not that we are hereby obliged to take the frequent offender into our bosom, and to make him our intimate; but to lay aside all malice, and all thoughts and desire of revenge, and to stand ready to do him any office of love and friendship. Learn, That to fall often into the same offence against our brother, is a great aggravation of sin, so the multiplication of forgiveness is a great demonstration of a God-like temper in us. He that multiplies sin, doth like satan, sin abundantly; and he that multiplies pardon, doth like God, pardon abundantly.

23 ¶ Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants;

24 And when he begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid

hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

33 Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to his tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Our blessed Saviour, to enforce the foregoing doctrine of mutual forgiveness, propounds a parable: the main scope of which is to show, that unless we do actually forgive and pass by injuries done to us, we cut ourselves off from all interest in God's pardoning mercy, and must expect no forgiveness at the hand of God. From the whole, Note, 1. That as we all stand in need of forgiveness from God, so likewise of forgiveness from one another. 2. That we all stand bound by the laws of our holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another. 3. That Almighty God has made the forgiving one another, the certain and necessary condition of his forgiving us. 4. That such as are inexorable towards their brethren, shall find God Almighty hard to be intreated towards themselves. We may expect the same rigor and severity from God, which we show to men. 5. That the freeness of God's love in forgiving us, ought to be both an argument to excite us to forgive one another, and also a rule to direct us in the manner of forgiving each other.

Doth God forgive us, when he has power in his hand to punish us? So must we when we have ability and opportunity for revenge. Doth God forgive universally all persons? So must we all provocations. Doth he forgive us freely and willingly, heartily and sincerely? So must we; we must be as forward in forgiving, as they in provoking. Learn from the whole, the equity of unlimited forgiveness of our brother, because our God and Saviour forgives us more numerous

and heinous sins than our brother is capable of committing against us. Let all unmerciful and unchristian creditors remember this text, who cast poor men into prison for debt, who have nothing to pay; surely, he who bids us lend, *looking for nothing again*, will not allow us to *imprison* where nothing can be hoped for. It is to be feared, such will find but little mercy hereafter, who have showed no mercy here; for if at the great day such shall be condemned as did not visit christians in prison, what will their condemnation be, who cast them into prison?

CHAPTER XIX.

AND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan:

2 And great multitudes followed him: and he healed them there.

The country of the Jews was divided into three provinces; namely, Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. In Galilee, where the cities of Nazareth, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum; here Christ dwelt and spent a considerable part of his time, preaching to them, and working miracles among them. But now comes the time in which our holy Lord takes his leave of this province of Galilee, and returned no more to it: woe to that people, whose unthankfulness for Christ's presence and ministry amongst them, causes him finally to forsake them. Having left Galilee, our holy Lord passes through Samaria (the Samaritans being prejudiced against him, and refusing to receive him) and comes into the coasts of Judea, where multitudes of people flocked after him. But observe the qualities of his followers, not the great ones of the world, not many mighty, not many noble: but the poor and despised multitude, the sick and weak, the deaf and blind, the diseased and distressed. Thence observe, That none but such as find their need of Christ, will seek after him, and come unto him. None will apply to them for help, till they feel themselves helpless. *Great multitudes* of the sick and diseased came unto him, *and he healed them all*.

3 ¶ The pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

Observe here, 1. That wheresoever our blessed Saviour went, the pharisees followed him: not out of a sincere intention, but with a design to ensnare him; and accordingly they propound a question to him concerning divorce, Whether a man might put away his wife on any occasion, as the manner of the Jews was? Concluding that they should entrap him in his answer, whatever it was. If he denied the lawfulness of a divorce, then they would charge him with contradicting Moses, who allowed it. If he affirmed it, then they would condemn him for contradicting his own doctrine, chap. v. 32, for favoring men's lusts, and for complying with the wicked cus-

tom of the Jews, who upon every slight and frivolous occasion, put away their wives from them. Learn thence, 1. That whosoever our Lord went, as he had disciples and sincere followers, so the devil stirred him up bitter and malicious enemies, who sought to render his person unacceptable, and his doctrine unsuccessful. 2. That of all Christ's enemies, none had such a bitter hatred and enmity against his person, ministry, and miracles as the pharisees. Men of great knowledge, who rebelled against the light of their own consciences, and the clear convictions of their own mind. 3. That such was the wisdom of our Saviour in all his answers to his enemies, that neither their wit nor malice could lay hold upon any thing to ensnare him: but observe the piety and prudence of his answer to the pharisees in the next words.

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning, made them male and female.

5 And he said, For this *cause* shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh!

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Observe here, Christ gives no direct answer to the pharisees' insinuating question, but refers them to the first institution of marriage, when God made them one, to the intent that matrimonial love might be both incommunicable and indissoluble. Whence learn, 1. The sacred institution of marriage; it is an ordinance of God's own appointment, as the ground and foundation of all sacred and civil society, *What God has joined together.* Learn, 2. The antiquity of this institution, it was from the beginning: *He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.* Marriage is almost as old as the world, as old as nature; there was no sooner one person, but God divided him into two; and no sooner were there two, but he united them into one. Learn hence, 3. The intimacy and nearness of this endeared and endearing relation: the conjugal knot is tied so close, that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature: stricter is the tie betwixt husband and wife, than betwixt parent and children, according to God's own institution. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife."

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever

(No. 6)

shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery.

Observe here, The pharisees' demand, and our Saviour's reply. They demand, *Why Moses commanded to put away the wife by a bill of divorce?* Where note, The wicked abuse which the pharisees put upon Moses, as if he had commanded them, whereas he only permitted to put them away. *Moses suffered it for the hardness of their hearts:* that is, he did not punish it: not allowing it as good, but winking at it as a lesser evil, because the Jews were so barbarously cruel to their wives, as to turn them away upon every disgust. Now our Saviour, in his reply, refers them again to the primitive institution of marriage, bidding them compare the precept and their practice together: *for in the beginning it was not so.* Learn, That according to the word and will of God, nothing can violate the bonds of marriage, and justify a divorce between man and wife, but the defiling of the marriage bed by adultery and uncleanness: this is the only case in which man and wife may lawfully part. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, committeth adultery."

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

That is, if a man be so strictly tied by marriage, it is best for him not to marry. A very rash saying of the disciples, discovering both their great carnality, and also the tyranny of a sinful practice, grown up into custom. Learn, 1. That the best of men have their weaknesses and infirmities: and the flesh takes its turn to speak, as well as the spirit in them. All that the saints say is not the gospel. Learn, 2. How impatient nature is of restraint, and how desirous of sinful liberty, and to be freed from the ties and bonds which the holy and wise laws of God put upon it.

11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

As if our Lord had said, "You my disciples do not consider what you say. All men without sinning against God cannot abstain from marriage, but those only to whom God has given the gift of continency, and grace of chastity. Some indeed by nature, or natural impotency, are unfit for marriage. Others wickedly are made unfit by castration;

others by religious mortification, bring under their bodies, that being free from the incumbrances that attend a marriage state, they may give up themselves the better to the exercises of a holy life." Learn, 1. That Almighty God has given us divers persons, different tempers, and constitutions: some can subdue their impure desires and affections without the remedy of marriage, others cannot. 2. That continency or ability to live chastely, without the use of marriage, is the special gift of God; not common to all, but bestowed only upon some. A gift it is, worthy of our fervent prayers, worthy of our best endeavours. 3. That a vow of chastity is not in our power; to quench a natural affection requires a supernatural gift. *All have not received it*: that is, all men cannot live single, and abstain from matrimony. From whence it follows, That men and women are not by monastical vows to be obliged to live a single life, which some cannot perform without sin. Note farther. When Christ says, that some *have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*: the meaning is, That some have abstained from matrimony that they might be more expeditious in preaching the gospel, if ministers; or more prompt, fit and ready, to regard only the things of the Lord, if private christians.

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Observe here, a solemn action performed. Children are brought to Christ, to be blest by him. Where note, 1. The persons brought, children, young children, sucking children, as the word imports: St. Luke xviii. 15. *They brought them in their arms*, not led them by the hand. 2. The person they are brought unto, Jesus Christ: but for what end? Not to baptize them, but to bless them: the parents looking upon Christ as a prophet, a great prophet, the great prophet, do bring their infants to him, that they may receive the benefits of his blessings and prayers. Whence learn, 1. That infants are subjects capable of benefit by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. If infants be capable of benefit by Christ; if capable of his blessing on earth, and presence in heaven; if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory: then they may be baptized; for they that are in covenant, have a right to the seal of the covenant. If Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater, what reason have his ministers to deny them baptism, which is the less? But say some, Christ did neither baptize them, nor command his disciples so to do? Ans. That is not to be wondered at, if we consider that they had already entered into a covenant with God by cir-

cumcision, and christian baptism was not yet instituted: John's baptism was the baptism of repentance, of which infants were incapable.

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Observe here, A person addressing himself to Christ, and propounding an important question to him: namely, What he should do to gain eternal life? Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. And, 3. He declares his readiness to do some good, that he may obtain that happiness. Learn, That the light of nature, or natural religion, directs and teaches men, that good works are necessary to salvation, or that some good thing must be done by men that at death expect eternal life. *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, and living well, that entitles us to eternal life.

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is God*: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

The person thus addressing himself unto Christ, was either a pharisee or a disciple of the pharisees, who did not own Christ to be God, or to come from God; but taught that eternal life was attainable, by fulfilling of the law in that imperfect sense which the pharisees gave of it. And accordingly, 1. Christ reproves him for calling him good; *Why callest thou me good?* When thou wilt neither own me to be God, nor to come from God! *For there is none good*, that is, essentially and originally good *but God only*: nor any derivatively good, but he that receives his goodness from God also. From this place the Socinians argue against the divinity of Christ; thus, "He to whom the title of good doth not belong, cannot be God most high. But by our Lord's words this title belongs not to him, but only to God the Father; therefore God the Father must be God alone." Answer, Christ may be supposed to speak to this young man thus, "Thou gavest me a title which was never given to the most renowned rabbins, and which agrees to God alone; now thou oughtest to believe that there is something in me more than human. If thou conceivest that this title of good doth belong to me." Observe, 2. That our Saviour might convince him of the error of the pharisees, who believed that they might, without the knowledge of him, the true Messiah, enter into life by keeping the law of God, according to that lax and loose interpretation which they, the pharisees, had given of it: he bids him, *Keep the commandments*. Where note, Christ calls him off from outward ceremonies, which the pharisees abounded in, to the practice of moral duties; yet withal lets him understand, that if he expected salvation by the moral law, he must keep it perfectly and exactly, without the least deficiency, which is an impossibility to man in his lapsed state. Learn, 1. That such as seek justification and salvation by the works of the law only must keep the whole law only, or covenant of works, perfectly and exactly. Learn, 2. That the best

way to prepare men for Jesus Christ, is, to let them see their own impotency to keep and fulfil the covenant of works.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.

19 Honor thy father, and *thy* mother : and Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; What lack I yet?

Observe here, That the duties which our Saviour instances in, are the duties of the second table, which hypocrites are most failing in; but the sincere practice of our duty to our neighbour, is a singular evidence of our love to God. These duties of the second table the young man says he had kept from his youth, and perhaps might say it truly according to the pharisees' interpretation, which condemned only the gross, outward act, not the inward lusts and motions of the heart. Learn hence, How apt men are to think well of themselves, and have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God: *All these have I kept from my youth.*

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

That is, "Thou hast been all thy days a pharisee; if now thou wilt be a christian, thou must maintain a readiness and disposition of mind to part with all that thou hast in this world at my call and at my command, and follow after me." Learn, That such as enter themselves disciples of Christ, must be ready at Christ's call to part with all, for Christ's sake, that they have in this world. All that profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, must be his followers: that is, that they must obey his doctrine, and imitate his example, his holiness, his humility; his heavenly mindedness, his patience, his meekness, his readiness to forgive injuries: "and the same mind must be in us which was in Christ Jesus."

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

This parting with all for Christ seemed so hard a condition to the young man, that he went away sorrowful from Christ. Whence learn, 1. That a man wedded to the world will renounce Christ rather than the world, when both stand in competition. 2. That unregenerate and carnal men are exceeding sorrowful, and sadly concerned, that they cannot

have heaven upon their own terms, and win it in their own way. *The young man went away sorrowful.*

23 ¶ Then Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our blessed Saviour takes occasion, from what had passed, to discourse with his disciples concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulties that attend rich men in their way to salvation. *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Whence note, 1. That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven, than other men; it is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their abundance. It is difficult to depend upon God in a rich condition. "The poor committeth himself to God, but the rich man's wealth is his strong tower." 2. That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men; who by placing their trust and putting their confidence in riches, do render themselves incapable of the kingdom of God.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!

These words were a proverbial speech among the Jews to signify a thing of great difficulty, next to an impossibility; and they import thus much: "That it is not only a very great difficulty, and an impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth to be saved, without an extraordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for a rich man to become happy even by God, because he thinks himself happy without God."

25 When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

The disciples understanding how naturally and strongly men love the world, and how idolatrously and inordinately their hearts run out upon it, they say unto Christ, *Lord, who then can be saved?* Learn, 1. That when the general difficulties which lie in the way to salvation, are laid forth, and sufficiently understood, we may justly wonder that any are or shall be saved. 2. That such are the special and peculiar difficulties in the rich man's way to heaven, that his salvation is matter of wonder and great admiration to the disciples of Christ. "When the disciples heard this, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?"

26 But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

As if Christ had said, "Were all men left to themselves, no man either rich or poor would be saved: but God can

bring men to heaven by the mighty power of his grace: he can make the rich in estate, poor in spirit; and them that are poor in this world, rich in grace." Learn, 1. That it is impossible for any man rich or poor, by his own natural strength, to get to heaven. 2. That when we are discouraged with a sense of our impotency, we should consider the power of God, and act our faith upon it: *With God all things are possible.*

27 ¶ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles having heard our Saviour's command to the young man to sell all and give to the poor, St. Peter, in the name of the rest, tells Christ, that they had left all, and followed him; *Behold, we have left all.* Where note, How Peter magnifies that little which he had left for Christ, and ushers it in with a note of observation and admiration also, *Behold! we have forsaken all, what shall we have then?* Learn thence, That although it be very little that we suffer for Christ, and less that we have to forsake upon his account, yet we are apt to magnify and extol it as if it were some great matter, *Lord, we have forsaken all.* What all! His tattered fisher-boat, and ragged nets; scarce worthy to be mentioned: yet how is it magnified! *Behold, Lord, we have left all!* But observe our Lord's kind and glorious answer; "You that have left all to follow me, shall be no losers by me: for in the *regeneration*, that is, at the resurrection when believers shall be perfectly renewed, both in soul and body, and shall enjoy my kingdom, then as I sit upon the throne of my glory, so shall you sit with me in a higher degree of dignity and honor, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*; that is, the Jews first, for their unbelief, and then all other despisers of gospel grace and mercy." Learn, 1. That such ministers as do most service for Christ, and forsake most to follow him, shall, in his kingdom, partake of most honor and dignity with him and from him. 2. That as the ministers of Christ in general, so his twelve apostles in particular, shall sit nearer the throne of Christ, and have an higher place in glory at the great day, than ordinary believers.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

The foregoing promises, verse 28, respected the apostles; this, all christians, who forsake the dearest enjoyments for Christ: he assures them, they shall be recompensed in this life an hundred-fold; how? *Non formaliter sed eminenter*: Not in *specie*, but in *valor*: not in *kind*, but in *equivalence*: not an hundred brethren or sisters, or lands, but first, He shall have that in God, which all creatures would not be to him if they were multiplied an hundred times. Secondly, The gifts and graces, the comforts and consolations, of the Holy Spirit, shall be an hundred-fold better portion than any thing we can part with for the sake of Christ and his gospel here. Though we may be losers for Christ, yet shall we never be losers by him. Christ gives present recompences, as well as future rewards; inasmuch that they who have suffered and lost most for Christ have never complained of their sufferings or losses. Therefore never be afraid to lose any thing for Christ, he will not only see you indemnified, but plentifully rewarded: in this world an hundred-fold: in that to come, life eternal.

30 But many *that are first* shall be last; and the last *shall* be first.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words: the first respects the Jews and Gentiles in general: the second, all professors of christianity in particular. "The Jews (as if Christ had said) look upon themselves as first and nearest to the kingdom of heaven, but for their infidelity they shall be last in it; that is never shall come there. And the gentiles, who were looked upon as dogs, and farthest from heaven, shall be first there, upon their conversion to me, and faith in me." As the words respect all professors, the sense is, many that are first in their own esteem, and in the opinion of others, and forward in a profession of religion, yet at the day of judgment they will be last, and least in mine and my Father's estimation and account. And many that were little in their own, and less in the esteem of others, who had a less name and vogue in the world, yet shall be first and highest in my favor." Learn hence, That the day of judgment will frustrate a great many persons' expectations, both as touching others, and concerning themselves. Many will miss of heaven, and be last, who looked upon themselves to be first. And many will find others in heaven, whom they least expected there. "The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth:" We judge of man by outward appearances, "but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." He can neither be deceived, nor deceive.

CHAPTER XX.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place.

4 And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard: and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth, and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us, He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of this parable; but both analogical. One of which relates to the calling of the Gentiles. The Jews were the first people that God had in the world; they were hired into the vineyard betimes in the morning, the Gentiles not till the day was far spent: yet shall the Gentiles, by the favor and bounty of God, receive the same reward of eternal life, which was promised to the Jews who bore the heat of the day, while the Gentiles stood idle. In the other analogical sense we may understand all persons indefinitely called by the gospel into the visible church, those that are called last shall be rewarded together with the first; and accordingly the design and scope of this parable, is to show the freeness of the divine grace, in the distribution of those rewards which the hand of mercy confers upon God's faithful servants. The vineyard is the church of God, the husbandman is God himself; the laborers are particular persons. God's going at diverse times into his vineyard, imports the several ages of man's life; some are called early in the morning, some at noon, others at night. Now when God comes to dispense his rewards, those that entered first into the vineyard and did most service for God, shall be plentifully rewarded by him; and such as came in later, but did faithful service, shall not miss of a merciful reward. Learn, 1. That so long as a person keeps out of Christ's vineyard and service, he is idle. Every unregenerate man is an idle man. 2 That persons are called by the preaching of the gospel at several ages and periods of life into God's vineyard; that is, into the communion of the visible church. 3. That such as do come, though late, into God's vineyard, and work diligently, and faithfully, shall not miss of a reward of grace at the hand of free mercy.

8 So when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

(No 6)

9 And when they came that *were* hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more: and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the good man of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny?

14 Take *that* thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own; Is thine eye evil because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen.

Here observe, 1. That the time of God's full rewarding of his laborers, is the evening of their days; that is, when their work is done. "When the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard called his laborers, and gave them their hire;" not but that they have part of their reward in hand, but it is chiefly laid up in hope. Observe, 2. That though God makes no difference in his servants' wages for the time of their work, yet he will make a difference for the degrees of their service. Undoubtedly, they that have done most work, shall receive most wages. "He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully: God will reward every man according to his works:" that is, not only according to the nature and quality, but the measure and degree, of his work. All shall have equity, but all shall not have equal bounty. Observe, 3. That all inequality in the distribution of rewards, doth not make God an unjust acceptor of persons; he may dispense both grace and glory, in what measure and degree he pleases, without the least shadow of unrighteousness. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Observe, 4. That when we have done much service for God, by laboring longer than others in his vineyard, it is our duty to have a low esteem, both of our services and of ourselves, for the first shall be last, and the last first: that is, they that are first and highest in their own esteem, shall be the last and least in God's account.

17 ¶ And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

X

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is now the third time that Christ had acquainted his disciples very lately with his approaching sufferings, and bloody passion. He did it twice before, chap. xvi, and chap. xvii. yet now he mentions it again, that they might not be dismayed, and their faith might not be shaken to see him die, who called himself the true Messiah, and the Son of God. The first time he told his disciples of his death in general; the second time he declares the means, by treason; now he tells them the manner, by crucifying; that he should be scourged, mocked, spit upon, and crucified: all this he did to prevent his disciples' dejection at his sufferings. Learn thence, That it is highly necessary that the doctrine of the cross be preached to us; that so being armed with expectation of sufferings before they come, we may be the less dismayed and disheartened when they come. Our Lord's frequent fore-warning his disciples of his death and sufferings, was to fore-arm them with expectation of his, and with preparation for their own.

20 ¶ Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

To sit on the right hand, and on the left, is to have the most eminent places of dignity and honor after Christ. This the mother might be encouraged to ask for James and John because of their alliance to Christ, and because Christ had admitted them with Peter to be with him at his transfiguration. However, the rest of his disciples hearing of this ambitious request of the two brethren: and being as desirous, and in their own opinions as deserving of the same honor, they had indignation against them. Whence note, That none of the disciples did imagine that Christ had promised the supremacy to Peter, by these words, *Tu es Petrus*, Thou art Peter; for then neither James nor John had desired it, nor would the rest have contended for it. Observe here, 1. The persons making this request to Christ, Zebedee's children, that is, James and John, by the mouth of their mother. They spake by her lips, and made use of her tongue to usher in a request, which they were ashamed to make themselves. Observe, 2. The request itself. "Grant that these two may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the

other on thy left hand." Where note, How these disciples did still dream of Christ's temporal kingdom, (although he had so often told them, *That his kingdom was not of this world*) and ambitiously seek to have preference and pre-eminence in that kingdom. See here how these poor fishermen had already learnt craftily to fish for preferment. Who can wonder to see some sparks of ambition and worldly desires in the holiest ministers of Christ, when the apostles themselves were not free from aspiring thoughts, even when they lay in the bosom of their Saviour? Ambition has all along infested churchmen, and troubled the church, even from the very first original and foundation of it. Observe, 3. Both the unseasonableness and unreasonableness of this request made by the disciples. Christ speaks of his sufferings to them, and they sue for dignity and great places from him, *in optimis non nihil est pessimi*; the holiest, the wisest, and the best of men, in their imperfect state, are not wholly free from passionate infirmities. Who would have expected, that when our Saviour had been preaching the doctrine of the cross to his disciples, telling them that he must be mocked, scourged, spit upon, and crucified for them, that they should be seeking and suing to him for secular dignity and honor, pre-eminence and power? But we plainly see, the best of men are but men, and that none are in a state of perfection on this side of heaven.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask: Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

As if Christ had said, "You do but abuse yourselves with fond and idle dreams; there is other work cut out for you in the purpose of God, than sitting upon thrones and tribunals; to think of suffering would do you more service." And accordingly our Saviour, in his answer, tells these disciples, 1. That they were greatly ignorant of the nature and quality of his kingdom, which was not secular but heavenly: but the carnal notion of a glorious earthly kingdom upon earth, in which they should be delivered from the Roman power, was so deeply imprinted in their minds, that they frequently declare their expectation of it, notwithstanding all the assurances which Christ had given them of the contrary. Observe, 2. The course which our Saviour takes to cool the ambition of his disciples; he tells them, they must expect here, not crowns on their heads, but a cross on their backs; they must first taste of his sufferings, before they talk of his glory; and patiently suffer for him, before they expect to reign with him; plainly intimating, that the cross is the way to the crown, suffering the way to reigning, and that those that suffer most for Christ, shall partake of highest dignity and glory from him. Observe, The presumptuous confidence which the disciples had of their own strength and ability for suffering. *Are ye able*, says Christ, *to drink of my cup?* They replied, *We are able*, Alas! poor disciples! when it came to the trial; they all cowardly forsook him and fled. A bold presumption

makes us vaunt of our own ability: holy jealousy makes us distrustful of our own strength. Those that are least acquainted with the cross, are usually the most confident undertakers.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink, indeed, of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Observe here, our blessed Saviour's wonderful mildness and goodness towards his disciples; he doth not with passion, much less with indignation, reprehended them, either for their ambition or presumption, but makes the best of their answer, and encourages their good intentions: he tells them, they should have the honor to share with him in his sufferings, to pledge him in his own cup, and after a conformity to him in his sufferings, they might expect to be sharers with him in his glory. Yet observe, That when Christ says, *That to sit at his right hand, was not his to give*; he means, as he was man, or as he was mediator; for elsewhere, as God, we find him asserting his power to dispose of the kingdom of heaven; John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life*. However, the Arians of old, and Socinians of late, do from this text infer, that God the Father has a power reserved to himself, which he hath not committed to Christ his Son; from whence they would conclude, that he is not the same God which the Father is, because he hath not the same power which the Father has. Answer, But if Christ be here supposed to deny his power to himself, he must then manifestly contradict himself, when he says, *I appoint to you a kingdom, and all power in heaven and earth is given to me*. When Christ, therefore, saith, he could only give this to them for whom it was appointed of his Father, this doth not signify any defect in his power, but a perfect conformity to his Father's will, and that he could no do this, unless the divine essence and nature abided in him. This the words rather show, than that there is any want of power in Christ.

24 And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Note here, 1. That Christ, by these words, doth not forbid the exercise of civil dominion and lawful magistracy; for then all order, all defence of good men, and punishment of evil-doers would be taken away. Magistracy is God's ordinance; and the magistrate is God's minister for the good of human society, and consequently not here censured or condemned by Christ. True, when Christ was here on earth he refused to execute the magistrate's office, because his kingdom was not of this world, and because he would give no umbrage to Cesar or the Jews; and because he would leave us an example of humility and contempt of worldly grandeur, and not because the office of civil magistracy was unlawful. Note, 2. That Christ by this text doth not condemn the exercise of ecclesiastical government, that being as necessary in the church, as the former in the state. The welfare of the church necessarily depends on the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. Note, 3. Christ here forbids only the exercise of that dominion which is attended with tyranny and oppression, and is managed according to men's wills and lusts. Now says Christ, you shall have no such government, you shall command nothing for mere will and pleasure, but your whole office shall consist in being ministers to the good of others: and herein ye shall resemble *me the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*. And accordingly, that Christ might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in his apostles' minds, he tells them, that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to evangelical pastors, who ought to carry themselves with humility towards one another: not that Christ directs to a purity and equality amongst all his ministers, and forbids the pre-eminence of some over others; but the affectation of superiority, and the love of pre-eminency, is that which our Saviour disallows. Learn, 1. That so far ought the ministers of Christ to be from affecting a domination and superiority of power over their fellow brethren, that, in imitation of Christ their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants, *I am amongst you*, says Christ, *as one that serveth*. 2. That such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminency and superiority, are most unfit for it; and they deserve it best, who seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honor which the ministers of Christ should chiefly and only affect, is in another world; and the way to be greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble here, mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem. *Whosoever will be chief*, says Christ, *let him be your servant*.

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

To encourage his disciples to the forementioned condescending humility one towards another, our Saviour propounds to them his own instructive example, *I came not to be ministered unto*, says Christ, *but to minister* to the wants and necessities of others, both for soul and body. "O what a sight will it be, as if our Lord had said, to behold an humble God, and a proud creature; an humble Saviour, and an haughty sinner!" Yea, our Lord urges his example farther, that as he laid down his life for us, so should we be ready to lay down our lives for one another. Did Christ lay down his life for us, and shall we

not only lay down a lust for him? our pride, our ambition, our affectation of dignity and superiority over others? Note here two things: 1. Whereas it is said that Christ gave his life a ransom for many; it is elsewhere affirmed that he tasted death for every man, even for them that *denied the Lord who bought them*. The word *many*, in other places of scripture, is not exclusive of some, but inclusive of all. Thus Dan. xii. 2. "Many that sleep in the dust shall arise;" answer, St John v. 28, 29. "All that sleep in the grave shall hear his voice" Thus Rom v. 15. "Through the offence of one many died;" answer, 1st Cor. xv. 22. "In Adam all died"

There is a virtual sufficiency in the death of Christ for the salvation of mankind, and an actual efficacy for the salvation of them that repent, and believe, and obey the gospel. Note, 2. From these words, *he gave his life a ransom*. That Christ suffered in our stead, and died in our place, and gave his life instead of ours. It was the constant opinion both of the Jews and Gentiles, that their piacular victims were ransoms for the life of the offender, and that he who gave his life for another, suffered in his stead, to preserve him from death. And who can reasonably suppose, but that our Lord intended by saying, he gave himself a ransom, that he gave his life instead of the lives of those for whom he suffered? Vain are the Socinians, when they say this price was to be paid to satan, because he detained us captive: True; the price is to be paid to him that detains the captive, when he doth this for gain to make money of him, as the Turks detain the christians captive at Algiers; but when a man is detained in custody for violation of a law, then it is not the gaoler, but the legislature, to whom the price of redemption must be paid, or satisfaction be made. Accordingly this price was paid to God; for Christ became our ransom, as he offered up his life and blood for us: now he offered himself without spot to God. Heb. ix. 14. he therefore paid the price of our redemption to God.

29 ¶ And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou Son of David*.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou Son of David*.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, That our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

This chapter concludes with a famous miracle, wrought by Christ upon two blind men, in the sight of a great multitude, which followed him. Where observe, 1. The blind men's faith in acknowledging Jesus to be the true Messiah, for so much the title of the *Son of David* signifies. Observe, 2. Their fervency, in crying so earnestly to Christ for mercy and healing: *Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David*. A true sense of want will make us cry unto Christ for help earnestly, and with undeniable importunity. Observe, 3. The great condescension of Christ towards these poor blind men: "He stood still, he called them, he had compassion on them, he touched their eyes and healed them." A mighty instance of Christ's divine power. He that can open blind eyes with the touch of his finger, and that by his own power, is really God, his touch is an omnipotent touch. Observe, 4. Although Christ well knew the condition of these blind men, yet before he will restore them to sight they must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for mercy and healing. Learn hence, That although Christ, perfectly knows all our wants, yet he takes no notice of them till we make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. The best way and course which the blind men take to express their thankfulness to Christ for recovered sight, *they followed him*. Learn hence, That mercy from Christ is then rightly improved, when it engages us to follow Christ. This should be the effect of all salvation wrought for us. He praiseth God best, that serveth and obeyeth him most: the life of thankfulness consists in the thankfulness of the life.

CHAPTER XXI.

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples.

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

The former part of this chapter gives us an account of our Saviour's solemn and triumphant riding into the city of Jerusalem. Where observe, That in all our Saviour's journeys and travels from place to place, he constantly went like a poor man, on foot, without noise, and without train; now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for sinners, he rides, to show his great cheerfulness in that service, and his forwardness to lay down his life for us. But what doth he ride upon? An ass, according to the manner of great persons amongst the Jews; but especially to fulfil the prophecy, Zech. ix. 9. that the Messiah, a King of the Jews, "should come riding upon an ass." But this ass was a colt, the foal of an ass, on which never man had rode before," says St. Mark, chap. xi. 12; signifying thereby, that the most unruly and untamed creatures be-

come obedient and obsequious to him: and upon a *borrowed ass*, the use of which he demands, thereby manifesting his sovereign right to all the creatures; and accordingly, he bids his disciples tell the owner of the ass, *That the Lord hath need of them; not our Lord but the Lord*; that is, he that is the Lord of all, *whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills*; he that is Lord of all the beasts and the owners too. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Christ's supreme right to the ass and the colt, he will have neither of them taken without the owner's knowledge, or against his will; but the disciples must acquaint him with it, and by a double argument move him to it. 1. Christ's right of dominion and sovereignty over them; he is *the Lord* that sends for them. 2. His present occasion for them; the *Lord has need of them*. Note also here, A wonderful instance of Christ's prescience or foreknowledge, even in the most minute and smallest matters. 1. You shall find a colt. 2. On which no man ever sat. 3. A colt tied and bound with its dam. 4. In the place where two ways met. 5. As they entered the village. 6. That the owner should be willing to let him go. Such an exact knowledge had Christ of persons and actions, even of the circumstances of actions.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Here the reason is assigned why Christ rode upon the ass into Jerusalem; it was to fulfil an ancient prophecy, that the Messiah, or king of the Jews should come riding upon that beast into Jerusalem. There was not any prophecy of Christ more plainly fulfilled than this. The prophecy alluded to, is Zech. ix. 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass; and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Where note the character given of the Messiah; he is the Supreme King and Governor of his church, *thy King cometh*. The errand that he comes upon, *bringing salvation*: and the entertainment which his church was to give him; namely, to receive him with triumph of joy, and universal acclamations. "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; and shout O Jerusalem for joy."

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them.

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

(No. 6)

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Observe here, 1. The obedience of his disciples, and the motions of the multitude; the disciples never dispute their Lord's commands, nor raise objections, nor are afraid of dangers, but speedily execute their Lord's pleasure, and find every thing according to their Lord's predictions. When our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy. What God commands we are not to dispute, but to obey. *The disciples did as Jesus commanded them*. Observe, 2. The actions of the multitude in acknowledging Christ to be their king; *They cast their garments on the ground* for him to ride upon, according to the custom of princes when they rode in state; and they do not only disrobe their backs, but expand their breath in joyful acclamations and loud Hosannas, wishing all manner of prosperity to this meek but mighty king. In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter into that famous city of Jerusalem. O how far was our holy Lord from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur! He despised that glory which worldly hearts fondly admire; yet because he was a king, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, applauded and blest; but that it might appear, *that his kingdom was not of this world*, he abandons all worldly magnificence. O glorious, yet homely pomp! O meek, but mighty prince.

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

This is not the first or only time that Jerusalem was moved and troubled at the appearance of Christ; at his birth, Mat. ii. we read all *Jerusalem was troubled*, together with Herod; and now that he rides into Jerusalem, though in so mean a port, yet there is a new commotion. Jerusalem, instead of being thankful for his company, is troubled at his presence. Thence learn, That such persons and places as have the greater helps and privileges afforded them, are not always the most answerable in their returns of thankfulness. It is not Christ's presence with us, but his welcome to us, that makes us happy. *Christ is daily taught in our synagogues, and preached in our streets*: yet alas! multitudes are ignorant of him, and say, with the men of Jerusalem, when Christ was before their eyes, *Who is this?*

12 ¶ And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of

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prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves:

Our blessed Saviour having entered Jerusalem, Observe, his first walk was not to the palace, but to the temple, and his work there was to purge and reform: all reformation of manners must begin first at the house of God. Our Lord's business was to reform the temple, not to ruin it. Places dedicated to the service of God, if profaned and polluted, ought to be purged from their abuses, not pulled down and destroyed, because they have been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple, which so offended our Saviour? Answer, within the third or outward court of the temple, there was a public mart or market held, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, and such things as were needful for sacrifice: many of the Jews coming an hundred miles to the temple, it was burdensome to bring their sacrifices so far with them: wherefore order was taken by the priest, that sheep and oxen, meal and oil, and all other requisites for sacrifice should be had for money, close by the altar, to the great ease of the offerer. Nothing could be more plausible than this plea. But the fairest pretences cannot bear out a sin with God; therefore our blessed Saviour, in indignation at so foul an abuse, whips out these chapmen, casts down their tables, and vindicates the honor and reputation of his Father's house. Learn thence, That there is a reverence due to God's house, for the owner's sake, and for the service sake. Nothing but holiness can become that place, where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Observe lastly, The reason which our Saviour gives for this act of his; for, says he, *It is written, My house shall be called an house of prayer.* Where by *prayer* is to be understood, the whole worship and service of Almighty God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house, is certainly the chief work to be done in that house. Now God's house being called an house of prayer, certainly implies that prayer is the chief and principal work to be performed in his house; yet must we take heed that we set not the ordinances of God at variance one with another; we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another; but pay an awful respect and regard to all the institutions of our Maker.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple: and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.

Observe here, 1. That our blessed Saviour works his miracles not secretly in a corner, but openly in the temple,

and submits them to the examination of all persons' senses. A miracle is a supernatural action, which is obvious to sense. Popish miracles are talked of by many, but seen by none. Observe, 2. That Christ's enemies are never more incensed, than when his divine power is most exerted, and his divine nature owned and acknowledged. "When the chief priests saw the miracles which Jesus did, and heard the children crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased." Observe, 3. That Christ can glorify himself by the mouths of babes and sucklings: he can form and fit up what instruments he pleases, to show forth his excellencies, and celebrate his praises. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise."

17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

18 Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it. Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig-tree withered away.

Our blessed Saviour having driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, lodges not that night in Jerusalem, but withdraws to Bethany, a place of retirement from the noise and tumult of the city. Where note, Our Lord's love of solitude and retiredness. How delightful is it to a good man to dwell sometimes within himself, *to take the wings of a dove, and fly away, and be at rest.* Yet the next morning our Lord returns to the city: he knew when to be solitary, and when to be sociable: when to be alone, and when to converse in company. In his passage to the city, he espied a fig-tree; and being an hungered (to show the truth of his humanity) he goes to the fig-tree, and finds it full of leaves, but without any fruit. Displeased with this disappointment, he curses the tree which had just deceived his expectations. This action of our Saviour, in cursing the barren fig-tree was typical; an emblem of the destruction of Jerusalem in general, and of every person in particular, that satisfies himself with a withered profession, bearing leaves only, but no fruit. As this *fig-tree* was, so are they, nigh unto cursing. Learn thence, That such as content themselves with a fruitless profession of religion, are in great danger of having God's blasting added to their barrenness.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this

which is done to the fig tree, but, also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea: it shall be done.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.

The disciples being filled with admiration at the sudden withering of the fig-tree, thereupon our Saviour exhorts them to have *faith in God*; that is, firmly to rely upon the power of God whereby he is able, upon the goodness of God whereby he is willing, to perform his promises to us. Learn, That faith is a necessary ingredient in prayer. Praying without faith, is like shooting without a bullet; it makes a noise, but doth no execution. 2. That whatsoever good thing God has made the matter of a promise, shall be given to good men, praying in faith. *Whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.* Yet note, That the faith here promised to root up mountains, must be restrained to that age of miracles, and to the persons to whom this was spoken, namely, the apostles and first propagators of the gospel: it being certain from experience, that this is no ordinary and perpetual gift of christians.

23 ¶ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, I, also, will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I, in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we say, Of men: we fear the people: for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The pharisees having often questioned our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now: although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his divine miracles. Almighty God never empowered any to work miracles that were not sent by him. When the adversaries of Christ can object nothing against his doctrine, they then quarrel with him about his commission and calling, and demand by what authority he doth

teach and work miracles. Our blessed Saviour well understanding their drift and design, answers them one question by asking them another. *The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?* Was it of divine institution or of human invention? Implying, that the calling of such as call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God. "No man ought to take this honor upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Heb. v. 4. The pharisees reply they could not tell whence John had his mission and authority. This was a manifest untruth; by refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lie. One sin ensnares, and draws men into the commission of more. Such as will not speak exact truth, according to their knowledge, they fall into the sin of lying against their conscience. Our Saviour answers them, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.* He doth not say, I cannot, or I will not tell you: but I do not, I need not tell you: because the miracles which I work before you, are sufficient demonstration of my divine commission, that I am sent of God amongst you; for God never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie, or impowered an impostor to work real miracles.

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said, likewise. And he answered and said *I go, sir*; and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, the first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

The design and scope of this parable is to show, That *publicans and harlots*, that is, the vilest, the profanest, and worst of sinners, who upon the hearing of Christ's doctrine and miracles did repent and believe, were in a much better condition than the proud pharisees, who though they pretended to great measures of knowledge, and high degrees of holiness, yet did obstinately oppose Christ, disobey his doctrines, deny his miracles, and set at nought his person. Learn hence, That the greatest, the vilest, and the worst of sinners, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, shall much sooner find acceptance with God, than proud pharisaical

Justiciaries, who confidently rely upon their own righteousness: *Publicans and harlots*, says Christ here to the pharisees, *shall go into the kingdom of God before you*. Publicans were the worst sort of men, and harlots the worst kind of women; yet did these repent sooner, and believed in Christ before the proud pharisees. The reason was because their hearts lay more open to the strokes of conviction, than those that were blinded by vain hopes and presumptuous confidence. Security frustrates all means of recovery.

33 ¶ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And, when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught *him*, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew *him*.

In this parable, God compares the Jewish church to a vineyard: himself to an householder: his planting, pruning and fencing his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it spiritually fruitful. His *letting it out to husbandmen*, signifies his committing the care of his church to the priests and levites, the public pastors and governors of the church. His servants are the prophets and the apostles, whom he sent from time to time, to admonish them to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost which God had expended on them. His son is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish church slew and murdered. The scope of the parable is to discover to the Jews, particularly to the pharisees, their obstinate impenitency under all means, their bloody cruelty to the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the Son of God; for all which, God would unchurch them finally, and ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles, that should bring forth better fruit than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole note,

1. That the church is God's vineyard, exceeding dear and precious to the planter and the owner of it. 2. As dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent his giving it to other husbandmen, is to give him the fruits of it. It is but a vineyard that God lets out, it is no inheritance; no people ever had so many promises of God's favor as the Jews had, nor ever enjoyed so many privileges whilst they stood in his favor, as they did; yet though they were the first, "and the natural branches, they are broken off, and we Gentiles stand by faith; let us not be high minded, but fear." Rom. xi. 20.

40 When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Observe here, At the first mentioning of the parable the pharisees express a bitter indignation against such wicked servants, not considering what a dreadful sentence they passed upon themselves and their own nation. Little did they think, that thereby they condemned their temple to be burnt, their city to be destroyed, their country to be ruined; but in these words they vindicate God, they condemn themselves, and own the justice of God, in inflicting the severest punishments on them.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Which words are the application that our Saviour makes of the foregoing parable concerning the vineyard; which the chief priests and pharisees did not apprehend themselves to be concerned in, till he brought the application of it home unto them. *Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, &c.* Note, 1. The greatest mercy that God can bestow upon any people, is his giving his kingdom to them; that is, all gospel ordinances, and church privileges leading to the kingdom of heaven. 2. Observe the terms upon which God either gives or continues his kingdom to a church and nation, And that is, *upon bringing forth the fruits thereof*. Learn, 3. That the greatest judgment which can befall a people, is the taking away the kingdom of God from them. *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given, &c.*

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

These words are taken out of the cxviiith Psalm, which the Jews understood to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and accordingly Christ applies them to himself. The church is the *building* intended, Christ himself the *stone* rejected; the *rejecters* or the *builders rejecting*, were the heads of the Jewish church; that is, the chief priests and pharisees. God, the great master-builder of his church, takes this precious *foundation-stone* out of the rubbish, and sets it in the *head of the corner*. Nevertheless, there are those who stumble at this stone. Some through ignorance, others through malice, stumble at his person, at his doctrine, at his institutions: "these shall be broken in pieces: but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder." That is, Christ himself will fall as a burden-some stone upon all those that knowingly and maliciously oppose him; and particularly upon the Jews, who not only rejected him, but persecuted and destroyed him. Thus Christ tells the chief priests and pharisees their own particular doom, and also declares what will be the fatal issue of all that opposition which is made against himself and his church. It will terminate in their inevitable and irreparable destruction. Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." That is, "He that stumbles on this stone, while Christ is here on earth, being offended at his doctrine, life, and miracles, shall be broken by his fall upon it; as the person stoned is by the sharp stone which he falls upon. But he on whom this stone shall fall, when Christ is elevated to his throne of glory, shall be more violently shattered by it, as is the person stoned by the great stone as big as two men can lift, thrown down violently upon his breast."

45 And when the chief priests and pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

When the chief priests came to understand that the parables were all applied to them, that they were the *murderers of the king's son*, that they were the *builders that rejected the chief corner-stone*, they were enraged at the close application made to themselves; and had not fear restrained them, they would have laid violent hands upon him. Learn thence, That nothing doth more provoke and exasperate unsound hypocrites than the particular application, and close coming home of the word of God unto their hearts and consciences. So long as the truths of God are generally delivered, sinners are easy, looking upon themselves as unconcerned, but when the word of God comes close to them, and says, *Thou art the man*, this is thy wickedness; they are angry at the message, and rage at the messenger.

CHAPTER XXII.

AND Jesus answered, and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize;

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them *spitefully*, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10 So those servants went out into the *high-ways*, and gathered together all, as many as they found both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11 ¶ And, when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The design and scope of this parable of the marriage-supper, is to set forth that gracious offer of mercy and salvation, which was made by God in and through the preaching of the gospel to the church of the Jews. The gospel is here compared to a *feast*, because in a feast there is plenty, variety, and dainties. Also to a *marriage-feast*, being full of joy, delight and pleasure. And to a *marriage-feast made by the king* as being full of state, magnificence, and grandeur. To this marriage-feast or gospel-supper, Almighty God invited the church of the Jews, and the servants, sent forth to invite them, were the prophets and the apostles in general, and John the Baptist in particular, whom they intreated spitefully and slew. *The making light of the invitation*, signifies the generality of the Jews' refusal and careless contempt of the offer of grace in the gospel. By the "armies which God sent forth to destroy those murderers," are meant the Roman soldiers, who spoiled and laid waste the city of Jerusalem, and were the severe executioners of God's wrath and judgment upon the wicked Jews. *The highways* signify the despised Gentiles, who upon the Jews' refusal were invited to this supper, and prevailed with to come in. *The king's coming to see the guests*, denotes that inspection which Christ makes into his church, in the times of the gospel. By the *man without the wedding garment*, understand such as are destitute of true grace and real holiness, both in heart and life. In the examination of him, Christ says, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* not Friends, why came ye along with him? Teaching us, that if unholy persons will press into the Lord's Supper, the sin is theirs; but if we come not, because they will come the sin is ours. The presence of an unholy person at the Lord's table, ought not to discourage us from our duty, or cause us to turn our back upon that ordinance. The command to *bind the unqualified person hand and foot, to cast him into outer darkness*, plainly intimates, that the condition of such persons as live under the light, and enjoy the liberty of the gospel, but walk not answerably to their profession, is deplorably sad and doleful: they do not only incur damnation, but no damnation like it. "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness." From the whole, Note, 1. That the gospel, for its freeness and fulness, for its varieties and delicacies, is like a marriage-supper. 2. That gospel-invitations are mightily disesteemed. 3. That the preference which the world has in men's esteem is a great cause of the gospel's contempt. "They went one to his farm, and another to his merchandize." 4. That such as are careless in the day of grace, shall undoubtedly be speechless in the day of judgment. 5. That Christ takes a more particular notice of every guest that cometh to his royal supper, than any of his ministers do take, or can take. There was but one person without the wedding garment, and he falls under the eye and view of Christ. 6. That it is not sufficient that we come, but clothed we must be before we come, if ever we expect a gracious welcome to Christ's Supper; clothed with sincerity, clothed with humility; clothed with love and charity; if we be not thus clothed we shall appear naked to our shame, and bear that dreadful charge. "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth." See Luke xiv. 17.

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

This is our blessed Saviour's application of the foregoing parable to the Jews; he tells them that many of them, indeed all of them were called; that is, invited to the gospel supper, but with few, very few of them, was found that sincere faith; and that sound repentance, which doth accompany salvation. Learn thence, That amongst the multitude of those that are called by the gospel unto holiness and obedience, few, very few comparatively, do obey that call, and shall be eternally saved.

15 ¶ Then went the pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us, therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

19 Show me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 When they had heard *these words*, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

Here we have another new design to entangle our blessed Saviour in his discourse. Where observe, 1. The persons employed to put the ensnaring question to our Saviour; namely, *the pharisees and the Herodians*. The pharisees were against paying tribute to Cesar, looking upon themselves as a free people, and the emperor as an usurper. But the Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king of the Jews, was zealous for having the Jews pay tribute to Cesar, and such of the Jews as sided with him, and particularly his courtiers and favorites were called Herodians. Observe, 2. The policy and craft here used, in employing these two contrary sects to put the question to our Saviour concerning tribute; thereby laying him under the necessity (as they hoped) to offend one side, let him answer how he would. If to please the pharisees, he denied paying tribute to Cesar, then he is accused of sedition; if to gratify the Herodians, he voted for paying tri-

bute, then he is looked upon as an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to a popular odium: it has been the old policy of satan, and his instruments to draw the ministers of God into dislike, either with the magistrates or with the people, that they may either fall under the censure of one, or the displeasure of the other. Observe, 3. With what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them: he first calls for the tribute-money, which was the Roman penny, answering to seven-pence half-penny of our money, two of which they paid by way of tribute, or poll-money, for every head to the emperor. Christ asks them, *Whose image or superscription their coin bore?* they answer *Cesar's*; *Render then, says Christ, to Cesar the things that are Cesar's.* As if he had said, "The admitting of the Roman coin amongst you is a testimony that you are under subjection to the Roman emperor, because the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority. Now ye have owned Cesar's authority over you by accepting of his coin as current among you, give unto him his just dues, and render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." Learn hence, That there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it; Mat. xvii. 27. And as Christ is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil duties; so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honor, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights. As Christ requires all his followers to render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, so should princes oblige all their subjects to render unto God the things that are God's.

23 ¶ The same day came unto him the sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren, and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother;

26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore, in the resurrection, Whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31 But, as touching the resurrection of the dead, Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you, by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Our blessed Saviour having put the pharisees and Herodians to silence, next the sadducees encounter him. This sect denied the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and as an objection against both, they propound a question to our Saviour, of a woman that had seven brethren successively to her husbands; they demand, "Whose wife of the seven this woman shall be at the resurrection?" As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies, surely there will be a resurrection of relations too, and the other world will be like this, in which men will marry as they do here. And if so, whose wife of the seven shall this woman be, they all having an equal claim to her? Now our Saviour for resolving of this question, 1. Shows the different states of men in this world, and in the other world. "The children of the world, says Christ, marry and are given in marriage, but in the resurrection they do neither." As if our Lord had said, "After men have lived a time in this world, they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world men shall become immortal, and live for ever; and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease. For when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind." 2. Our Saviour having got clear of the sadducees' objection, by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an argument for the proof of the soul's immortality, and the body's resurrection. Thus, "Those to whom Almighty God pronounced himself a God are alive; but God pronounced himself a God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, many hundred years after their bodies were dead; therefore their souls are yet alive, federally alive unto God; their covenant relation lives still, otherwise God could not be their God; for he is not the God of the dead but of the living. If one relation fails, the other necessarily fails with it; if God be their God, then certainly they are in being, for God is not the God of the dead; that is, of those that are utterly perished. Therefore it must needs be, that although their bodies be naturally dead, yet do their souls still live, and their bodies shall as so live again at the resurrection of the just. From the whole, Note, 1. That there is no opinion so absurd, no error so monstrous, that having had a mother, will die for the lack of a nurse. The beastly opinion of the mortality of the soul, and the annihilation of the body, finds sadducees to profess and propagate it." Note, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, according as they behave themselves here; though some men live like beasts, they shall not die like them; nor shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. That glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection, shall be like unto the glorious

angels; not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility, and in their manner of living; they shall no more stand in need of meat or drink, than the angels do; but shall live the same heavenly, immortal, and incorruptible life, that the angels live. Note, 4. That all those that are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, at the resurrection, shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls. If God be just, the soul must live, and the body must rise: for good men must be rewarded, and wicked men punished: God will most certainly, some time or other, plentifully reward the righteous, and punish the evildoers; but this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires it to be done in the next.

34 ¶ But when the pharisees had heard that he had put the sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them *which was* a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

The sadducees being put by Christ to silence, The pharisees again encounter him; they send to him a lawyer, that is, one of their interpreters and expounders of the law of Moses, who propounds this question to him, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" Our Saviour tells them, "It is to love the Lord with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind." That is, with all the powers, faculties, and abilities of the soul, with the greatest measure and highest degrees of love. This is the sum and substance of the duties of the first table. *And the second is like unto it*, not equal with it, but like unto it. The duties of the second table are of the same authority, and of the same necessity with the first. As a man cannot be saved without the love of God, so neither without the love of his neighbour. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" that is, the whole duty of man, required by Moses and the prophets, is comprehended in, and may be reduced to these two heads, namely, the love of God and our neighbour. From the whole, Note, 1. That the fervency of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due. Love must

pass through and possess all the powers and faculties of the soul; the mind must meditate upon God, the will must choose and embrace him, and the affections must take complacency and delight in him; the measure of loving God, is to love him without measure. God reckons that we love him not at all, if we love him not above all. 1. We must love him above all, *appretiative*; so as to prize him in our judgment and esteem above all, and before all things. 2. We are to love God above all things, *comparative*, preferring his favors above all things, comparatively hating whatever stands in competition with him. 3. We are to love God above all things, *intensive*. That is, our longing desires must run out after him, we must pant and thirst for the enjoyment of him. 4. We must love every thing in subordination to God, and nothing co-ordinately, or equal with God. Note, 2. That thus to love God is the first and great commandment. *Great*, in regard of the object, which is God, the first cause, and the chief Good. *Great*, in regard of the obligation of it. To love God is so indispensable a command, that God himself cannot free us from the obligation of it; for so long as he is God, and we his creatures, we shall lie under a natural and necessary obligation to love and serve him. *Great*, in regard of the duration of it, when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition; love will then be perfected in a full enjoyment. Note, 3. That every man may, yea, ought to love himself, not his sinful self, but his natural self, and especially his spiritual self, the new nature in him. This it ought to be his particular care to increase and strengthen. Indeed there is no express command in scripture for a man to love himself, because the light of nature directs, and the law of nature binds and moves every man so to do. God has put a principle of self-love, and of self-preservation into all his creatures, but especially into man. Note, 4. As every man ought to love himself, so it is every man's duty to love his neighbour as himself. 1. Not as he *does* love himself, but as he *ought* to love himself. 2. Not in the same degree and measure that he loves himself, but after the same manner, and with the same kind of love that he loves himself. As we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly, and compassionately, constantly, and perseveringly, so should we love our neighbour. Though we are not commanded to love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves, yet we are to love him like as we love ourselves. Note lastly, That the duties of the first and second table are inseparable. The love of God and our neighbour, must not be parted. "He that loveth not his neighbour whom he hath seen, never loveth God whom he hath not seen." A conscientious regard to the duties of both tables, will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Let it then be our prayer and daily endeavour, that "we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves." For this is the sum of the law and the substance of the gospel.

41 ¶ While the pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, what think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son of David*.

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son?

46 And no man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more questions.

The pharisees had often put forth several questions maliciously unto Christ, and now Christ puts forth one question innocently unto them; namely, What they thought of the Messiah whom they expected? They reply, that he was to be the Son of David, a secular prince descending from David, that should deliver them from the power of the Romans, and restore them to their civil rights. This was the notion they had of the Messiah, that he should be a man, the Son of David, and nothing more. Our Saviour replies, Whence is it then that David calls the Messiah, Lord? Psalm cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord*; how could he be both David's Lord, and David's son? No son is lord to his father; therefore if Christ were David's sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son. As man, so he was David's son; as God-man, so he was David's Lord. Note hence, That although Christ was truly and really man, yet he was more than a bare man; he was Lord unto, and was the salvation of his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be God and man in one person. The Messiah, as a man, who was to come forth out of David's loins; but as a God-man, he was David's Sovereign and Saviour. As man, he was his father's son; as God, he was Lord to his own father.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

2 Saying, the scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

3 All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not.

The scribes and pharisees, so often mentioned in the gospels, were the great doctors and spiritual guides amongst the Jews. Scribe is the name of an office; pharisee the name of a sect. They were both learned in the law, and teachers of the law of Moses. Our blessed Saviour, in the former part of his gospel, held many conferences with these men, and used the most persuasive arguments to convince (No. 7.)

them both of their errors and wickedness. But their obstinacy and malice being such, that neither our Saviour's ministry nor miracles could convince them; hereupon our Lord denounces, in this chapter, eight several woes against them. But first he charitably warns his disciples and the multitude against the pernicious practices of this sort of men, saying, *The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses' seat*; that is, they teach and expound the law of Moses, which they were wont to do sitting, *Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do*. That is, "What they teach you consonant to the word of God, and agreeable to the writings of Moses and the prophets: if they go not out of Moses' chair into their own unwritten traditions, follow their doctrine, and obey their precepts: but do not after their works, follow not their example, take heed of their pride and hypocrisy, of their ambition and vain-glory. Obey their doctrine wherein it is sound; but follow not their example wherein it is corrupt." Learn, 1. That the personal miscarriages of ministers, must by no means beget a disesteem of their office and ministry. Charity must teach us to distinguish betwixt the calling and the crime. 2. That the infallible truths of God, recommended to us by a vicious teacher, ought to be entertained and obeyed by us, without either scruple or prejudice. What the pharisees themselves, says Christ, bid you observe, *that observe and do*. 3. That no people are obliged to follow their teacher's pattern and example any farther than it is agreeable to scripture rule, and conformable to Christ's example: *Do not after their works, who say and do not*.

4 For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

These heavy burdens which the pharisees laid upon the people's shoulders, were counsels and directions, rules and canons, austerities and severities, which the pharisees introduced and imposed upon their hearers, but would not undergo the least part of those severities themselves. If we do not follow our own counsels, we must not think to oblige our people to follow them. No man ought to press upon others what he is unwilling to perform himself. It is very sinful to give that counsel to others, which we refuse to take to ourselves.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.

6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

In these words our blessed Saviour admonishes his disciples and the multitude to take heed of imitating the pharisees in their ostentation and hypocrisy, in their ambition and vain-glory; and he instances, in three particu-

lars, wherein they expressed it: 1. *All their works*, says Christ, *they do to be seen of men*. To do good works that men may see them, is a duty; but to do all or any of our works to be seen of men, is hypocrisy. 2. "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments." These phylacteries were certain scrolls and labels of parchment, in which were written the ten commandments, and some sections of the law; these they tied to their foreheads, and pinned upon their left sleeve, that the law of God might be continually before their eyes, and perpetually in their remembrance. This ceremony they judged God prescribed them, Deut. vi. 8. "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." By enlarging the borders of their garments, our Saviour points at the fringes and blue ribbons which the Jews did wear upon their garments, in obedience to the command, Numb. xv. 37, 38. As the threads in those fringes and ribbons close woven together, did represent the connection, complication, and inseparable conjunction of God's commandments among themselves; so the wearing of these fringes was to put them in mind of the laws of God, that which way soever they turned their eyes, they might meet with some pious admonition to keep the law of God. Now the vain-glorious pharisees, that they might be thought more mindful of the law of God than other men, did make their phylacteries broader, and their fringes thicker and longer than other men. 3. They fondly affected and ambitiously contended for the first and uppermost seats in all conventions, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, and loved to be respectfully saluted in open and public places, and to have titles of honor, such as *rabbi*, *master*, *father*, and *doctor*, put upon them. Now that which our Saviour condemns, is the pharisees' fond affection of these little things, and unduly seeking their own honor and glory. It was not their taking, *but their loving, the uppermost rooms at feasts*, that Christ condemns. From the whole, note, 1. That hypocrites are fond of affecting ceremonial observations, and outward parts of commanded duties, neglecting the substance of religion itself. These pharisees were carrying a library of God's law on their clothes, scarce a letter of it in their hearts. They wore the law of God, as *frontlets* before their eyes, but not engraven on the tables of their hearts. Observe, 2. That the nature of hypocrisy is to study more to seem religious in the sight of men, than to be religious indeed before God. The hypocrite is the world's saint, and not God's: he courts the world's acceptance, more than the divine favor and approbation.

8 But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even Christ*; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10 Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, *even Christ*.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The word *rabbi* signifies a *doctor* or *teacher*, eminently endowed with a variety of knowledge whose place it was to sit in an exalted chair, or chief seat in the synagogue; their disciples and scholars sat upon lower forms at the feet of their teachers. Our Saviour doth not simply condemn the giving or receiving of these titles, of *rabbi*, *master*, and *father*; but the things forbidden, are, 1. A vain-glorious affectation of such titles as these, the ambitious seeking of them, and glorying in them. 2. He condemns that authority and dominion over the consciences of men, which the pharisaical doctors had usurped; telling the people that they ought to believe all their doctrines, and practise all their injunctions, as the commands of the living God. They did in effect assume infallibility to themselves. Learn hence, 1. That there have been in all ages of the church a sort of teachers, who have usurped authority and dominion over the faith and consciences of men. 2. That christians ought not to submit their faith and conscience in matters of religion to any human authority whatsoever, nor give up themselves absolutely to the conduct of any man's judgment or opinion in matters of faith. 3. That Christ alone, the great prophet and infallible teacher of his church, is the only person to whose doctrine and precepts we owe absolute faith and obedience: *One is our Master, even Christ*. 4. As God will abase, and men will despise the proud, especially ministers who are such; so shall God exalt, and men will honor them that stoop to the meanest services for the good of souls: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased." This was a sentence often used by our Saviour, and was a frequent saying among the Jews.

13 ¶ But woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

From the thirteenth verse to the thirtieth, the pharisees have eight several woes denounced against them by our Saviour; the first is, for perverting the scriptures, and keeping the true sense and knowledge of them from the people. This St. Matthew calls *the shutting up of the kingdom of heaven against men*. St. Luke calls it, *A taking away the key of knowledge from men*, which is an allusion to a known custom among the Jews in admission of their doctors: for those that had authority given them to interpret the law and the prophets, were solemnly admitted into that office, by delivering to them a key and a table-book. So that by the key of knowledge, is meant the interpretation and understanding of the scriptures; and by *taking away the key of knowledge* is signified, first, that they arrogated to themselves alone the understanding of the scriptures. Secondly, that they kept the true knowledge of the scriptures from the people, especially the prophecies which concerned the Messiah, and so they hindered men from embracing our Saviour's doctrine, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it. Learn hence, 1.

That the knowledge of the holy scriptures is absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to salvation. This our Saviour calls *the key*, which lets men into the kingdom of heaven. Learn, 2. That great is the guilt, and inexcusable the fault of those who deprive the people of the knowledge of the scriptures. *They shut the kingdom of heaven against men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal salvation. Men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of knowledge.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

The second woe denounced against the pharisees, is for their gross hypocrisy, in coloring over their covetousness with a pretence of religion: making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to the corban or the common treasure of the temple, some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Learn, 1. It is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloak of religion. The pharisees make long prayers a cover for their covetousness. 2. That to make use of religion in policy for worldly advantage sake, is the way to be damned with a vengeance for religion sake: *Woe unto you scribes, &c.*

15 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and, when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.

The next woe denounced is for their false-ended zeal and earnestness in proselyting heathens to the Jewish religion; not with a pious intention to save them, but to serve themselves upon them, to have their consciences and purses under their power: and when you have poisoned them, says our Saviour, by your corrupt doctrine, and hardened them in a course of sin by your wicked example, *they are more the children of hell than before you practised upon them.* Learn, 1. Great is the diligence and indefatigable the industry which false teachers use in gaining proselytes to their opinion and party: *They compass sea and land to make one proselyte.* 2. That such as are proselyted to error, are oftentimes faster riveted in their false opinions than their teachers themselves: "They are made two-fold more the children of hell than yourselves."

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides! which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor.

17 Ye fools, and blind! for whether is

greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools, and blind! for whether is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso, therefore, shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

The fourth woe which our Saviour denounceeth against the pharisees is for their false and erroneous doctrine concerning oaths. 1. They taught men to swear by the creatures. 2. They taught that some oaths made by the creatures were obligatory and binding, others not; particularly they affirmed, that "If a man swear by the temple, or the altar, it was nothing;" that is, he was not bound by such an oath; but "if a man swear by the gold of the temple, and the altar;" that is, by the gifts offered to the corban, or treasury of the temple, and by the sacrifices and oblations on the altar; such an oath, they affirmed, was binding, because it was for their profit that the gifts on the altar; and the gold brought into the treasury, should be accounted most holy, seeing that would encourage the people to be more ready to contribute and offer. This horrid hypocrisy and covetousness our blessed Saviour here sharply reproves, and shows, that oaths made by the creatures, though unlawful, yet being once made, did oblige, as if the parties had sworn by God himself. For he that swears by the temple, swears by it and him that dwelleth therein. Learn, 1. That swearing by the creatures is no new sin, but as old as the pharisees. 2. That swearing by the creatures is a great profanation of the name of God, and a mighty provocation to him. 3. That is notwithstanding, if the matter of such oaths be not sinful, they are obligatory and binding. He that sweareth by the creatures, sweareth indeed by the God of the creatures; "for," says our Saviour, "he that sweareth by the heavens, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

23 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tythe of mint and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides! which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The next woe denounced is for the pharisees' ostentation of a precise keeping of the law in smaller matters, and neglecting weightier duties: *They paid tythe of mint, anise, and cummin*; but at the same time omitted judgment, mercy, and faith, that is, just dealing with men, charity towards the poor, and faithfulness in their promises and covenants one with another. *This*, says our Saviour, *is to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*. A proverbial expression, intimating, that some persons pretend great niceness and scrupulosity about small matters, and none or but little about duties of the greatest moment. Hence note, 1. That hypocrites lay the greatest stress upon the least matters in religion, and place holiness most in those things where God places it least. "Ye tythe mint, &c. but neglect the weightier matters of the law." This is indeed the bane of all religion and true piety, to prefer ritual and human institutions before divine commands, and the practice of natural religion. Thus to do, is a certain sign of gross hypocrisy. Observe, 2. That although some duties are of greater moment than others, yet a good man will omit none, but perform every duty, the least as well as the greatest, in obedience to the command of God. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

25 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 Thou blind pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Our Saviour doth not here condemn their legal or traditional washing of pots or cups, or any external decency and cleanliness in conversation; but his design is to show them the vanity of outward purity, without inward sanctity, and to convince them of the necessity of cleansing the heart, in order to the purifying and reforming the life: plainly intimating, 1. That men's lives could not be so bad, if their hearts were not worse, all the obliquity of their lives proceeding from the impurity of their hearts and natures. 2. That an holy heart will be accompanied with an holy life. A man may be outwardly pure, and yet inwardly filthy; but he that has a pure heart will live a pure and holy life. Cleanse "that which is within the cup, that the outside may be clean also."

27 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Here we have a woe denounced against the pharisees for cheating and deceiving the people with an outward show, an external appearance of piety and religion: their lives were seemingly very religious, but their hearts were full of hypocrisy and impurity, like sepulchres painted without, and full of rottenness within. Whence learn, That the great design of hypocrisy is to cheat the world with a vain and empty show of piety. The ambition of the hypocrite is to be thought good, not to be so; he is the world's saint not God's.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous.

30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

This is the eighth woe denounced by our blessed Saviour against the pharisees for their grand hypocrisy, in pretending great honor to the saints departed, building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres, and declaring against their fathers' impiety, That "had they lived in their days, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Now their hypocrisy appeared in three particulars. 1. In that they continued in their own wickedness, and yet recommended the saints departed; they magnify the saints, but multiply their sins, and instead of imitating their virtues, they content themselves with garnishing their sepulchres. 2. In professing great respect to the dead saints, and at the same time persecuting the living. Palpable hypocrisy! And yet as gross as it is, it prevails to this day. The church of Rome, who magnify martyrs, and canonize saints departed, have yet added to their numbers, by shedding of their blood. 3. In taking false measures of their love to the saints departed, from their building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres; whereas the best evidence of our love unto them is the imitating their virtues, and cherishing their followers. It is gross hypocrisy to pay respect to the relics of saints, and veneration to their images; and at the same time to persecute and afflict their followers.

Learn hence, 1. That the world has all along loved the dead saints better than living ones. *Mortui non mordent*. The dead saints' example, how bright soever, is not so scorching and troublesome at a distance; and he himself no longer stands in other men's light, whereas the living saints' example is a cutting reproof to sin and vice. Observe, 2. That there is a certain civility in human nature, which leads men to a just commendation of the dead

and to a due estimation of their worth. The pharisees here, though they persecuted the prophets whilst alive, yet had they a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honor too great to be done unto them. Note, 3. That it is the grossest hypocrisy to pretend to love goodness, and yet hate and persecute good men. These hypocritical pharisees pretended highly to piety and religion, and at the same time killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. 4. That the highest honor we can pay to the saints departed, is not by raising monuments, and building tombs to their memory; but by a careful imitation of their piety and virtue, following the holiness of their lives, and their patience and constancy at their deaths.

34 ¶ Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Observe here, A prophetic prediction and a severe denunciation. 1. A prediction foretelling what cruel usage the apostles should meet with from the Jews, killing and crucifying some, scourging and stoning others; which accordingly was fulfilled in the crucifying of St. Peter, the scourging of St. Paul, in the stoning of St. Stephen, and killing of St. James. The first planters and propagators of the gospel sealed their doctrine with their blood, and the blood of the martyrs has all along been the seed of the church. Observe, 2. A severe denunciation, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from Abel to Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada," 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. who was the last prophet whose murder is related by name in the Old Testament. These words are not to be understood as if the end and intent of Christ's sending the prophets were that the Jews might put them to death, and bring their righteous blood upon themselves. This was the consequence and event indeed of their sending, but by no means the design and intent of it. Learn, 1. That raging persecutors have no regard either to the extraordinary mission, or eminent sanctity of persons who reprove them for sins. *I sent unto you prophets*, says our Saviour, *wise men and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify*. 2. That as the piety of persons, so neither can the sanctity of the place discourage and deter bloody persecutors from their rage and fury against the prophets of God. In the temple itself, in the court of the house of the Lord *even betwixt the porch and the altar*, was Zacharias slain. That it is a righteous thing with God to punish god men for the impie-

(No. 7)

ties of their parents; this is to be understood, 1. Where the children tread in their fathers' steps, and continue in their parents' sins; which they do, if they do not confess them, abhor them, and be humbled for them. 2. This is to be understood of temporal evils, not of eternal punishments. No man shall for his father's sins lie down in everlasting burnings. As our fathers' faith will not let us into heaven, so neither will their impiety shut us into hell. At the day of judgment every man shall be separately considered according to his deeds.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord concludes this chapter with a pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem. His imprecation or doubling of the word, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, shows the vehemency of Christ's affection towards them, and the sincerity of his desires for their salvation. Observe, 1. The great kindness and compassion of Christ to the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, set forth by a lively metaphor and similitude: that of *a hen gathering her chickens under her wings*. As the hen doth tenderly cherish, and carefully hide and cover her young from the eye of the destroyer; so would Christ have shrouded and sheltered his people from all those birds of prey, and particularly from the Roman eagle, by which they were at last devoured. Again, As the hen continueth her call to her young ones from morning to night, and holds out her wings for shelter to them all the day long, so did Christ wait for his people's repentance and conversion for more than forty years after they had killed his prophets, and murdered himself, before they met with a final overthrow. Observe, 2. The amazing obstinacy and wilfulness of this people, in rejecting this grace and favor, this kindness and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ: *I would have gathered you, but ye would not*. Observe, 3. The fatal issue of this obstinacy, *Behold your house is left unto you desolate. Is left*; that is certainly and suddenly will be so. The present tense put for the *paulo post futurum*, it denotes both the certainty and nearness of this people's ruin. Learn, 1. That the ruin and destruction of sinners is wholly chargeable upon themselves; that is, on their own wilfulness and obstinacy: *I would have gathered you*, says Christ *but ye would not*. Learn, 2. How deplorably and inexcusably they will perish, who perish by their own wilfulness under the gospel. 3. That there is no desire like unto God's desire of a people's repentance; no longing like unto God's longing for a people's salvation: *O Jerusa-*

C c

lem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee? When shall it once be? Christ did very seriously desire the conversion of the Jews, who continued still in their impenitency and unbelief. And consequently they whom he so seriously desired to convert, might have been converted, but they would not be so: *I would have gathered you, but ye would not.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him*, for to show him the build-ings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Our blessed Saviour had often acquainted his disciples with his approaching death at Jerusalem. "The Son of man must go up to Jerusalem to be crucified." Now in this chapter he acquaints them with the destruction that should come upon Jerusalem in general, and upon the temple in particular, for their putting him the Son of God to death. The disciples looking upon the temple with wonder and admiration, were apt to think that the temple, in regard of its invincible strength could not be destroyed; or, at the least in regard of its incredible magnificence it was a great pity it should be destroyed; and accordingly they say to Christ, "See what goodly buildings are here." As if they had said, Master, what great pity it is, that such a magnificent structure should become a ruinous heap! But hence we learn, 1. That sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular and private persons to their end. There are no places so strong, but an Almighty God is able to destroy them: and sin is sufficient to lay them waste. Observe, 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. God had threatened Jerusalem with destruction for her sin, and now it is not all her strength that can oppose his power. Learn, 3. That notwithstanding magnificence and worldly glory doth mightily dazzle our eye, yet how little doth it affect Christ's heart. Even the temple itself, that most magnificent structure, Christ values no more than a heap of rubbish, when the impiety of the worshippers had devoted it to destruction. *Not one stone, says Christ shall be left upon another unthrown down.* This threatening was fulfilled forty years after Christ's death, when Titus the Roman emperor destroyed the city, and burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, ploughed up the very foundation upon which the temple stood. Thus was the threatening of God fulfilled, Jer. xxvi. 18. "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." The truth and veracity, the faithfulness and fidelity

of God, is as much concerned in the execution of his threatenings, as in the performance of his promises.

3 ¶ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what *shall* be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you:

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

A double question is here propounded by the disciples to our Saviour. First, As to the time of the temple's destruction. Secondly, As to the signs of that destruction. As to the former, the time when the temple should be destroyed. See the curiosity of human nature, both in desiring to know what should be hereafter, and also when that hereafter should be. Thence learn, That there is found with all of us an itching curiosity and desire, rather to inquire and pry into the hidden counsels of God's secret will than to obey the manifest declarations of God's revealed will: *Tell us when these things shall be.* As to their second question, *What shall be the sign of thy coming?* Our Saviour acquaints them with this, among many others, *That there should arise false Christs, false prophets, and seducers, a multitude of impostors, that would draw many after them; therefore he bids them, Take heed and beware.* Where observe, That Christ doth not gratify his disciples' curiosity, but acquaints them with their present duty, to watch against deceivers and seducers, who should have the impudence to affirm themselves to be Christ. Some, Christ personal, or the Messiah: others, Christ doctrinal affirming their erroneous opinions to be Christ's mind and doctrine. From the whole, Note, 1. That there will be many seducers, many erroneous persons, and false opinion, before the end of the world; for Jerusalem's destruction was a type and emblem of the world's destruction. 2. That such seducers will come in Christ's name, and their errors and false opinions shall be given out to be the mind of Christ. 3. That many will be seduced and carried away with their fair pretences and plausible deceits. 4. That Christ's own disciples had need to take heed, lest they themselves, "being led away by the error of the wicked, do fall from their own steadfastness. Take heed that no man deceive you: for many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

6 And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there

shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

The next sign which our Saviour gives his disciples of Jerusalem's destruction, is the many broils and commotions, civil discords and dissensions, that should be found amongst the Jews: "famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, fearful sights, and signs in the air." And Josephus declares, That there appeared in the air chariots and horses, men skirmishing in the clouds, and encompassing the city: and that a blazing star, in fashion of a sword, hung over the city for a year together. Learn, 1. That war, pestilence, and famine, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel grace. *Ye shall hear of wars, famine, and pestilence.* 2. That although these be mighty and terrible judgments, yet are they the forerunners of worse judgments. *All these are the beginnings of sorrows.*

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Our Saviour here goes on in giving farther signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. 1. He declares the sharp persecutions which should fall upon the apostles themselves; *They shall kill you.* Thence learn, That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ambassadors of Christ, and falls heaviest on the ministers of God. *Ye shall be hated and killed.* The next sign is, the apostacy of professors upon the account of these persecutions: "Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another." Learn hence, That the times of persecution for christianity, are constantly times of apostacy from the christian profession. 2. That apostates are usually the bitterest persecutors: *Omnis apostata est osor sui ordinis.* They shall betray one another, and hate one another. A third sign is the abounding of false teachers: *Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.* Where note, That the fair pretences and subtle practices of heretical teachers have drawn off many from the truth; whom open persecution could not drive from it. A fourth sign is, the decay and abatement of zeal for God, and love one to another; *The love of many shall wax cold,* that is, both towards God and towards man. When iniquity abounds, trouble waxes hot: and when trouble waxes hot,

false love waxeth cold, and true love waxes colder than it was before: the cold blasts of persecution blow up the love of a few, but blow out the love of many more. These are the signs laid down by our Saviour, foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem: and forasmuch as Jerusalem's destruction was not only a forerunner, but a figure of Christ's coming to judgment, these are also the signs foretelling the approach of that dreadful day. Verse 13. *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.* Our Saviour closes his discourse with an exhortation to constancy and perseverance: teaching us, that there is no such way to overcome temptation and persecution, as by keeping our integrity, and persevering in our fidelity to Christ. 2. That constancy and perseverance in our integrity and fidelity towards Christ, is sometimes attended with temporal salvation and deliverance in this life, but shall certainly be rewarded with eternal salvation in the next: *He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Here our blessed Saviour comforts his disciples with a threefold consideration. 1. That his gospel, how hated and persecuted soever, shall be plainly and persuasively preached: *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached.* Therefore called the gospel of the kingdom, because it discovers the way to the kingdom of heaven. Observe, 2. The extent of the gospel's publication, *it shall be preached unto all nations,* that is to the Gentile world; not only among the Jews, but among the chief and principal nations of the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The design and end of the gospel's publication, and that is, for a witness or testimony; namely, for a witness of God's grace and mercy offered to sinners, and of their obstinacy who reject it. Learn thence, That the preaching of the gospel, wherever it comes, proves a testimony to them to whom it comes. To the humble and teachable, it is a testimony for, to the scorers and despisers, it is a testimony against; or, in the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. ii. "To some it is the savor of death unto death, to others the savor of life unto life."

15 When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.)

The sense is, when ye shall see the armies of the Romans, who are an abomination unto you, and an occasion of great desolation where they go; when you shall see that abominable, dissolute army, begirting the holy city of Jerusalem, then call to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which primarily belonged to Antiochus, but secondarily to Titus, and shall now be fully completed: for the seed shall not be raised, till both city and temple be razed to the ground." Learn thence, That God has instruments ready at his call to lay waste the strongest cities, and to ruin the most flourishing kingdoms, which do oppose the tenders of his grace, and can make those whom most men abhor, to be the occasion of their destruction.

16 Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains :

17 Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house ;

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The meaning is, "As soon as you shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem, let every one that values his own safety, fly as far and as fast as he can, even as Lot fled out of Sodom ; and let such as fly be glad if by flight they can save their lives, though they lose their goods, their clothes, and all things beside." From hence, Learn, 1. That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is lawful, yea, a necessary duty, by flight to endeavour the hiding and sheltering of themselves from the approaching calamity and desolation : "When ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then flee to the mountains." 2. That in case of flight before a bloody enemy and army, if we lose all that we have, and our lives be given us, we fare well, and the Lord deals very mercifully with us.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days !

20 But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day :

Here our Saviour declares the doleful distress of those that could not flee from the siege of Jerusalem ; as women big with child, and such as give suck, who by that means are like to lose their lives. And he farther adds, that it should increase their calamity if their flight should happen to be *in the winter*, when none can fly either fast or far : or if they should be forced to flee on the *sabbath-day*, when the Jews scrupled travelling farther than a sabbath-day's journey, which was about two miles. From hence, Learn, That it is a great addition to the trouble and disquiet of a good man's spirit, when the day of his spiritual rest is interrupted : and instead of enjoying communion with God in his house, he is driven from house and home, and flees before the face of an enraged enemy, *Pray ye*, says our Saviour, *that your flight be not on the sabbath-day* ; that being a day of holy rest.

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

The doleful miseries, and dreadful calamities which were coming upon the Jews in general, and upon Jerusalem in

particular, are here foretold by our Saviour, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditions and factions of the zealots within, who committed such outrages and slaughters, that there were no less than an hundred thousand slain, and ninety-seven thousand carried away captive and made prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, were now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Now did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Yet observe, Christ promises that these calamitous days shall be shortened, for the elect's sake. God had a remnant which he determined, should survive this destruction, to be an holy seed ; and accordingly the providence of God so ordered, that the city was taken in six months, and the whole country depopulated in eighteen. Whence observe, How the Lord intermixes some mercy with the extremest misery that doth befall a people for their sin. On this side hell, no sinner can say that they feel the strokes of justice to the uttermost, or that they have judgment without mercy.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders ; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert ; go not forth : behold, *he is in the secret chambers* ; believe it not.

The Jews had all along cherished in themselves a vain expectation, that the promised Messiah should be a temporal deliverer, that should set them at liberty from the power and slavery of the Romans ; and accordingly Christ declares to his disciples here, that immediately before Jerusalem's destruction, several persons taking the advantage of this expectation, would make themselves heads of parties, and pretend that they were the true Messiah, who would save and deliver them from their enemies, if they would repair to them, and follow after them. Hereupon our Lord cautions his disciples against such false Christs, and prophets, and bids them *believe them not*, though they did ever so many great signs and wonders, and promised them never such glorious deliverances. Learn hence, That the church's greatest danger is from seducers that come in Christ's name, and pretend to work signs and wonders by his authority. 2. That such is the power of seduction and delusion, that many are carried away with seducers and false teachers. 3. That the elect themselves, if left unto themselves, might be seduced ; but Divine Power guards them against seduction and delusion : *They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect*. Which phrase imports not what the event would be upon the elect, but the vehemency of the endeavours of seducers ; namely, that they would do the utmost that they could, to shock the christian, and cause him to fall from his steadfastness.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

There is a threefold coming of Christ spoken of in the New Testament. 1. His coming in his spiritual kingdom by the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles. 2. His coming to destroy Jerusalem forty years after his ascension. 3. His final coming to judgment at the great day. All these comings of the Son of man, for their suddenness and unexpectedness, are compared unto lightning, which in a moment breaketh out of the east, and shineth unto the west. Learn hence, That the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the judging of the wicked and impenitent sinners, will be a very certain, sudden, and unexpected appearance.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

If the coming of Christ be understood in the former verse of his coming to destroy Jerusalem, then by the carcass in this verse are to be understood the people of Jerusalem, and the body of the Jewish nation; and by *eagles* are to be understood the Roman armies, who carried an eagle in their standard. These were the instruments which Almighty God made use of as his rod and scourge to chastise and punish the people of Jerusalem. Learn thence, That the appointed messengers of God's wrath, and the instruments of his vengeance, will certainly gather together, certainly find out, and severely punish and plague, an impenitent people devoted to destruction. *Where the carcass is* (the body of the Jewish nation) *there will the eagles* (the Roman soldiers) *be gathered together.*

29 ¶ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:—

Our Saviour goes on in figurative expressions to set forth the calamities that should befall the Jewish nation, immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem: *the sun shall be darkened*: that is, all their glory and excellency shall be eclipsed, all their wealth and prosperity shall be laid waste, the whole government, civil and ecclesiastical, destroyed; and such marks of misery found upon them, as never were seen upon a people. *By the sign of the Son of man*, the papists will have it understood the sign of the cross. Others understand it of those prodigies which were seen a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, which Josephus mentions; as namely, a comet in the form of a sword hanging over the city for a year together: a light in the temple and about the altar, seen at midnight for half an hour: a cow led by the priest to be sacrificed, calved a lamb: a voice heard in the temple, saying, *Abeamus hinc.* "Let us go (No. 7.)

hence." Learn hence, God premonishes before he punishes; he warns a people of destruction often, before he destroys them once.

—And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other.

Then shall the tribes mourn: that is, then shall the Jews be convinced that their destruction was the punishment of their sin, in rejecting and crucifying Christ; and accordingly they that pierced him, shall behold him, and mourn over him. Thus it was before the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus will it be before the final judgment. They that pierced him shall be brought before him. Lord, how will the sight of a pierced Christ pierce their souls with horror! they who have not seen a pierced Christ in the sorrows of repentance, shall hereafter see him in the sorrows of despair. To behold Christ with the eye of sense hereafter, will be very dreadful and terrible to all those that have not beheld him with an eye of faith here. "And he shall send his angels with the sound of a trumpet." Those that apply this to the destruction of Jerusalem, by the angels, understand the ministers of the gospel, who by the trumpet of the word did bring in believers throughout all Judea, who were saved from that destruction. Those who understand it of the general judgment, take it literally, that Christ at the great day will send forth his holy angels, and gather all his elect to himself with the sound of a trumpet. Probably, as there was an audible sound of a trumpet at the giving of the law, so there shall be the like sound of a trumpet, when Christ shall summon the world to judgment, for transgressing of the law. A joyful sound will this be to the friends of Christ; a doleful, dreadful sound in the ears of his enemies.

32 ¶ Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 ¶ But of that day and hour knoweth.

no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Here our blessed Saviour declares two things with reference to his coming. 1. The certainty of the thing itself. 2. The uncertainty of the time. The certainty of his coming he sets forth by the similitude of the *fig-tree*, who beginning to bud declares the summer at hand. Thus when they shall see the fore-mentioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be *nigh at hand*, and that some then living should see all these predictions certainly fulfilled. What Christ foretels shall certainly be fulfilled, his word being more firm than the fabric of heaven and earth. Observe, 2. The uncertainty as to the precise time, when this judgment should come. No angel in heaven, nor creature on earth could determine the time, only the glorious persons in the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Learn, 1. That all things are not revealed to the angels themselves, but such things only as concern them to know, and the wisdom of God thinks fit to reveal. 2. That the precise time of the day of judgment is kept by God as a secret to himself. He will not have us know that hour, to the intent that we may be upon the watch every hour.

37 But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two *women* shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.

In these verses our Saviour declares that Jerusalem's destruction, and the world's final desolation at the great day, would be much like the destruction of the old world; and that in two respects: 1. In regard of unexpectedness. 2. In regard of security and sensuality. How sensual and secure was the old world before the flood? "They were eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage." That is, wholly given to sensuality and debauchery, and did not know of the flood's coming; that is, did not consider it, till the flood swept them away. Thus was it in the destruction of Jerusalem; and so it will be in the end of the world. Learn hence, 1. That as the old world perished by infidelity, security, and sensuality, so will the same sins be prevailing, before the destruction of the present world. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of man cometh." That the true reason why sinners are drowned in sensuality, and given over to security, is this, because they

do not believe the certainty, or consider the proximity and nearness of an approaching judgment. The old world knew not of the flood's coming. Strange! When Noah had told them of it an hundred and twenty years together. The meaning is, they did not consider it, and prepare for it. To such as are unprepared for, and unapprehensive of death and judgment, those evils are always sudden, although men are so often warned of them. But to such as are prepared, death is never sudden, let them die ever so suddenly.

42 Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Here we have the application made by our Saviour of the foregoing doctrine concerning the certainty and suddenness of a future judgment. *Watch therefore* always; not without intermission, but without giving over; that ye may be not only in an habitual, but actual readiness for my appearance. Learn thence, That it is the indispensable duty, and ought to be the indefatigable endeavour of every christian, to stand upon his watch in a prepared readiness for Christ's appearance, both for his coming to us, and for our going to him. *Watch always, for ye know not the hour when your Lord cometh.*

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

These words may be applied two ways, 1. To all the faithful servants of Christ in general. Thence Learn, That for a person to spend and end his days in the service of Christ, and doing his will, gives good assurance of a blessed condition. *Blessed is that servant.* 2. To the ministers of the gospel in special, may these words be applied. And here Observe, 1. The character and duty of a gospel minister: he is the *steward of Christ's household, to give them their meat in due season.* Observe, 2. The qualifications requisite in such stewards, faithfulness and prudence. *Who then is that faithful and wise steward?* Observe, 3. The reward insured to such stewards as answer these qualifications: *Blessed is that servant.* Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of the

gospel are in a special sense the stewards of Christ's household. 2. That faithfulness and prudence are the necessary and indispensable qualifications of Christ's stewards. 3. That wherever these qualifications are found, Christ will graciously and abundantly reward them. Our faithfulness must respect God, ourselves, and our flock, and includes our integrity of heart, purity of intention, industry of endeavour, impartiality in our administration. Prudence appears in the choice of suitable subjects, in the choice of fit language, in exciting our own affections, in order to the moving of our people. Ministerial prudence will teach us, by the strictness and gravity of our deportment, to maintain our esteem in the consciences of our people. It will assist us to bear reproach, and direct us to give reproof: he that is silent cannot be innocent: reprove we must, or we cannot be faithful; but prudently, or we cannot be successful.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming:

49 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our Lord in these verses describes an unfaithful and negligent steward, and denounces the dreadful sentence of wrath hanging over him. He is described. 1. By the character of infidelity, he believeth not Christ's coming to judgment, though he preaches it to others; he saith in his heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming*. 2. He is described by his hatred, envy, and malignity, against his fellow-servants, that were more painful and faithful than himself. He begins to smite, at least with the virulence of his tongue, if not with the violence of his hand. 3. By his associating with the wicked, and strengthening their hands by his ill example. *He eateth and drinketh with the drunken*; that is, as their associate and fellow companion. Thus the unfaithful servant is described; next his judgment and sentence is declared. Observe, 2. The tremendous judgment that shall come upon unfaithful stewards. 1. Christ will surprise them in their sin and security, *by coming in an hour when they look not for him*. 2. He will execute temporal vengeance upon them; *he will cut them asunder*; or hew them in pieces, as the Jews did their sacrifices; that is, separate their souls from their bodies by untimely death. Hence some observe, That God seldom suffers slothful, sensual, wicked, and debauched ministers, to live out half their days. 3. Christ will punish them with eternal destruction also: *appointing them their portion with hypocrites*; that is, with the worst of sinners, they shall have a double damnation. As the hypocrite has a double tongue, a double heart, and is a double sinner, so shall he undergo a

double damnation. Learn hence, That such ministers as neglect the service of God, and the souls of their people; as they are ranked amongst the worst of sinners in this life, so shall they be punished with them in the severest manner in the next. When satan destroys the souls of men, he shall answer for it as a murderer only, not as an officer that was intrusted with the care of the soul. But if the steward doth not provide, if the shepherd doth not feed, if the watchman doth not warn, they shall answer not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered. Woe unto us, if at the great day we hear distressed souls roaring out their complaints and howling forth that doleful accusation against us; "Lord! our stewards have defrauded us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our guides have misled us!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Our blessed Saviour, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had exhorted all Christians to the great duty of watchfulness, and to be in a posture of readiness against his coming. Which duty he is pleased to inculcate again in this chapter, and accordingly he urges the necessity of it from two eminent parables: the former, Of the ten virgins, ver. 1. and the latter, Of a man travelling into a far country, ver. 14.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

By the kingdom of heaven here, is meant the state of the visible church on earth; it cannot be understood of the kingdom of glory, for there are no foolish virgins in that kingdom; nor yet of the invisible kingdom of grace, for therein are no foolish virgins neither. But in the visible church here on earth, there ever has been a mixture of wise and unwise, of saints and hypocrites. "Five of these virgins were wise, and five were foolish. Where observe, Our Lord's great charity, in supposing and hoping, that amongst the professors of the gospel, the number of sincere christians is equal with hypocritical professors. "Five were wise, and five were foolish." Teaching us, that we should not confine the church of Christ within a narrow compass, nor confine our charity to a few, and think none shall go to heaven but those of our own party and persuasion, but to extend our charity to all christians that hold the foundation with us, and to hope well of them. Lord! let me rather err on the charitable hand, than be found on the censorious and damning side! This is to imitate my Saviour, whose charity supposed as many wise as foolish virgins, as many saints as hypocrites, in the church. All these virgins are said to *take their lamps, and go forth to*

meet the bridegroom. For understanding which, we must know that our Saviour alludes to the ancient custom of marriages, which were celebrated in the night; when usually ten young men attended the bridegroom, and as many virgins attended the bride, with lamps in their hands; the bridegroom leading home his bride by the light of those lamps. By these virgins are shadowed forth the professors of christianity. The foolish virgins are such as satisfy themselves with a bare profession, without bringing forth fruits answerable thereunto. The wise virgins are such as walked answerably to their profession, persevered and continued steadfast therein, and abounded in the graces and virtues of a good life. They are called wise virgins, for the purity of their faith, for the purity of their worship, and for the purity of their conversations.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

By the lamps is meant an outward profession of faith and holiness. By the oil in their lamps is to be understood that solemn profession of repentance and faith, which all christians make in baptism. By oil in their vessels, are meant the sanctifying and saving graces of the Holy Spirit; the growth and improvement of them, with constancy and perseverance in them. Observe here, Wherein the wise and foolish virgins agreed, and wherein they differed; they agreed thus far, that both took their lamps, both lighted them, they both had oil in their lamps: the difference was not that the wise had oil and the foolish had none: but in this, that the wise took care for a future supply of oil to feed their lamps, when the first oil was spent. Some professors, like foolish virgins, content themselves with a blazing lamp, of an outward profession, without concerning themselves to secure an inward principle of grace and love, which should maintain that profession, as the oil maintains the lamp. As the lamp will not hold long burning without a stock of oil to feed it: so a profession of religion, though never so glorious, will not be lasting nor persevering, without a principle of faith and love in the heart, to support and maintain it. Learn hence, That the true wisdom of a christian consists in this, to take care that not only the lamp of his life may shine by outward profession, but that the vessel of his heart may be furnished with the graces of the Holy Spirit, as a prevailing and abiding principle.

5 While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.

That is, while Christ delays his coming to persons by death and judgment, they are not so diligent as they ought, to prepare themselves for death and judgment. Instead of being upon their watch and guard, they slumbered and slept. Note, That not only visible professors, but the holiest, and best of christians, are very prone to spiritual slumber. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Spiritual slumber consists in this: when graces are not lively, and kept in exercise, particularly faith, hope, and

love; when there is an abatement of our love and zeal, an intermission of our care and watchfulness; this is a degree of spiritual slumber; yet the saints' slumber is not prevailing slumber: it is not an universal slumber; it is not in all the faculties of the soul; if there be deadness in the affections yet is there not a searedness in the conscience. *I sleep*, says the church, *but my heart awaketh*, Cant. v. 2. Still there is a principle in the soul which takes God's part, and the christian groans under the burden of his dull and drowsy state. But the greatest wisdom is, to maintain a constant watch, that we may at no time, be surprised by the bridegroom's coming, or be in a confusion when death and judgment shall overtake us. Blessed are those virgins whose lamps always burn bright!

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

At midnight, that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time, when all the virgins were fast asleep; and, when awakened in great affright, could not on a sudden consider what to do. Such is the case of those who put off their repentance, and preparation for another world, till they are surprised by death and judgment. Lord, how will the midnight cry of the bridegroom's coming terrify and amaze the unprepared souls! What a surprising word will this be, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*? Learn hence, That the bridegroom will certainly come, though at his own time; and then all shall be called upon, both prepared and unprepared, to go forth to meet him. Reason says he may come, because there is a just God that will render to every one according to his deeds, and reward both body and soul for all the services they have done for God. The body shall not always remain like a solitary widow in the dust, but shall meet its old companion, the soul, again. And as reason says he may come, faith says he will come, and argues from the promise of Christ, John xiv. 3. and from the purchase of Christ; from Christ's affections to us, and from our affection to him; faith hath seen him upon the cross, and determines she shall see him in the clouds. The bridegroom will certainly come at his own time: happy they that are ready to go forth to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The virgins arising and trimming their lamps, doth denote their actual preparation for Christ's coming and appearance, and their putting themselves into a posture of readiness to receive him. Thence learn, That a believing apprehension of the certainty and suddenness of our Lord's coming and approach, will rouse us out of our spiritual slumber, and prepare us to meet him with joy and assurance. "Then they arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for

our lamps are gone out." Observe here, 1. A request made, *Give us of your oil*. There is a time when the neglectors of grace will be made sensible of the worth of grace by the want of it. Such as undervalue, yea, vilify the grace of God, will be heard to say, *O give us of your oil*. Observe, 2. The reason of the request, *For our lamps are gone out*. Thence learn, That the lamp of profession will certainly go out, which has not a stock of grace to feed and maintain it.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Observe here, 1. The wise virgins' denial, *Not so*; they will part with no oil. Learn thence, That it must be the care of every one to get grace of his own, otherwise the grace of others will do him no good. It is not what others have done, nay, what Christ himself has done, that will save us without our own endeavours. Observe, 2. The reason of their denial, *Lest there be not enough for us and you*. Thence note, That such christians as have most grace, have none to spare; none to spare in regard of their occasions for grace on earth, and in regard of their expectations of glory in heaven. Observe, 3. The advice and counsel given; *Go to them that sell and buy for yourselves*. Some take this for an exhortation, others for a mocking derision. *Go to them that sell*; that is, say some, to the shop of the ordinances, where it may be had. Thence note, That such as would have grace, must have timely recourse to the ordinances and means of grace; *Go to them that sell*. Others understand the words ironically, and as spoken by way of derision, *Go to them that sell*, if you know where to find them, and either buy or borrow for yourselves. Learn thence, That it is the greatest folly in the world to have oil to buy, when we should have oil to burn; to have our grace to seek, when we should have it to exert and exercise. It is no time to get grace when the bridegroom is come, and the day of grace is past and over.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Observe here, 1. Christ will come at the great day to his people as a bridegroom, and to the wicked as a judge. The relation now begun betwixt Christ and his church shall then be publicly solemnized. Observe, 2. The qualification of the persons who shall enter with the bridegroom into heaven, *Such as were ready went in with him*. This readiness is twofold, habitual and actual; habitual readiness consists in the state of the persons (justified and pardoned) in the frame of the heart (sanctified and renewed;) and in the course of life, universally and perseveringly holy and righteous; consists our actual preparation. Observe, 3. The doleful condition of such as were unready; the door is shut against them: the door of repentance, the door of hope, the door of salvation, all shut, eternally shut, "and by him that shutteth and none can open." Learn hence, (No. 7.)

The utter impossibility of ever getting our condition altered by us, when the day of grace and salvation is once over with us. Woe to such souls, who by the folly of their own delays, have caused the door of conversion and remission to be everlastingly shut against their own souls!

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Observe here, The virgins' petition, and the bridegroom's reply: the petition, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Learn hence, That how negligent soever men are of heaven and salvation here, there are none but will desire it earnestly and importunately hereafter: *afterwards*; that is when too late. Observe farther, the bridegroom's reply, *I know you not*; that is, I own and approve you not. There is a twofold knowledge that Christ has, a knowledge of simple intuition, and a knowledge of a special approbation; the former knowledge Christ has of all men, the latter only of good men. Learn hence, That it will be a dreadful misery for any person, but especially for such as have been eminent professors, to be disowned by Christ at his coming, to hear that dreadful word from the mouth of Christ, *Verily, I know you not*.

13 Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Here we have our Lord's application of the foregoing parable, to be always upon our watch, continually upon our guard, to meet the bridegroom in death and judgment, because we know not the time of his coming and approach. Learn thence, That watchfulness and a prepared readiness is a great duty that lies upon all those who believe and look for Christ's coming and appearance. Happy souls; who are found in a posture of readiness at the bridegroom's approach, standing with *lamps trimmed, loins girded, lights burning!* that is, improving and exercising their graces, abounding in all the fruits of the spirit, and in all the substantial virtues of a good life; such, and only such shall have an entrance abundantly administered to them into the everlasting kingdom.

14 ¶ For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey,

Observe here, The person intrusting, Christ! the persons intrusted, all christians: the talents they are intrusted with, goods: that is, goods of providence, riches and honors; gifts of mind, wisdom, parts, and learning: gifts of

grace, all these goods Christ dispenses variously: more to some, fewer to others, but with expectation of improvement from all. Learn, 1. That Christ is the great Lord of the universe, and owner of all his servants' goods and talents. 2. That every talent is given us by our Lord to improve and employ for our master's use and service. 3. That it pleases the Lord to dispense his gifts variously among his servants, to some he commits more, to others fewer talents. 4. That to this Lord of ours every one of us must be accountable and responsible for every talent committed to us and intrusted with us.

16 Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

The former verses gave an account of the Lord's distribution: these acquaint us with the servants' negotiations. Some traded with, and made improvement of their talents, others traded not at all: yet it is not said, they did embezzle their talent, but not improve it. Learn, It is not sufficient to justify us, that we do not abuse our talents; it is fault enough to hide them, and not improve them; the slothful servant shall no more escape punishment, than the wasteful servant.

19 After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came, and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Note here, 1. That the wisdom of God dispenses his gifts and graces variously, as so many talents to his servants, to be employed for his own glory, and his church's good. 2. That all such servants as have been faithful in improving their talents, at Christ's coming, shall be both commended and rewarded also. "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Where observe, 1. That the state of the blessed is a state of joy. 2. That the joy which the blessed partake of, is *the joy of their Lord*: that is, the joy which he provides, and which he possesses. 3. That the way after which the saints partake of this joy, is *by entering into it*, which denotes the highest and fullest participation of it. The joy is too great to enter into them, they must enter into that; *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

24 Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed;

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast *that is thine*.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed.

27 Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Observe here, 1. That he that received but one talent, is called to an account as well as he that received five. Heathens that have but one talent, namely, the light of nature, must give an account for that one talent, as well as christians that have five must account for five. Observe, 2. The slothful servant's allegation; "I knew thee to be a hard man and I was afraid." Where note, His prejudice against his master, and the effect of that prejudice, *he was afraid*: and the fruit of his fear, *he hid his talent in the earth*. Learn hence, That sinners entertain in their mind, very hard and unkind thoughts of God: they look upon him as a hard master, rigorous in his commands, and difficult to be pleased. Learn, 2. That such hard thoughts of God do naturally occasion slavish fear, which is a great hindrance to the faithful discharge of our duty to God. Observe, 3. The master's reply to the slothful servant's allegation, which contains an exprobatation, or upbraiding of him for his sloth and negligence; *Thou wicked and slothful servant*. Where note, 1. That the slothful servant is a wicked servant, as well as the unfaithful servant. 2. That wicked and slothful servants, to excuse themselves, will not stick to charge their miscarriages upon God himself: *Thou wert a hard man*. 3. That no excuse whatsoever shall serve either the slothful or unfaithful servant at the bar of Christ.

28 Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These words contain the sentence denounced by Christ upon the slothful servants; his punishment is, first, a punishment of loss; *take, therefore, the talent from him.* Learn hence, That not improving the gifts of God given as talents to us, provokes God to take them from us, as well as misimproving. *From him that hath not; that is, from him that improveth not, shall be taken that which he hath.* 2. Follows the punishment of sense; "Cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth." Learn thence, That hell is a place and state of inexpressible misery and torment; a dismal place as being deprived of the sight and enjoyment of God, of Christ, of saints, and of angels; a doleful place, full of overwhelming sorrow and despairing grief. *The gnashing of their teeth,* signifies their being full of rage and indignation against God, against the saints, and against themselves.

31 ¶ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

From hence to the end of the chapter, we have a draught and scheme of the general judgment. Where observe, The person judging, *the Son of man;* the persons judged, *good and bad;* the one called *sheep,* for their innocency and meekness; the other *goats,* for their unruliness and uncleanness. Observe also, The manner of his coming to judgment, most august and glorious; glorious in his person, glorious in his attendance. Learn, That Christ's appearance at the great day to the judging of the world, will be a splendid and a glorious appearance: "He will come with power and in great glory," in regard of the dignity of his person, and the quality of his office, and the greatness of his work. He will appear as a king in the midst of his nobles, to take off the scandal and ignominy of the cross, and as a recompence for his abasement and humiliation; to strike the hearts of his enemies with dread and fear, and to fill the souls of his people with joy and confidence. Let us therefore propound it to our faith to believe it; to our fear,

to tremble at the thoughts of it. Observe farther, The work of this judge: he shall first *gather all nations.* Learn, That at the general judgment, all that have lived shall be summoned to the bar of Christ; persons of all sexes, of all ages, of all nations, of all conditions; having gathered them together, he shall next *separate them, as a shepherd his sheep.* Thence learn, That though there be a mixture and confusion of the godly and the wicked here, yet at the day of judgment there will be a separation made betwixt them, and they shall never come together more.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Here follows the sentence which Christ will pronounce upon the righteous and the wicked at the great day; first, the sentence of ab-solution upon the righteous; then the sentence of condemnation upon the wicked. Learn thence, That at the day of judgment the godly shall be absolved before the wicked are condemned. The reasons are, because it is more delightful to God to reward than to punish; to save than to destroy: because it is suitable to Christ's love to begin with his saints, and to be admired by them; also to put his saints out of fear as to their eternal condition, and to bring them near to himself, and to set them upon the throne with himself, assessors and judges of the wicked world: 1 Cor. vi. 3. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Lastly, With respect to the wicked, that they may be the more affected with their loss, and have a vexatious and tormenting sense of that happiness which they have refused. Observe next, The joyful sentence pronounced; "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Where note, 1. The joyful compellation; *Ye blessed!* Which term is opposed to these two things: 1. To the world's judgment of them, which accounts them vile and accursed. Here is an absolution from their unjust censures. 2. To the sentence of the law, which pronounces all its transgressors accursed, Gal. iii. 10. but says Christ I that have redeemed you from the curse of the law, pronounce you *blessed.* "But why blessed of my Father?" 1. To point out the fountal cause of all our happiness, the love of the Father: this *prepared the kingdom.* 2. This expression shows how the divine persons glorify one another. As the Spirit glorifies the Son, so the Son glorifies the Father, and refers all to him. Therefore Christ says not, "Come, my redeemed ones;" but, "Come, ye blessed ones;" not, "Come, ye that were redeemed by me;" but, "Come, ye blessed of my Father: it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, at this second coming, will adjudge all his people unto a state of glorious and everlasting happiness, which his Father has prepared, and himself has purchased for them. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Here our Saviour sets forth, not the meritorious cause of his saints' happiness, but the infallible signs of such as should inherit that happiness, the character of the persons that might expect it. Such as fed him, clothed, and visited him in his members. Where note, 1. That the godly having their sins forgiven in this world, some would gather, that there should no mention be made of them in the day of judgment. For they observe that Christ here only mentions the good works of his saints; *ye fed me, ye clothed me,* not a word of their failings. Observe, 2. That they are not duties of the first, but of the second table, which here Christ mentions, because works of charity are more visible to the world than works of piety. Learn hence, 1. That at the great day, every man's sentence shall be pronounced according to his works. 2. That works of charity done out of love to Christ, shall be particularly observed, and beautifully rewarded by Christ at the great day. The question then will be, not only how have you heard, prayed, or preached, but whom have you fed, clothed, and visited? 3. That whatever good or evil is done to the poor members of Christ, Christ reckons it as done unto himself, *I was an hungred and ye gave me meat.* Christ personal is not the object of our pity and charity, but Christ mystical is exposed to want and necessity: he feels hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness in his members, and is refreshed and comforted in their refreshments and comforts. He takes it as a courtesy, who might demand it by authority. How can we be close-handed or hard-hearted to the necessitous christians, did we steadily believe that in administering to them, we minister refreshments to Christ himself, who parted with the glory of heaven, yea with his heart's blood for us.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Here we have a dialogue, or interchangeable discourse betwixt Christ and his faithful servants, at the great day. Where observe, Their question and his reply. Their question, *Lord when did we feed thee, clothe thee, or visit thee?* We have forgot the time, though such is thy good-

ness to remember it. Learn thence, That Christ keeps a faithful record of all our acts of pious charity, when we have forgotten them. If we remember to do good, Christ will be sure to remember the good we have done; aye, and reward it as well as remember it. Again, this question of theirs may proceed from admiration and wonder, and from an humble sense of their own nothingness, and from the greatness of Christ's condescension, in taking notice of such mean services, and requiting them with such a transcendent reward. Learn hence, That when Christ comes to reward his children and people, they will wonder and be astonished at the poverty and meanness of their own services, and at the transcendency and greatness of his rewards. Observe next, our Lord's reply, "*Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.*" Whence observe, 1. The title put by Jesus Christ upon his poorest and meanest members; *My brethren.* 2. The resentment of the kindness showed to his brethren, "as shown unto himself; inasmuch as ye did it to them, ye have done it to me." Learn thence, That such is the endearing intimacy between Christ and his members, that whatsoever is done to any of them, is esteemed by him as done unto himself.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Here we have the sentence of condemnation denounced against the wicked. Where observe, 1. The posture in which they are found; *At Christ's left hand.* This does not so much denote the ignominy of the place (though placing on the left hand is less honorable) as the impiety of their choice, they took up with the left-hand mercies, the mercies of the footstool, wealth and riches, dignity and honor. As for the good things, "which are at God's right-hand for evermore," they never sought after these. Verily a man may know his future state by his present choice. Observe, 2. The title given to wicked men, *Ye cursed.* Not cursed of my Father, because cursing is God's strange work; we force him to it, he delights not in it. Observe, 3. The sentence itself. Where note, 1. The punishment of loss, *Depart from me.* Learn thence, 1. That it is the hell of hell to the damned, that they must everlastingly depart from, and lose the comfortable fruition and enjoyment of God in Christ: it is to be deprived of an infinite good. Hell is a deep dungeon, where the sunshine of God's presence never cometh. 2. The punishment of sense, *Depart into everlasting fire.* Where note, Its severity, it is *fire*; it is eternity, it is *everlasting fire.* Learn thence, That there are everlasting torments in hell prepared for the wicked; there is a state of torment, and a place of torment provided by God. All princes have not only their palace, but their prison. God has the palace of heaven, for the enjoyment of himself and his friends; and the prison of hell for punishing his enemies. The nature of the damned's misery is set out by *fire*; the whole man, body and soul shall be tormented in it. 1. The body in all its members; their eyes with affrighting spectacles, *the devil and his angels*, and their old compa-

nions in sin; every time they behold these, it revives their guilt, and enrages their despair, their ears are filled with yellings and howlings, and hideous cries. 2. The soul shall suffer in hell by reflecting upon its own choice, by remembering time sinfully wasted, seasons of grace sadly slighted, the mercies of God unworthily abused. Lord! how will the remembrance of past mercies aggravate present miseries! Note farther, 1. That Christ saith not of the punishment, as he doth of the blessing, but that it was *prepared from the beginning of the world*, lest it should be thought that God designed men's punishment before they sinned. Note, 2. That although Christ saith, *Come ye blessed of my Father*: he saith not, *Go ye cursed of my Father*: because God is the author and procurer of men's happiness, but man only is the author and procurer of his own misery. Note, 3. That Christ speaks of this eternal misery by fire, as designed originally not for men, but for the devil, and his angels; but man, by giving up himself to the power and thralldom of sin and satan, and working himself down to the infernal regions, becomes like unto him in torments whom he so much resembled in manners and qualities.

42 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Observe here, 1. How Christ lays the charge of the wicked's damnation upon themselves alone. *Ye gave me no meat, ye took me not in*: man, and man alone, is the cause of his own destruction and damnation. 2. The kind of sin charged on the wicked at the great day. Consider it first, in general it is a sin of omission. Whence learn, That sins of omission are certainly damning, as well as sins of commission. Consider it, 2. In particular, it is a sin of unmercifulness, or want of love to Christ and his members. Learn thence, that one reigning sin, one prevailing corruption, is enough to damn a person, because it deprives a man of the grace of the gospel, and excludes him from all the benefit of the promises. Note lastly, if such as do not give to Christ in his members, shall be miserable at the great day, what will the condition of them be that take from them, who strip and starve them, who persecute and hate them, who imprison or banish them! If the uncharitable shall scarcely be saved, yea, shall certainly be damned, where shall the unmerciful and cruel appear?

46 And these shall go away into ever-
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lasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Observe here, 1. That though the righteous are first judged, yet the sentence is first executed on the wicked. *These shall go into everlasting punishment*. 2. That men's states and conditions in another world will be different, as their ways and doings have been in this world. 3. That everlasting life shall be the portion of the godly, and everlasting punishment the portion of the wicked. God grant that the horrors of eternal darkness, and the dismal thoughts of a miserable eternity, may effectually discourage every one of us from a wicked and impenitent course of life! "For who can dwell with devouring fire? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas.

4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

5 But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Several things are here observable; as, 1. The persons conspiring against our blessed Redeemer's life, namely, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders, that is, the whole sanhedrim, or general council of the Jewish church; these lay their malicious heads together, to contrive the destruction of the innocent Jesus. Here was a general council of them, consisting of priests, doctors, and elders, with the highpriest their president, yet erring in a point of doctrine concerning the Messiah, not believing Jesus to be the Son of God, notwithstanding all the convincing miracles which he had wrought before them. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against our Saviour's life; it was clandestine, secret, and subtle: "They consulted how they might take him by subtilty, and kill him." Learn hence, That satan makes use of the subtilty of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power, for his own purposes. Satan never sends a fool on his errand. Observe, 3. The time when this conspiracy was managed; *at the time of the passover*. Indeed at first the chief priests did not incline to that time, *fearing a tumult and uproar among the people*; but Judas presenting them with a fair opportunity, to apprehend him, they changed their purpose and accordingly at the feast of the passover our Saviour suffered. This was

not without a mystery, that Christ the true Lamb of God, whom the paschal Lamb typified and represented, should be offered up at the *feast of the passover*; signifying thereby, that he was the true paschal Lamb, and that the legal shadow ought to cease in the exhibition of him. Learn hence, That not only the death of Christ in general, but all circumstances relating to it, were foreordained by God himself; as the place where, at Jerusalem; the time when, at the *feast of the passover*; that time did God devise best for this Lamb to be a sacrifice.

6 ¶ Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, and poured *it* on his head as he sat at *meat*.

This woman, St. John says, was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who, to show her love to Christ, and put honor upon him, took a precious box of ointment, and poured it upon our Saviour's head, according to the custom of the eastern countries, who used so to do at their feasts and banquets; to which David alludes, Psal. xxiii. 5. Learn hence, 1. That where true love to Christ prevails in the heart, nothing is adjudged too dear for Christ. This box of ointment murmuring Judas valued at three hundred pence; which, reckoning the Roman penny at seven pence halfpenny, makes of our money nine pounds seven shillings and sixpence. Love (we see) spares for no cost, but where the esteem of Christ is high, the affection will be strong. Note, 2. That where strong love prevails towards Jesus Christ, it suffers not itself to be outshined by any examples. The weakest woman that strongly loves Jesus Christ, will piously strive with the greatest apostle to express the fervor of her love unto him. I do not find any of the apostles at so much cost to put honor upon Christ, as this woman was at. Love knows no bounds, no measures.

8 But when his disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

That is, when Judas, and some other disciples whom he had influenced, saw this action, they murmured; particularly Judas blamed this holy woman, for needless prodigality, and did tacitly reflect upon Christ himself, for suffering that wasteful expence. O! how doth a covetous heart think every thing too good for Christ: he that sees a pious action well done, and seeks to undervalue it, shows himself possessed with a spirit of envy. Judas' invidious spirit makes him censure an action which Christ highly approved. Learn thence, That men who know not our hearts, may through ignorance or prejudice, censure and condemn those actions which God doth commend and will graciously reward. Happy for this poor woman that she had a more righteous judge to pass sentence upon her action than wicked Judas!

10 When Jesus understood *it*, he said

unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did *it* for my burial.

Observe here, How readily our Lord vindicates this good woman: she says nothing for herself, nor need she, having such an advocate. 1. Christ rebukes Judas, *Why trouble ye the woman?* plainly intimating, that it is no small trouble to a gracious spirit, to find their good works misinterpreted and misrepresented. Next he defends the action, calling it a good work: because done out of a principle of love to Christ: *she hath wrought a good work upon me*. And lastly, He gives the reason of her actions; *she did it for my burial*. As kings and great persons were wont, in those eastern countries, at their funerals to be embalmed with odors and sweet perfumes; so says our Saviour, this woman, to declare her faith in me as her King and Lord, doth, with this box of ointment, as it were before-hand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith puts honor upon a crucified as well as a glorified Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honor in his death, believing it would be a sweet smelling sacrifice unto God, and the savor of life unto his people. Observe farther, From these words, *But me ye have not always*, the doctrine of transubstantiation is overthrown: for if Christ be, as to soul, body and divinity, perpetually present in the host among those of the church of Rome, then have they Christ always with them; contrary to what our Saviour here declares: though his poor members would be always present with them, yet he himself should not be so. *The poor ye have always, but me ye have not always*.

13 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Our Saviour having defended this holy woman from the calumny of Judas in the foregoing verses, in this he declares, that she should be rewarded with an honorable memorial in all ages of the church; "Whosoever the gospel is preached, this shall be spoken of her." O what care doth Christ take to have the good deeds of his children not buried in the dust with them, but be held in *everlasting remembrance*! Though sin causes men to rot above ground, to stink alive, and when they are dead, leaves an inglorious memory upon their graves, yet will the actions of the just smell sweet, and blossom in the dust. Learn hence, That we may laudably prosecute that which will procure us a good name, and spread our reputation to future ages.

14 ¶ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Redeemer; Judas; Judas, a professor; Judas a preacher; Judas, an apostle, and one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of all the world to be his dearest friends, and his own family and household. Shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly and unfaithful towards us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own house? Observe, 2. The heinousness of his sin in betraying Christ: he betrayed Christ Jesus, a man; Christ Jesus, his master; Christ Jesus, his maker; the first was murder, the second treason. Learn thence, That it is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the sin occasioning and leading Judas to the committing of this horrid sin; it was covetousness. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice against Christ's person, but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed him; this made him sell his Master. Covetousness is the root-sin, an inordinate desire and love of riches, an eager and insatiable thirst after the world, is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins; therefore remember we our Saviour's caution. Luke xii. 15. "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" he doubles the caution, to show us both the great danger of the sin, and the great care we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it. Observe, 4. How small a sum tempted the covetous mind of Judas to betray his Master, *Thirty pieces of silver*; which amounted but to three pounds fifteen shillings of our money. This was the price of a slave or common servant, Exod xxi. As Christ took upon him the form of a servant, so his life was valued at the rate of an ordinary servant's life.

It may seem a wonder, that the highpriests should offer no more for the life of our Saviour, and that Judas should accept so little; seeing that his covetousness was so great, and their rage so grievous, how comes it to pass that he demands so little, and that they offer no more? Had the reward been proportioned to the greatness of their malice, it had been thirty thousand rather than thirty pieces of silver. But the scripture must be fulfilled, accordingly the wisdom of God over-ruled this matter, for fulfilling that prophecy, Zech. xi. 12. *they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.* Let not any christian be concerned that he is despised and undervalued; he can never meet with so great a reproach, so low an abasement for Christ, as Christ underwent for him. Observe lastly, Judas' folly, as well as treachery; he that might have demanded what he pleased for this purchase, *He says unto the chief priests, What will ye give me?* As if he had said, "I am resolved to sell him at any rate, give me what you will for him." Nay, farther, Judas covenanted, and they promised, but whether it was now paid, appeareth not. Learn, That such a person as has a vile and base esteem of Jesus Christ, will part with him upon any terms. The bare expectation of a few

shekels of silver, will make such a one willing to part with the pearl of great price. Wonder not then to see some persons selling their country, their friends, their God, and their religion for money. Judas did so before them.

17 ¶ Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them, and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples to Jerusalem, to prepare things necessary, in order thereunto: accordingly, they enter the city, and find the master of an house, whose heart Christ, by his divine power, had so inclined, that he willingly accommodated them upon this occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and possibly no money in his purse to buy one, but he finds as excellent accommodations in this poor man's house, as if he had dwelt in Ahab's ivory palace, and had had the provisions of Solomon's table. Learn hence, That Christ has such an influence upon, and command over the spirits of men, that he can incline them to do what service soever he pleaseth for him. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will prepare an house, and dispose the heart to a free reception of himself. Learn, 2. That Christ being under the law, observes and keeps the law of the passover. Thus he fulfilled all righteousness; and although the ceremonial law was to receive its abolishment in the death of Christ, yet all the time of his life he punctually observes it.

20 Now, when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Observe here, The impudent forehead of this bold traitor Judas, who presumed, as soon as he had sold his master, to sit down at the table with him, and partake with the other disciples of the solemn ordinance of the passover; had the presence of Judas polluted the ordinance to any beside himself, doubtless our Saviour would never have permitted this bold intrusion. Learn hence, 1. That nothing is more ordinary than for unholy persons presumptuously to rush in upon the solemn ordinances of God, which they have no right, whilst such, to partake of. 2. That the presence of such persons pollutes the ordinances only to themselves: holy persons are not polluted by the sins of such; *For to the pure all things are pure.*

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

What an astonishing word was this: "One of you my disciples shall betray me." Can any church on earth expect purity in all its members, when Christ's own family of twelve had a traitor and a devil in it? Yet though it was very sad to hear that one should betray him, it was a matter of joy that it was but one: one hypocrite in a congregation was too much, but there is cause of rejoicing if there be no more. But why did not Christ name Judas, and say, "Thou art he that shall betray me!" Doubtless to draw him to repentance, and to prevent giving Judas any provocation. Lord, how sad is it for such as pretend friendship to Christ, and call themselves of his family and acquaintance, *who eat of his bread, and yet lift up the heel against him!*

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord is it I?

Observe here, 1. The disciples' sorrow, and next the effect of that sorrow. Their sorrow was (as well it might be) exceeding great. Well might innocent disciples be overwhelmed with sorrow, to hear that their Master should die; that he should die by treason, that the traitor should be one of themselves. But though their sorrow was great, yet was the effect of their sorrow very good; it wrought in them a holy suspicion of themselves, and caused every one to search himself, and say, *Master is it I?* Thence learn, That it is possible for such secret wickedness to lurk in our hearts as we never suspected, which time and temptation may draw forth in such a manner as we could not believe, and therefore it is both wise and holy to suspect ourselves and to be often saying, *Lord is it I?* There is no better preservative from sin, than to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Observe farther, That though the disciples' fear and sorrow made them jealous and suspicious, yet it was of themselves, not of one another, nay of Judas himself: every one said, *Master, is it I?* Not *Master, is it Judas?* Learn hence, that true sincerity and christian charity will make us more suspicious of ourselves than of any other person whatsoever; it always hopes the best of others, and fears the worst concerning ourselves.

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered, and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples who it was that had designed his death, even he that dipped with him in the dish, or he to whom he gave the sop. Observe, The

traitor, whom Christ less loved, he has the sop given to him, the other disciples whom Christ loved better, had no such particular doom.——Outward good things are not always given to the children of men in love, but are sometimes bestowed in displeasure; there is no measuring Christ's affection by temporal blessings, no concluding either love or hatred by these things. Observe farther, How Judas could sit still, and hear the threats of judgment denounced against himself without concern; he hears Christ say, *Woe to the man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed*, and is no more blanked than innocence itself; resolved sinners run on desperately in their wicked courses, and with open eyes see and meet their own destruction; and are neither dismayed at it, nor concerned about it. Observe farther, That this shameless man had the impudence to say to Christ, *Master is it I?* Our Saviour gives him a direct affirmation. *Thou hast said.* Did not Judas, think ye, blush, and cast down his guilty eyes, and let fall his drooping head at so galling an intimation? nothing less. Lord how does obduracy in sin steel the brow, and make it incapable of all relenting impressions! Observe lastly, How Christ prefers non-entity before damnation. *It had been better for that man if he had never been born.* A temporal miserable being is not worse than no being, but an eternal miserable being is worse than no being at all: eternal misery is much worse than non-entity. *It had been better for Judas if he had never been born*, than to commit such a sin, and lie under such wrath, and that everlasting. O better to have no being, than not to have a being in Christ!

26 ¶ And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it:

28 For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Immediately after the celebration of the passover, follows the institution of the Lord's Supper, in which observe, 1. The author of this new sacrament, *Jesus took bread.* Note thence, That to institute a sacrament is Christ's sole prerogative; it is the church's duty to celebrate the sacraments, but she has power to make none. This belongs only to Christ. Observe, 2. The time of the institution, the night before his passion. *The night before he was betrayed, Jesus took bread.* Learn thence,

That it is very necessary, when sufferings are approaching, to have recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is a restorative to faith. Observe here, 3. The sacramental elements, *Bread and wine*: bread representing his body, and wine his blood. Observe, 4. The ministerial actions, *the breaking of the bread, and the blessing of the cup*. As to the bread, *Jesus took it*: that is, set it apart from common use, and separated it for holy ends and purposes. *He blessed it*: that is, prayed for a blessing upon it; and *brake it*, thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross. And he *gave it to his disciples*, saying, "This broken bread signifies my body suddenly to be broken upon the cross for your redemption and salvation. *Do this in remembrance of me, and of my death.*" Thus the scriptures constantly speak in sacramental matters. So circumcision is called the *covenant*, and the lamb the *passover*. In like manner here, the bread is called *Christ's body*, because instituted to represent to all future ages his body broken. Moreover how could the disciples think they had eaten *Christ's body*, when they saw his body whole before them? And besides, to eat human flesh and drink blood, was not only against the express letter of the law, but abhorred by all mankind. True it is, that the heathens laid it to the christians' charge, that they eat human flesh; but falsely, as it appears by the apology made for the primitive christians; which apology had been false, had they daily eaten the flesh of Christ, in the sacrament. The very heathens owned it a thing more detestable than death, to eat human flesh, and more to eat the God they worship, and to devour him whom they pretended to adore. Again, as to the cup, Christ having set it apart by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples to *drink all of it*, and subjoins a reason for it: For *this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins*: that is the wine in this cup represents the shedding of my blood, by which the new covenant betwixt God and man was ratified and confirmed. Whence we learn, That every communicant has as undoubted a right to the cup as to the bread, in the Lord's Supper: *Drink ye all of it*, says Christ, therefore to deny the cup to the laity is contrary to the institution of Christ. After the celebration was over, our Saviour and his disciples sang an hymn, as the Jews were wont to do at the passover, the six eucharistical psalms, from the 113th to the 119th psalm. Learn hence, How fit it is that God be glorified in his church, by singing of psalms, and in particular when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is celebrated. When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples, that by reason of his approaching sufferings, they should all of them be so exceedingly offended, that they would certainly forsake and leave him: which accordingly came to pass. Learn

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thence, That Christ's dearest friends forsook him, and left him alone in the midst of his greatest distress and danger. Observe, 2. What was the cause of this their flight, it was the prevalency of their fear. Thence note, How sad it is for the holiest and best of men to be left under the power of their own fears in a day of temptation.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Observe here, The wonderful lenity of Christ towards his timorous and fearful disciples; notwithstanding their cowardly flight from him, he tells them he would not forsake them, but love them still; and as an evidence of it, would meet them in Galilee. *I will go before you into Galilee*; there shall you see me. And when they did see him, he never upbraided them with their timorousness, but was friends with them, notwithstanding their late cowardice. Christ's love to his disciples is like himself, unchangeable and everlasting. *Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.*

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples,

See here what strong purposes and settled resolutions both Peter and all the apostles had to keep close to Christ; but how did their self confidence fail them! Learn hence, That self confidence is a sin, too, too incident to the holiest and best of men. *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.*

Good man, he resolved honestly; but too, too much in his own strength. Little, little did he think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once God left him to the power and prevalency of his own fears. Observe farther. That the rest of the apostles had the like confident opinion of their own strength with St. Peter. *Likewise also said they all.* Note hence, that the holiest of men know not their own strength till it comes to a trial. Little did these good men imagine what a cowardly spirit they had in them, till temptation put it to the proof.

36 ¶ Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

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38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Our blessed Saviour, being now come with his disciples into the garden, he falls there into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful fervency and importunity to his heavenly Father. His sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, That prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under, the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to this prayer of our Saviour's in the garden, many things are very observable, As, 1. The place where he prayed, *in the garden*; but why went Christ thither? was it to hide or shelter himself from his enemies? Nothing less; for, if so, it had been the most improper place, because he was wont to retire thither to pray, John xviii. 2. *Judas knew the place, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither*; so that Christ went thither not to shun, but to prepare himself, by prayer to meet his enemies. Observe, 2. The time when he entered the garden for prayer, it was the evening; here he spent some hours in pouring out his soul to God; for about midnight Judas and the soldiers came, and apprehended him in a praying posture. Teaching us by his example, That when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestling with him. Observe, 3. The matter of our Lord's prayer, *that if possible the cup might pass from him*; that is, those bitter sufferings which were then before him; particularly the insupportable burden of his Father's wrath. He prays

if possible, that his Father would excuse him from this dreadful wrath, his soul being amazed at it. But what! Did Christ then begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? Did he shrink and give back when it came to the pinch? No, no; as Christ had two natures, being God and man, so he had two distinct wills, as man, he feared and shunned death; as God-man, he willingly submitted to it: the divine Spirit and human nature of Christ now assault each other with disagreeing interests till at last victory was got on the Spirit's side. Again, this prayer was not absolute but conditional, *If it be possible, Father, if it may be, if thou art willing, if it please thee, let it pass*; if not, I will drink it. Learn hence, 1. That the cup of sufferings is in itself considered a very bitter and distasteful cup, which human nature abhors, and cannot but desire and pray it may pass from it. 2. That yet oftentimes the wisdom of God is pleased to put this bitter cup of affliction into the hands of those whom he doth most sincerely love. 3. That when God doth so, it is their duty to drink it with humble submission, and cheerful resignation. *Not my will but thine be done.* Observe here, 4. The manner how our Lord prayed; and here we shall find it, 1. A solitary prayer; he went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples; he saith unto them, *Tarry ye here, while I go and pray yonder.* Mark, Christ did neither desire his disciples to pray with him, nor to pray for him. No he must tread the wine press alone; not but that Christ loved and delighted in his disciples' company; but there were occasions when he thought fit to leave them and go alone to God in prayer. Thence learn, That the company of our best friends is not always seasonable. Peter, James, and John, were three good men; but Christ bids them tarry, while he went aside for private prayer. There are times and cases when a christian would not be willing that the dearest friend he has in the world should be with him, or understand and hear what passes betwixt him and his God.

2. This prayer of Christ was humble prayer; that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself; sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate upon his face. He lies in the very dust; lower he cannot fall; and his heart was as low as his body. And such was the fervor of his spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. O let us blush to think how unlike we are to Christ in prayer, as to our praying frame of spirit! Lord, what drowsiness and deadness! What laziness and dullness! What stupidity and formality is found in our prayers! How often do our lips move, and our hearts stand still! 3. It was a repeated and reiterated prayer, *He prayed the first, second, and third time.* He returns upon God over and over, plies him again and again, resolving to take no denial. Learn thence, That christians ought not to be discouraged, though they have besought God again and again for a particular mercy, and no answer of prayer has come unto them. Observe also, How our Lord used the same prayer three times over, *Saying the same words.* A person then may pray with and by a form of prayer, and yet not pray formally, but in a very acceptable manner unto God. Christ both gave a form of prayer unto his disciples, and also used one himself. Observe next the posture in which our holy Lord found his own disciples, when he was in his agony: *they were sleeping*, when he was praying. O wonderful! that they could sleep at such a time. Hence we gather,

That the best of Christ's disciples may be sometimes overtaken with infirmities, with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing. *He cometh to his disciples and findeth them sleeping.* Observe farther, The gentle reproof he gave his disciples for sleeping. *What! could ye not watch with me, one hour?* Could not you watch when your Master is in such danger? Could not you watch with me, when I am going to deliver up my life for you? What, not one hour, and that the parting hour too? After this reprehension, he subjoins an exhortation: *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,* and superadds a forcible reason, *For though the spirit is willing yet the flesh is weak.* Thence learn, That the holiest and best resolved christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard of the weakness of the flesh, or the frailty of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptations. *Watch and pray, for though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak:* though you have sincerely resolved rather to die with me than deny me, yet be assured, that when temptation actually assaults you, when fear and shame, pain and suffering, death and danger, are before you, and present to your sense, the weakness of your flesh will prevail over these resolutions, if you do not watch diligently and pray fervently for divine assistance.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand, that doth betray me,

47 ¶ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now, he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Our Saviour having poured out his soul in prayer to God in the garden, he is now ready, and waits for the coming of his enemies; being first in the field: accordingly, while he yet spake, came Judas one of the twelve, and under his conduct a band of soldiers to apprehend him.

It was the lot and portion of our blessed Redeemer to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend. Observe here, The traitor, treason, the manner how, and the time when, this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The betrayer, Judas; all the evangelists carefully describe him by his name Judas, by his surname Iscariot; lest he should be mistaken for Jude the brother of James. God is tender and careful of the names and reputations of his upright-hearted servants. He is also described by his office, *one of the twelve*. The eminence of his place and station was an high aggravation of his transgression. Nay, in some respect he was preferred above the rest, having a peculiar trust reposed in him, he bare the bag: that is, he was almoner and steward of Christ's family, to take care for the necessary accommodations of Christ and his apostles; and yet this man, thus called, thus honored, thus respectfully treated by Christ, for the lucre of a little money, perfidiously betrays him. O, whither will not a bad heart and a busy devil carry a man? Learn hence, 1. That the greatest professors had need be jealous of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their profession. A profession begun in hypocrisy, will certainly end in apostacy. Learn, 2. That persons are never in such imminent danger, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master-lust.

Covetousness was Judas' master-sin: the love of the world made him a slave to satan, and the devil lays a temptation before him which suits his temper, hits his humor, and it prevails immediately. O pray, pray, that ye may be kept from a strong and suitable temptation, a temptation suited to your predominant lust and inclination. Observe, 2. As the betrayer Judas, so the treason itself, with its aggravating circumstances; he led an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him, and encouraged them to lay hands upon him, and hold him fast. This was the hellish design satan had put into his heart, and it has these aggravating circumstances attending it. He had seen the miracles which Christ wrought by the power of God, and could not but know him to be a divine person. He could not sin out of ignorance or blind zeal, but the love of money made him do what he did. Father, what he did was not done by the persuasion of any, but he was a volunteer in this service. The high priests neither sent to him, nor sent for him, but he offers his service, and no doubt they were very much surprised to find one of Christ's own disciples at the head of a conspiracy against him. Learn hence, That no man knows where he shall stop or stand when he first enters the ways of sin; should any one have told Judas, that his love of money would at last so far prevail upon him as to make him sell the blood of Jesus Christ, he would have answered as Hazael did Elisha, *Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?* Wickedness like holiness, doth not presently come to its full strength in the soul, but grows up by insensible degrees. Men do not commence masters in the art of villany in an instant: they begin first with lesser, then with greater sins; first with secret, then with open sins. Doubtless Judas was an old, though secret sinner; surely he could not immediately attain to such an height of impudence, and so great a degree of stupidity. Hear, ye professors of religion, ye that partake of ordinances, frequent sacraments, take heed of living as Judas did, in the allowed commission of any secret sin, to the wasting of your

consciences, and the destroying of your souls. Observe, 3. The manner how this hellish plot was executed; partly by force and partly by fraud: by force, in that he came, *with a multitude armed with swords and staves*; and by fraud, *he gives him a kiss, and says, Hail, Master*. Here was honey in the tongue, and poison in the heart. This treacherous kiss enhanced his crime beyond expression. O vilest of hypocrites, how durst thou approach so near thy Lord in the exercises of so much baseness and ingratitude! But none sin with so much impudence and obstinacy as apostates. Learn we hence, To beware of men; when we see too, too glittering appearances, we may suspect the inside. Charity for others is our duty, but too great confidence may be our snare. There is much hypocrisy in many, and so much corruption in all, that we must not be too confident. Observe, 4. The time when this treasonable design was executed upon Christ, when he was in the garden with his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly and most seasonable counsels upon them. "While he yet spake, lo, Judas came, and the multitude with him." Judas found Christ, in the most heavenly and excellent employment, when he came to apprehend him. O how happy is it, when our sufferings find us in God's way, engaged in his service, and engaging his assistance by fervent supplication! Thus did our Lord's sufferings meet him, may they so meet us.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

The rude multitude laying hands upon Christ, the disciples who had remitted their watch, do resume their courage, and are willing to rescue their Master, if they can; particularly Peter draws his sword, and cuts off the ear of Malchus one of the forwardest to lay hold on Jesus. Observe here, St. Peter's zeal and sincere love for his Lord and Master; it was in great sincerity spoken, *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*. But why did not Peter draw his sword upon Judas, rather than Malchus? Perhaps because though Judas was more faulty, yet Malchus was more forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. How doth a pious breast swell with indignation at the sight of an open affront offered unto Christ? Observe here, That though St. Peter's heart was sincere, yet his hand was rash: good intentions are no warrant for irregu-

lar actions: and accordingly Christ, who accepted his affection, reproves him for the action; "Put up thy sword; for they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Learn hence, that Christ will thank no man to fight for him without a warrant and commission from him. To resist a lawful magistrate, even in Christ's own defence is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel. To a lawful power lawfully executed there must be yielded due obedience. Observe lastly, Our Lord's absolute refusal to be rescued out of his enemies' hands, with the reason of it; "Did I incline to be rescued by force (as if our Lord had said) I could demand all the troops of angels in heaven to show themselves upon that occasion; but how can this stand with the decrees of my Father, with the declarations of the scripture, with the demonstration of mercy, and the salvation of miserable mankind." Learn thence, That Christ was infinitely more concerned for the salvation of lost sinners, than for his own death and sufferings; more concerned for our eternal salvation, than for his own temporal preservation. Had he been rescued by the power of angels, we had fallen a prey into the paws of devils.

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all his disciples forsook him, and fled.

We had an account of our Lord's apprehension in the former verses, here the sad effect of it upon his disciples; *They all forsook him, and fled*. Had this been done by the giddy multitude who followed him for the loaves, it had been no cause of wonder; but for those who had already forsaken all to follow him who were faithful, though fearful friends; what an addition to his sufferings must this be! No doubt but the ingratitude of his friends made deeper wounds into his soul than the malice of enemies could make in his body. They that said all to Christ, ver. 35. "Though we should die with thee, yet we will not deny thee," do here all of them desert and forsake him; when it came to the push, not a man of them stands by him. Learn hence, That the holiest of men know not their own hearts when great temptations and trials are before them, till they come to grapple with them, and to be engaged in them. We know not our own strength, till temptation puts us to the proof.

57 ¶ And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58 But Peter followed him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now, the chief priests, and elders,

and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 But found none: yea, though many false-witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.

62 And the highpriest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it *which* these witness against thee?

63 But Jesus held his peace.

Judas having made good his promise to the highpriest and delivered Jesus a prisoner into their hands, these wolves of the evening no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to suck his innocent blood. Yet lest it should look like a downright murder, they will allow him a mock trial, and abuse the law by perverting it to justice and bloodshed: accordingly they industriously suborn false witnesses to take away his life, not sticking at the grossest perjury, so they might destroy him. "The chief priests and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death." Abominable wickedness! Innocency itself cannot protect from slander and false accusations. No man is so innocent or good, whom false witnesses may not condemn. Yet observe farther, Our Lord's meekness and patience, his submissive silence, under all these wicked suggestions and false accusations. *Jesus held his peace*, ver. 63. Guilt is clamorous and impatient; innocency is silent, and careless of mis-reports. Learn hence, That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and false accusations of men, with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Our Lord stood before his unjust judges, and false accusers, as a *sheep before his shearers, dumb, and not opening his mouth*. Although a trial for his life was managed most maliciously and illegally against him, "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." O let the same humble mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus!

— And the highpriest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the highpriest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what

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further need have we of witness? behold' now ye have heard his blasphemy.

66 What think ye? They answered and said, he is guilty of death.

67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands,

68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ: Who is he that smote thee?

We observed even now, that our Lord was silent, and did make no reply to the false witnesses that evidenced against him at his trial: because being so manifestly contradicting; they did fall to the ground of themselves. But now when the question was solemnly put by the highpriest, *Art thou the Christ?* He said, *I am*. Thence learn, That although we are not obliged to answer every cavilling or ensnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to own, and freely to confess, the truth, when we are solemnly called thereunto. Christ, who in the former verses was silent, and *as a deaf man that heard not*, now witnesses a good confession: teaching us, both by his example and command, to confess and own both him and his truth, when lawfully required; when our silence will be a denying of the truth, a dishonor to God, and a scandal to our brethren; Christ knew that his answer would cost him his life, and yet he durst not but give it. *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* Jesus said, *I am*. Yea farther observe, That as Christ answered directly and plainly at his trial, so he did not refuse to answer upon oath, *I adjure thee by the living God*, says the judge of the court, *that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ*: that is, I require thee to answer this question upon oath, for adjuring a person, or requiring him to answer upon oath, was the manner of swearing among the Jews. Now to this adjuration our Saviour answered plainly and directly, *I am*, Mark xiv. 61. Hence learn, That swearing before a magistrate upon a just and great occasion, is lawful: if Christ in the fifth of St. Matthew forbids all oaths, then here his practice was contrary to his own doctrine: but it is evident that Christ answered the magistrate upon oath, and so may we. Observe lastly, The sentence of condemnation which the council passed upon him for owning himself to be the Son of God. *He hath spoken blasphemy*, and is worthy to die. Hereupon the unruly rabble affront him with the vilest abuses, and most horrid indignities: *They spit in his face; they blindfolded him, they smote him with their fists and palms of their hands*; and in the way of contempt and mockery, they bid him divine or prophesy, *who it was that smote him*. Learn hence, That there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline or stick at for Christ's sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting upon our account. O monstrous impiety! How do they spit on that awful lovely face? How do they revile and blaspheme his noble office of a prophet of the most high God? prophesy, say they in a mocking derision, *who was it that smote thee?* To such acts of inhumanity did the barbarous rage of the bloody Jews carry them.

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69 ¶ Now Peter sat without in the palace; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives an account of the fall and rising of Peter, of his sin in denying Christ, and of his recovery by a speedy and severe repentance. Both must be considered distinctly. First, as touching his sin and fall, there are four particulars observable, namely, the sin itself, the occasion of that sin, the reiteration and repetition of it, and the aggravating circumstances attending it. Observe, 1. The sin itself, the denial of Christ, *I know not the man*, a manifest untruth: next, he adds an oath, to confirm that untruth: *he swore that he knew not the man*. And last of all, he wished an horrid curse and imprecation upon himself: that is, he wished himself excommunicated and cast out of the church, say some: he wished himself eternally separated from the presence of God, say others: he wished, in effect, that the devil might take him if he were acquainted with Jesus. The inordinate love of life, and slavish fear of sufferings and death, may draw the best of men to commit the worst of sins. Observe, 2. The occasions of this sin, and they were three; his following Christ afar off; his being in bad company, amongst Christ's enemies; and his presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing. 1. *His following of Christ afar off*. To follow Christ is the work of faith, and fruit of love: but to follow him afar off, was the effect of fear and frailty. Woe unto us when a temptation comes, if we be far off from Christ's presence and assistance. 2. His being in wicked company, amongst Christ's enemies. O Peter, thou hadst better been cold by thyself alone, than sitting by a fire encompassed with the blasphemies of the wicked; where thy conscience, though not seared, was yet made hard. The way to escape prevailing temp-

tations to sin, is to shun such places, and to avoid such companions, as in all probability will invite and draw us into sin. 3. Confidence of his own strength and standing was another occasion of Peter's falling. Pride and presumptuous confidence have been ever the forerunners and occasions of a fall. O Lord! to presume upon ourselves is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves if ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling must enable us to stand. Not only they who go forth in the strength of nature, but also they who go forth in the strength of inherent grace, may quickly fall from their own steadfastness. Observe, 3. The reiteration and repetition of this sin. He denies him a first, a second, and a third time. He denies him first with a lie, then with an oath, and after all, with an anathema and curse. O how dangerous is it not to resist the first beginnings of sin! If we yield to one temptation, satan will assault us with more, and stronger. Peter proceeded from a bare denial, first to perjury, then to cursing and imprecation. Observe, 4. The aggravating circumstances attending this sin of Peter, and they are these: 1. The character of the person thus falling; a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle, a special favorite; who with James and John, had the special honor to be with Christ upon mount Tabor; Peter who had preached and prophesied in Christ's name, cast out devils, and wrought miracles by Christ's power, yet he denies him. 2. Consider the person whom he denies; his Master, his Saviour and Redeemer; he that had washed Peter's feet but a little before; that eat the passover with Peter, and gave the sacrament to Peter; yet this kind and condescending Saviour was denied by Peter. 3. Consider before whom he denies him, in the company and presence of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, and their servants, who rejoiced at it, and were hardened by it; that one disciple should sell him for money, and another disciple deny him through fear. 4. Consider the time when he denied him: verily it was but a few hours after he had received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from Christ's own hand. How unreasonable then is their objection against coming to the Lord's table, because some that go do dishonor Christ as soon as they come from it: such examples most not discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, to take heed that the future conduct of our lives be suited to the solemnity of a sacramental table. 5. Consider the smallness of his temptation to deny Christ; a damsel only put the question to him, *Art thou one of his disciples?* If a band of armed soldiers had appeared to him, and affrighted him; had he been terrified by the highpriest's threatenings, bound and led away to judgment, sentenced to an ignominious, painful death, some excuse might have been made for him: but to disown his relation to Christ at the question of a maid-servant that kept the door only! the smallness of the temptation was an aggravation of the crime. "Ah, Peter, how unlike thyself art thou at this time. Not a rock but a reed; a pillar blown down by a woman's breath. O frail humanity, whose strength is weakness and infirmity!" Observe here, that in most of the saints' falls recorded in scripture, either the first enticers, or the accidental occasions, were women. Thus in Adam, Lot, Samson, David, Solomon, and Peter's. A weak creature may be a strong tempter; nothing is too impotent or useless for the

devil's service. It was a great aggravation of Peter's sin, that the voice of a maid, a door-keeper only, should be stronger to overcome him than his faith in Jesus to sustain him. But what shall we say? Small things are sufficient to cast us down, if God doth not hold us up: we sink under any burden, if he sustain us not, and yield to every temptation, if he leaves us to ourselves. A damsel shall then make a disciple shrink, and a door-keeper is enough to drive an apostle before her. "And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice: And he went out and wept bitterly. Here we have an account of St. Peter's rising and recovery after his shameful fall, by a renewed act and exercise of repentance, the means of his repentance, and the manner of it. Observe, 1. The suddenness of his repentance: although his sin was great, yet his repentance was speedy and without delay. From whence note, That sins committed by the surprisal of a sudden temptation, are much sooner repented of than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. David's sins of murder and adultery were presumptuous and deliberate sins; he continued a long time in them, and lived almost a twelve-month without any solemn repentance of them. St. Peter's sin was hasty and sudden, under a violent passion of fear, contrary to his settled purpose and resolution of constancy; and he takes the warning of the second crowing of the cock, and goes forth to express his repentance. Observe, 2. The means of his repentance, which was twofold. Less principal, the crowing of the cock; more principal, Christ looking upon Peter, and Peter remembering the words of Christ. 1. The less principal means of St. Peter's repentance was the crowing of the cock (Bishop Reynolds on St. Peter's fall :) as the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of a cock occasioned him to repent. That God who can work without means, does sometimes work by weak and contemptible means, and when he pleases, can open the mouth of a bird or beast for the conversion of man. But why should our Saviour choose the crowing of the cock as a means to bring St. Peter to repentance, there being something of emblem between the cock and a preacher. A true minister must have the wings of a cock to rouse up himself from security, and to awaken others to a sense of their duty. He must have the watchfulness of a cock, to be ever ready to discover and forewarn danger. He must have the voice of a cock, *to crow aloud and tell Israel of their sin*, and terrify the roaring lion, and make him tremble. In a word, he must observe the hours of the cock, to crow at all seasons of the night, *to preach in season and out of season*, the glad tidings of salvation. But, 2. The more principal means of St. Peter's recovery, was, 1. Christ's looking upon Peter. Christ first looks upon Peter with an eye of mercy, grace and pity, before Peter looks upon his sin in order to repentance. Here take notice of the greatness of Christ's grace, of his wonderful love and mercy to this poor disciple. When our Saviour was upon his trial for his life, a time when our thoughts are wholly taken up about ourselves; even then did Christ find leisure to think upon Peter, remember to turn about, and give him a pitiful, but piercing look; a look that melted his heart and dissolved it into tears. We never begin to lament for sin, till we are first lamented by our Saviour. *Jesus looked upon Peter.* This is the first more principal means

of Peter's repentance. The second is, Peter's remembering the words of Christ, *Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice.* This remembrance of Christ's words was an applicative and feeling remembrance of them. He remembered the prediction of Christ, and applies it sensibly to himself. Teaching us, that the efficacy of Christ's word, in order to the bringing of a soul unto repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. A sanctified remembrance of Christ's words, and our own sins, is an excellent preparative to repentance. Observe lastly, The manner of Peter's repentance; it was secret; *he went out*; it was sincere, *he wept bitterly*; it was lasting and abiding all the days of his life, and attended with an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ to the end of his life. 1. It was secret, *he went out*; *vere dolet, qui sine teste dolet.* He sought a place of retirement where he might moan in secret: he cannot well be thought to dissemble his grief, who chooses no witness but the omnipresent God. Solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit; and as St. Peter's sorrow caused him to go forth, so might also shame. Christ looked upon Peter, but how ashamed must Peter be to look upon Christ, considering he had so lately denied to have ever seen him? 2. His repentance was sincere, *he wept bitterly*; his grief was extraordinary, and his tears abundant. There is ever a weeping that follows sin; sin must cost the soul sorrow, either here or in hell; we must mourn awhile, or lament for ever. Doubtless with Peter's tears there were joined hearty confession of sin to God, and smart reflections upon himself, after this manner: "Lord! what have I done? I that did once acknowledge my Master to be Christ the Son of the living God, have since disowned him with oaths, curses, and imprecations: I, that promised to lay down my life for his sake, yet have denied him at the voice of a damsel. O what unfaithfulness, what weakness, what wickedness! O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep all my days for the fault of this one night!" Blessed, indeed, are the tears of a converted revolter, and happy is the very misery of a mournful offender. 3. This holy man's repentance was lasting and abiding; he had a lively sense and remembrance of his sin upon his soul all his life. Ecclesiastical history reports, that ever after when St. Peter heard the crowing of a cock, he fell upon his knees and mourned; others say, that he was wont to rise at midnight, and spend the time in penitent devotion, between cock crowing and day-light. And the papists, who love to turn every thing into superstition, began that practice of setting a cock upon the top of towers, steeples, and chimneys, to put the people in mind of this sin of Peter, and his repentance by that signal. Lastly, St. Peter's repentance was attended with an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ to the end of his life. He had an earnest love towards Christ, "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee:" and as an evidence of it, he fed Christ's sheep; for in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of his extraordinary diligence to spread the gospel, and his travels in order thereunto are computed to be nine hundred and fifty miles: and the wisdom of God thought fit that this apostle should preach the gospel to the Jews, as St. Paul did to the Gentiles; that as he had joined with the Jews in denying and disowning Christ, so

he should endeavour to persuade them to join with him in repentance, as he had joined with them in their sin. His sin was in some respects like theirs, therefore he is sent to preach the gospel to them, and his diligence therein is an undoubted proof and evidence of his repentance. Have any of us fallen with Peter? though not with a formal abjuring, yet by a particular denial of him, let us go forth and weep with him; let us be more vigilant and watchful over ourselves for the time to come, let us express more extraordinary love unto, and zeal for Christ, more diligence in his service, and more concernedness for his honor and glory. This would be an happy improvement of this example. The Lord grant it may have that blessed effect. Amen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of Judas' treason, in delivering our Saviour into the hands of the chief priests. In this chapter we find our holy Lord brought by the chief priests unto Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, in order to his arraignment and condemnation. Whence observe, That it has been the old policy of corrupt church-governors to abuse the power of the civil magistrate, in executing their cruel and unjust censures upon holy and innocent persons. The chief priests and elders do not kill our Saviour themselves, but they deliver him over to the secular power, and desire Pilate, the civil magistrate, to sentence and condemn him, which soon after we shall find he did. *They bound him and led him away*; but what need was there of binding him, that never made any resistance? And O, what ingratitude was it to bind him with cords, who came to unloose those bands of sin wherewith we were bound.

3 ¶ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, *What is that to us?* see thou to that.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Here we have a sad relation of Judas' desperate death, after an hypocritical life, as also the horror of his mind and conscience before his death. Observe here, 1. The time when Judas repented; after it was too late. "When he saw that he was condemned, he repented." Learn thence, That they who will not see their sin timely to their conversion, shall see them sooner or later to their confusion. Observe, 2. The repentance itself in the several parts and branches of it; he was sorrowful for the fact, he made confession of his sin, and made restitution for the wrong done. "He repented saying, I have sinned; and cast down the thirty pieces of silver." Learn thence, That a wicked man, when conscience is thoroughly awakened, may make confession of his sin, express some sorrow for it, and endeavour also the making of some satisfaction and restitution for the wrong and injury done by it. They that mourn for sin as sin; they that mourn more for the intrinsic evil that is in sin, than for the penal or consequential evils that follow sin; they that confess sin voluntarily and freely, particularly, penitentially, believingly, with an eye of sorrow upon their sin, and an eye of faith fixed upon their Saviour; they that make restitution as an act of obedience to the command of God, and as an act of justice and righteousness to their neighbour; such persons' repentance shall find acceptance with God. Observe, 3. The answer and reply which the wicked highpriests and elders make to despairing Judas; 1. They excuse themselves. *What is that to us?* It is natural to all sinners to shift sin from themselves, and to lay it at any door rather than their own. Those that have had a share in the pleasure and profit of sin, are yet very desirous to throw the odium and guilt of it upon others. *What is that to us?* say these monsters in sin. O wonderful stupidity! could they think it nothing to them to hire a man to betray innocent blood! Was not the money given, the price of blood, and the field they bought called the field of blood? yet they do impudently say, *What is that to us?* 2. As they excuse and acquit themselves, so they load and burden him: *Look thou to that, Lord!* What miserable comforters are companions in sin to one another, when distress and sorrow comes upon them. When sin comes to be questioned, in order to its being punished, every sinner is for shifting for himself, and leaves his fellow in the lurch. Let us then remember the words of the Holy Ghost, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." How jolly soever sinners are together, when in the height of their lusts, they are but miserable comforters to one another upon a sick bed, or under the lashes of an awakened conscience. But though they may avoid each other now, there is a time coming when it will be impossible; at the great day the sinner shall see both his companions in sin, and his sins themselves, to be what he never would believe them here the vilest of monsters. Observe, 4. The sad and fatal end of Judas. *He went forth and hanged himself.* Horror and despair took hold upon him, and seized his conscience; which was so intolerable, that he ran to the halter for a remedy. Learn thence, 1. That conscience

is a powerful, though invisible executioner: the wrath of man may be endured, but the wrath of God is insupportable, and the irruptions of conscience are irresistible. O how intolerable are those scourges that lash us in this tender and vital part! Judas, awakened with the horror of his fact, conscience begins to rouse, and the man is unable to bear up under the furious revenge of his own mind. There is an active principle in men's breasts and bosoms, which seldom suffers daring sinners to pass in quiet to their graves. Guilt is naturally troublesome and uneasy; it disturbs the peace and serenity of the mind, and fills the soul with storms and thunder, both in life and death. How vainly did Judas hope to take sanctuary in a grave, and to meet with that ease in another world which he could not find in this. Thus ended this miserable man, Judas. Behold! ye professors of religion, the terrible example of God's justice on a deceitful hypocrite. Behold! a disciple, an apostle, first a traitor, and then a self-murderer. Behold! all ye covetous worldlings, to what the love of that accursed idol has brought this wretched apostle. Behold! Judas, once shining in the robes of a glorious profession, now shining in the flames of God's eternal wrath and vengeance. Lord! how earnest ought we to be for thy preserving grace, when neither the presence, the miracles, the sermons, the sacraments of Christ, could preserve and secure a professor, a disciple, and apostle, from the fatal mischief of a ruinous apostasy. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood unto this day.

9 (Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.)

Observe here, 1. The niceness and scrupulosity of these hypocrites; they made no scruple to give money to shed blood, but they scruple the putting that money into the treasury which was the price of blood. They are afraid to defile their treasury, but are not afraid to pollute their souls. Thus hypocrites strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel; scruple at ceremony, but make no conscience of murder and perjury. Observe, 2. The use which they put this money to, which Judas brought them; they bought with it a field to bury strangers in. Thus Christ who was himself

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a stranger in a borrowed grave, by the price of his blood (being thirty pieces of silver) conferred graves upon many strangers. Observe lastly, How the wisdom of God ordered it, that hereby a scripture prophecy might be fulfilled, Zech. xi. 13. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver, and I took and cast them unto the potter." Whence learn, that all the indignities and abasing sufferings which the Lord Jesus underwent, were not only fore-ordained by God, but also foretold by the holy prophets; his being scourged, buffeted, spit upon, and here his being sold for thirty pieces of silver.

11 ¶ And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

14 And he answered him to never a word: insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Observe here, 1. That our Saviour readily answers Pilate, but refuses to answer the chief priests before Pilate. Pilate asks him, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* Jesus readily answers, *Thou sayest*; or, it is as thou sayest. But to all the accusations of the chief priests, and to all that they laid to his charge before Pilate, our Saviour answered never a word: probably for these reasons; because his innocence was such as needed no apology; because their calumnies and accusations were so notoriously false, that they needed no confutation; to show his contempt of death, and to teach us, by his own example, patience and silence, when for his sake we are slandered and traduced. Learn thence, that although we are not obliged to answer every captious and ensnaring question, nor to refute every slander and false accusation, yet are we bound faithfully to own and confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereunto. Our Saviour, as a deaf man hears not, answers not the calumnies of the chief priests; but when Pilate asks him, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* or as St. Mark has it, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* Jesus said, *I am*: though he knew that answer would cost him his life. Hence the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 13, says, "That Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." Teaching us sometimes to hold our peace when our reputation is concerned; but never to be silent when the honor of God, the glory of his truth, the edification and confirmation of others, may effectually be promoted by our open confession: then must we with Christ give a direct, plain, and sincere answer. For whoever denies him, or any truth of his, knowingly and willingly, "him will Christ deny in the presence of his Father, and before all his holy angels."

15 Now, at *that* feast the governor was

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wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?

18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

Now *at the feast*, that is, the feast of the passover, which by way of eminency is called *the feast*, the governor used to release a prisoner (possibly by way of memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt;) accordingly Pilate makes a motion to them, that Christ may be the prisoner set at liberty in honor of their feast; for he was sensible that what they did was out of envy and malice. As covetousness sold Christ, so envy delivered him. Envy is a killing and murdering passion: *Envy slayeth the silly one*, Job v. 2. that is, It slays the silly person who harbours this pestilent lust in his bosom, and is like a fire in his bones, continually preying upon him, causing him to pine away, and die miserably, because another lives happily. To envy another man's prosperity, is an argument of the worst simplicity: yea, farther, as envy slayeth the silly one, so it prompts and provokes the sinner to seek the slaying of simple and innocent ones. Envy wishes the envied person out of the way, yea, out of the world; and if need be, will not only wish it, but lend a lift towards it too; witness the chief priests here, whose envy was so conspicuous, that Pilate himself takes notice of it, and says, "He knew that for envy they had delivered him."

19 When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

There are several sorts or kinds of dreams, natural, moral, diabolical, and divine. The question is, what kind of dream this was? Nothing natural, all agree; some think it was diabolical, and that satan hoped thereby to prevent the work of man's redemption by the death of Christ. But if so, why had not Pilate the dream rather than his wife? Probably this dream was from God, for even our very dreams are ordered by God; our sleeping, as well as our waking times, are in God's hand. Learn hence, How wonderfully the wisdom and power of God is seen in this woman's testimony, which she gave to the innocence of our Saviour. When all his disciples were fled from him, when none of his friends durst speak a word for him, God raises up a woman, a stranger, a pagan, to give evidence of his innocence. And it is observable, That at our Saviour's trial, not one mouth was opened to plead or speak a word for him, in defence of innocence itself, but only Pilate and his wife's; they both pronounce him righteous, though they were Gen-

tiles and Pagans, whilst his own kindred and countrymen, the Jews, thirst after his righteous and innocent blood.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude, that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why? what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

Observe here, 1. How exceedingly unwilling and averse Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death; one while he bids the Jews take him themselves, and judge him according to their law! another while he offers to save Christ in honor of their feast, when by custom he was to release a prisoner, and this prisoner he desired might be Jesus. When this would not satisfy, he expostulates with them about our Saviour's innocence, *What evil hath he done?* Nay, St. Luke says, chap. xxiii. "That Pilate came forth three times, and professed that he found no fault in him." Yet though Pilate was satisfied, the Jews would not be denied. Thence learn, That wicked men and hypocrites within the visible church, may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the conscience of infidels and pagans without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews which had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles, condemn him. But observe, 2. Who influenced the main body of the Jews to desire Barabbas, and to destroy Jesus? It was the chief priests and elders, "they persuaded the multitude." Woe to the people when their guides and leaders are corrupt; for then they shall be tempted by wicked counsel; and woe unto them, much more, if they follow their wicked and pernicious counsels. Thus did the Jews follow their guides, the chief priests, till they had preserved Barabbas, and destroyed Jesus.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye *to it*.

Two things are here observable in Pilate's washing of his hands. 1. By this action he pronounces our Saviour's innocence, and was willing thereby to testify his own, that he did not consent to our Saviour's death; washing the hands being an usual ceremony, in protestation of a person's innocence. But, 2. It was great folly and madness in Pilate, to think that washing of his hands did or could free him from the guilt of innocent blood. "O Pilate! thou hadst need rub hard, if thou meanest to scour from thy soul the guilt of that crimson sin which thou hast committed;

hy guilt cleaves so close unto thee that nothing can expiate it but the blood which thou has spilt." Neither was it any excuse of Pilate's sin, that what he did was to please the people and to gratify their importunity. It is a fond apology for sins, when persons pretend they were not committed with their own consent, but at others' instigation and importunity.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us and on our children.

That is, "Let the guilt and punishment of his blood rest upon us, and our posterity." A most horrid and impious imprecation; the dreadful effects of it began to come upon them forty years after in the destruction of Jerusalem, and has rested and remained upon our posterity to this day, near eighteen hundred years: the Jews being vagabonds over the earth, abhorred by all nations wheresoever they come. The just God has heard their wicked wish, and caused that blood to fall upon them in so severe and righteous a manner, as must pierce the heart of those that read and observe it. God has given them blood to drink, as indeed they were worthy. This ought to be a terror and a warning to all persons, that they avoid all cursed imprecations, and wicked wishes upon themselves or others. Woe to such as wish damnation to themselves, and plague upon others; how if God says *Amen*, and ratifies in heaven the cursed imprecations made on earth, as he did this of the wicked Jews: *His blood be on us, and on our children!* Yet what they with a wicked mind put up as a direful imprecation, we may with a pious mind offer up to God as an humble petition: Lord let thy Son's blood, not in the guilt and punishment, but in the efficacy and merit of it, be upon us, and upon our posterity after us, for evermore.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

As the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans first to scourge and whip their malefactors, and then deliver them to be crucified. Now the manner of the Romans' scourging is said to be thus: they stripped the condemned person, and bound him to a post: two strong men first scourged him with rods of thorns, then two others scourged him with whips of cords full of knots; and lastly, two more with whips of wire, and therewith tore off the very flesh and skin from the person's back and sides: That our Saviour was thus cruelly scourged, seems to some not improbable, from that of the psalmist, Ps. cxxix. 3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows." Which, if spoken prophetically of Christ was literally fulfilled in the day of his scourging. But why was the precious body of our blessed Lord thus galled and torn with scourgings? Doubtless to fulfil that prophecy: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.—That by his stripes we might be healed." And to learn us patience from his example: why should we think it strange to be scourged either with the tongue or the hand, or with both, when we see our dear Redeemer bleeding by stripes and scourges before our eyes.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common-hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of *soldiers*.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail! King of the Jews.

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

31 ¶ And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The next part of our Lord's sufferings consisted of cruel mockings. Our blessed Saviour had said, that he was the King of the Jews; not a temporal king to reign over them with pomp and power, but a spiritual king, to rule in the hearts of his people; but the Jews, missing of their expectations of a temporal king in Christ, look upon him as an impostor: and accordingly they treat him as a mock king, putting a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and painful one, *a crown of thorns: a sceptre in his hand*, but it was of a *reed: and a robe of purple or scarlet*, both of which were used by princes, and *bowed the knee before him*, as they were wont to do to princes. Thus all the marks of scorn imaginable are put upon our blessed Redeemer: yet that which they did in jest, God did in earnest, for all these things were ensigns and marks of sovereignty; and Almighty God caused the regal dignity of his Son to appear and shine forth even in the midst of his abasement. Whence was all the jeering and sport, but to flout majesty? And why did Christ undergo all this ignominy, disgrace and shame, but to show us what was due to us for our sins, and to give us an example to bear all the scorn, reproach and shame imaginable for his sake, "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame."

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross,

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, A place of a skull.

34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof* he would not drink.

35 And they crucified him, and parted;

his garments, casting lots ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots,

36 And sitting down, they watched him there;

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can with dry eyes behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's bloody execution? Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gates, bearing that cross which was soon after to bear him. With his cross on his shoulder, he marches towards Golgotha ; and when they see he can go no faster, they force Simon the Cyrenian, not out of compassion, but from indignation, to be the porter of his cross. This Cyrenian being a Gentile, not a Jew, who bare our Saviour's cross, might signify and show, that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ, and be sharers with the Jews in the benefits of his cross. At length Christ comes to the place of execution, Golgotha or mount Calvary. Here, in a public place, with infamous company, betwixt two thieves, he is crucified ; that is fastened to a great cross of wood, his hands stretched forth abroad, and his feet close together ! and both hands and feet fastened with nails !! his naked body was lifted up in the open air, hanging between heaven and earth ; thereby intimating, that the crucified person was unfit to live in either. This shameful, painful, and accursed death, did the holy and innocent Jesus undergo for sinners. Some observe all the dimensions of length, breadth, depth, and height, in our Saviour's sufferings. For length, his passion was several hours long, from twelve to three, exposed all that time to hunger and cold : the thieves crucified with him were not dead so soon : they endured but personal pain, he undergoing the miseries of all mankind. But what his passion wanted in length, it had in breadth, extending over all the parts and powers of his soul and body ; no part free but his tongue, which was at liberty to pray for enemies. His sight was tormented with the scornful gestures of such, *as passed by wagging their heads* ; his hearing grieved with the taunts and jeers of the priests and people ; his smelling offended with noisome savors in the place of sculls : his taste with the gall and vinegar given him to drink. His feeling was wonderfully affected by the nails, which pierced his hands and feet, and the crown of thorns, which pierced his tender temples with a multiplicity of wounds. And for the depth of his passion, it was as deep as hell itself ; enduring tortures in his soul, as well as torments in his body ; groaning under the burden of desertion, and crying out, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* Lastly, for the height of his sufferings, they were as high as heaven ; his person being innocent and infinite, no less than the Son of God, which adds an infinite worth and value to his sufferings, " Lord let us be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, depth and height, and let us know the love of Christ, which in suffering for us passeth knowledge." So infinite every way were the dimensions of it.

37 And set up over his head his accu-

sation written, **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

It was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified any man, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters, placed over the head of the person. Now see how the wisdom and providence of God powerfully over-ruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw his title, which was truly honorable, and fix it to his cross : Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him, *King of the Jews*. Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in a time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches. Pilate did Christ a special honor, and an eminent piece of service. He did that for Christ, which none of his own disciples durst do ; but he did it not designedly for his glory, but from the special overruling power of Divine Providence ; but the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly, shall never be accepted or rewarded by God.

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him ; one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 ¶ And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 Likewise also the other priests, mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him ; for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Here we have several aggravations of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross. 1. From the company he suffered with, *two thieves*. It had been disparagement enough to our blessed Saviour to have been sorted with the best of men ; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts. This was intended by the Jews to dishonor him the more, and to persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders ; but God overruled this that the scripture might be fulfilled. *He was numbered among the transgressors*. 2. Another aggravation of our Lord's sufferings on the cross, was the scorn and mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments from the common people, from the chief priests, and from the thieves that suf-

ferred with him. The common people, both in words and actions, expressed scorn and detestation against him. "They reviled him, wagging their heads." The chief priests, though men of age and gravity, not only barbarously mock him, in his extremest misery, whom humanity obliged them to pity; but they scoff atheistically and profanely, jeering at his faith and affiance in God; tauntingly saying, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him now if he will have him." Where observe, That persecutors are generally atheists, though they make a profession of religion. The chief priests and elders here, though learned and knowing men, yet they blaspheme God, mock at his power, and deride his providence, which was as bad as to deny his being. Hence we may gather, That those who administer to God in holy things—by way of office, if they be not the best, they are the worst of men. No such bitter enemies to the power of godliness, as the ministers of religion who were never acquainted with the efficacy and power of it in their own hearts and lives. Nothing on this side hell is worse than a wicked priest, a minister of God devoted to the service of the devil. A third aggravation of our Lord's sufferings on the cross, was, that the thieves that were crucified with him reviled him with the rest; that is, one of them as St. Luke has it, or perhaps both of them might do it at first. Which, if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the thief's impenitency we learn, That neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner; but even then when he is in the very suburbs of hell, will he blaspheme.

45 Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 And, about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This man calleth for Elias.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

50 ¶ Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Observe here, 1. How the rays of Christ's divinity, and the glory of his godhead, break out and shine forth in the midst of that infirmity which his human nature labored under. He shows himself to be the God of nature, by altering the course of nature. The sun is eclipsed, and darkness overspreads the earth, for *three hours*: namely, from twelve o'clock to three. Thus the sun in the firmament becomes close mourner at our Lord's death, and the whole

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frame of nature puts itself into a funeral habit; Observe, 2. That the chief of Christ's sufferings consisted in the suffering of his soul; the distressed of the Spirit were more intolerable than the torments of his body, as appears by His mournful complaint, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Being the first words of the 22d psalm; and some conceive that he repeated that whole psalm, 't being an admirable narrative of the colors of his passion. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, when suffering for our sins, was really deserted for a time, and left destitute of all sensible consolation. *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Learn farther, That under this desertion Christ despaired not, but still retained a firm persuasion of God's love unto him, and experienced necessary supports from him. *My God, My, God,* These are words of faith and affiance, striving under temptation. Christ was thus forsaken for us, that we might never be forsaken by God; yet by God's forsaking of Christ, is not to be understood any abatement of divine love, but only a withdrawing from the human nature the sense of his love, and a letting out upon his soul a deep afflicting sense of his displeasure against sin. There is a total and eternal desertion, by which God utterly forsakes a man, both as to grace and glory, being wholly cast out of our God's presence, and adjudged to eternal torments; this was not compatible to Christ, nor agreeable to the dignity of his person. But there is a partial and temporary desertion, when God for a little moment hides his face from his children; now this was both agreeable to the dignity of Christ's nature, and also suitable to his office, who was to satisfy the justice of God for our forsaking of him, and to bring us near to him, that we might be received for ever. Observe lastly, What a miraculous evidence Christ gave of his divinity instantly before he gave up the ghost. *He cried with a loud voice.* This showed that he did not die according to the ordinary course of nature, gradually departing and drawing on, as we express it. No, his life was whole in him, and nature as strong at last as at first. Other men die gradually, and towards their end their sense of pain is much blunted; they fumble, fumble, and die by degrees: but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength; his life was whole in him. This was evident by the mighty outcry he made when he gave up the ghost, contrary to the sense and experience of all other persons; this argued him to be full of strength. And he that could cry with such a loud voice (*in articulo mortis*) as he did, could have kept himself from dying, if he would. Hence we learn, That when Christ died, he rather conquered death, than was conquered by death. He must voluntarily and freely lay down his life, before death could come at him, *He yielded up the ghost.* O! wonderful sight; the Lord of life hangs dead, dead on the accursed tree! O! severe and inexorable justice of God! O! amazing and astonishing love in Christ! love beyond expression, beyond conception, beyond all comprehension: with what comparison shall we compare it? Verily, with nothing but itself; never was love like thine.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent:

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52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now, when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

55 And many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him;

56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Here we have an account of several extraordinary and wonderful things which occurred, and fell out about the time that our Saviour died, 1. *The veil of the temple rent asunder*, that is, the hanging which parted the holy from the most holy place, to hide the mysteries therein, namely, the ark of the covenant and mercy-seat, from the view of the ordinary priests. This veil was now rent from the top to the bottom, and the rending of it did impart these great mysteries: 1. That now our great High Priest was entering into the most holy place with his own blood, having made the atonement for us. Heb. ix. 12. "By his own blood he entered once into the most holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." 2. That the means whereby he entered into the most holy place, was by the rending of his humanity, his soul from his body, typified by rending of this veil; accordingly his body is called a veil, Heb. x. 20. *Consecrated through the veil of his flesh*. 3. That now by the death of Christ all those dark mysteries veiled up formally in the most holy place, as the ark of the covenant and mercy-seat, are now unfolded and laid open, and the use of the whole ceremonial law at an end, and the Jewish temple-service ceased. 4. That now the kingdom of heaven, the most holy place, is open to all believers. Christ, our great High Priest, is entered in with his own blood, and hath not closed the veil after him, but rent it asunder, and made, and left a passage for all believers to follow him, first in their prayers and next in their persons. See Heb. x. 19, 20. "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us though the veil, that is to say, his flesh; let us draw near with a true heart, &c." Observe, 2. The earth quaked. As there was an universal eclipse, so likewise an universal earthquake, at our Lord's crucifixion, which did awaken many of the saints (that died before our Saviour's incarnation) out of their dead sleep. These arose both as witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and also as sharers

in it. But none of them arose till Christ was risen, *he being the first fruits of them that slept*. And those holy persons that arose with him, possibly attended him to heaven at his ascension. From hence we learn, That Christ was the Saviour of those who believed in him before his incarnation, as well as those that believed in him since his incarnation: and that the former are partakers of the fruit and benefit of his death and resurrection, no less than the latter. Others conjecture that those who rose out of their graves, were such as believed in Christ, and died before him, as old Simeon, &c. Accordingly they understand, St. John v. 25. "The hour is coming, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man," of this resurrection here mentioned. And whereas it is said they *went into the holy city, and appeared to many*: it is probable they were known to them unto whom they did appear; and if so, they must have lived in the time of their knowledge. Observe, next, What influence and effect the sight of those prodigious things had upon the centurion and the soldiers: it convinced them, that *verily this was the Son of God*. Here we see the Heathen soldiers are sooner convinced of the divinity of Christ, than the unbelieving Jewish doctors. Obstinacy and unbelief filled their minds with an invincible prejudice against Christ; so that neither the miracles done by him in his life, nor wrought at his death, could convince the high priests, that Christ was any other than an impostor and deceiver. Observe lastly, Who of Christ's friends were witnesses of his death: "They are women who followed him from Galilee, and ministered unto him:" not one of his dear disciples, except St. John, who stood by the cross with the Virgin Mary. What a shame was this for the apostles, to be absent from a spectacle upon which the salvation of the whole world did depend! and what an honor was this to the female sex in general, and to these women in particular, that they had the courage to follow Christ to the cross, *when all the disciples forsook him and fled*! God can make women glorious professors of his truth, and arm them against the fears of sufferings, contrary to the natural timorousness of their tempers. These women wait upon Christ's cross, when apostles fly, and durst not come near it.

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

58 He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus: Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Here we have an account given of our Lord's funeral, and interment in the grave; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Concerning which, we have these particulars observable; Observe, 1. The preparatives that were made for our Lord's funeral; namely, the begging and perfuming of his dead body; his body could not be buried, till by begging it was obtained of Pilate; the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power and disposal of the judge. Pilate grants it; and to manifest their dear affection to their dear Lord, they wrapt the body in fine linen, with spices to perfume it. But what need of odors for that body which could not see corruption? Though his holy body did not want them, yet the affections of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, The bearers that carried his body to the grave, or the persons concerned in solemnizing his funeral, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, two rich men, and two secret disciples. 1. They were rich men, senators, honorable counsellors; and so that prophecy was fulfilled, Isa. liii. 9. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." 2. They were good men as well as rich men, disciples, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. Grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is. As there is much secret riches in the bowels of the earth which no eye ever saw, so there may be grace in the heart of a christian, which the world takes no notice of. We never heard any news of Joseph of Arimathea till now; yet was he eminently rich, wise, and good; a worthy though a close disciple. Much grace may be where little is seen. Some gracious persons cannot put forward, and discover themselves, like others; and yet such weak christians, perhaps, when a trial comes, shall stand their ground, when stronger run away. We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral; fear had chased them away, though they professed a readiness to die with Christ; but Joseph and Nicodemus appear boldly for him. Let it be a caution to strong christians, neither to glory in themselves, nor to glory over the weak. If God deserts the strong, and assists the weak, *the feeble shall be as David, and the strong as tow.* Observe, 3. The mourners that followed the bier; namely, the women that followed him out of Galilee, and particularly the two Marys; a very poor train of mourners, a few sorrowful women. Others are attended to their graves by their relations and friends; but Christ's disciples were all scattered, and afraid to own him either dying or dead. Our blessed Lord affected no pomp or gallantry in his life, and it was no way suitable either to the end or manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death, and his burial was the lowest degree of his humiliation. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre in which they buried him; *it was in a garden.* As by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise; so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for an entrance into the heavenly paradise. It was in a *sepulchre hewn out of a rock*; that so his enemies might have no occasion to cavil, and say, that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, or unseen passages under ground. And it was in a new sepulchre, in which never any man was laid, lest his adversaries should say, it was some other that was risen, or that he rose from the dead by touching some other corpse. Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral, hastily, openly, decently celebrated. It was done in haste, by reason of the straits of time, the preparation for the passover caused them to be

very expeditious; the sabbath was approaching, and they lay all business aside to prepare for that. Learn hence, How much it is our duty to dispatch our worldly business as early as we can towards the end of the week, that we may be the better prepared to sanctify the Lord's day, if we live to enjoy it. We ought to remember that day before it comes, and to sanctify it when it is come. Again, Our Lord was buried openly, as well as hastily; all persons had liberty to be spectators, that none might object there was any fraud or deceit used in or about his burial. He was also interred decently, his body wrapt in fine linen, and perfumed with odors according to the Jewish custom, which used not to unbowel, but enbalm their dead. Observe, 6. The reason why our Lord was buried, seeing he was to rise again, in as short a time as other men lie by the walls; and had his dead body remained a thousand years unburied, it could have seen no corruption, having never been tainted with sin. Sin is the cause of the body's corruption; it is sin that makes our bodies stink worse than carrion when they are dead. A funeral then was not necessary for Christ's body, upon the same account that it is necessary for ours. But, 1. He was buried to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection; and for this reason did God's providence order it that he should be embalmed, to cut off all pretensions. For in this kind of embalming, his mouth, his ears, and his nostrils were all filled with spices and odors, so that there could be no latent principle of life in him; being thus buried then, declares him to be certainly dead. 2. He was buried to fulfil the types and prophecies that went before concerning him. Jonas' being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of Christ's being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; and the prophet Isa. liii. 9. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Pointing by that expression, at this tomb of Joseph's who was a rich man; and the scriptures cannot be broken. 3. He was buried to complete his humiliation; "They have brought me to the dust of death," says David, a type of Christ. This was the lowest step he could possibly descend in his abased state: lower he could not be laid, and so low his blessed head must be laid, else he had not been humbled to the lowest. 4. He went into the grave, that he might conquer death in its own territories and dominions. Christ's victory over the graves causes his saints to triumph and sing; O grave where is thy destruction?" Our blessed Lord has perfumed the bed of the grave by his own lying in it: so that the pillow of down is not so soft to a believer's head, as a pillow of dust. Observe, lastly, Of what use the doctrine of our Lord's burial may be unto us.

1. For instruction: here we see the amazing depths of our Lord's humiliation. From what, to what his love brought him; even from the bosom of his Father, to the bosom of a grave. Now the depth of his humiliation shows us the fulness and sufficiency of his satisfaction as well as the heinousness of our transgression. 2. For consolation against the fears of death and the grave. The grave received Christ, but could not retain him. Death swallowed him up as the fish did Jonas, but quickly vomited him up again; so shall it fare with Christ mystical as it did with Christ personal; the grave could not long keep him, it shall not for ever keep us, as his body rested in hope, so shall ours also; and though they see corruption,

which he did not, yet shall they not always lie under the power of corruption. In a word, Christ's lying in the grave has changed and altered the nature of the grave; it was a prison before, a bed of rest now; a loathsome grave before, a perfumed bed now. He whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his foot into the grave.—"Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in dust," for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ. 3. For imitation; let us study and endeavour to be buried with Christ, in respect of our sins: I mean, Rom. vi. 4. *Buried with him into death.* Our sins should be as a dead body, in several respects. Are dead bodies removed far from the society of men? So should our sins be removed far from us. Dead bodies in the grave spend and consume away by little and little; so should our sins daily. Will dead bodies grow every day more and more loathsome to others? So should our sins be to ourselves. Do dead bodies wax out of memory, and are quite forgotten? So should our sins, in respect of any delight that we take in remembering of them. We should always remember our sins to our humiliation; but never think or speak of them with the least delight or satisfaction; for this, in God's account, is a new commission of them, and lays us under an additional guilt.

62 Now, the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and pharisees came together unto Pilate,

63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

64 Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure, until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first.

65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can.

66 So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

This last paragraph of the chapter acquaints us with the endeavours that the murderers of Christ used to prevent his foretold resurrection: they ask and obtain of Pilate, that his sepulchre might be strongly guarded till the third day was past and over, when probably they intended to have exposed his dead body to the view of the people; and accordingly a threefold guard is set about the grave; the stone, the seal, and the watch; concluding that Christ was safe enough either from rising or stealing: the stone making the grave sure, the seal making the stone sure, and the watch or band of soldiers making all sure. The stone being sealed with the public seal, no person might meddle with it upon pain of death.

Where note, 1. The wonderful wisdom, the over-ruling power and providence of God; by this excessive care and extraordinary diligence, the high priests hoped to prevent our Saviour's resurrection, but the truth and belief of it was hereby confirmed to all the world. How much evidence had Christ's resurrection wanted, if the high priests and elders had not been thus maliciously industrious to prevent his rising? Learn, 2. That the endeavours used to obstruct our Lord's resurrection, have rendered it more certain and undoubted; had not all this care and caution been used by his enemies, the grounds of our faith had not been so strong, so evident, and so clear. It was very happy, that the Jews were thus jealous and suspicious, thus carnal and distrustful: for otherwise the world had never received so full and perfect an evidence of Christ's resurrection as now, whereon all our comfort and salvation doth depend. Verily, their solicitous care to suppress our Redeemer's resurrection, has rendered it more conspicuous, and freed it from all suspicion of forgery.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This last chapter of St. Matthew contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives us an account of what he did on earth, between the time of his triumphant resurrection and his glorious ascension.

IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre.

The Lord of Life was buried upon the Friday, in the evening of that day on which he was crucified: and his body rested in the silent grave the next day, and a part of the morning of the day following. Thus he arose again the third day, neither sooner nor later: not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned, that he did not die at all: and not later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. And accordingly, when the sabbath was past, "and it dawned towards the first day of the week, in the morning very early," before day, Mary Magdalene, and other devout women, go to visit the sepulchre, intending with their spices and odors farther to embalm our Lord's body. But observe, Although the hearts of these good women did burn with an ardent love and zeal to their crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they stay till the sabbath is ended, and then early in the morning they go with odors in their hands to perfume his sacred corpse; fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen: how great a tribute of respect and honour is due and payable to these women for their magnanimity and courage! They followed Christ, when his disciples left him; they accompanied him to his cross,

and followed his hearse to the grave, when none of his disciples durst appear. Learn hence, That courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where God gives courage, it is not in man to make afraid.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Observe here, 1. With what pomp and triumph doth our Lord arise. The earth that quaked before at his crucifixion, quakes now again at his resurrection: it quaked then at the dissolution, now at the re-union of his human nature, to tell the world that the God of nature then suffered, and now conquered. Observe, 2. How an angel is employed in Christ's resurrection; *He rolls away the stone*. But could not Christ have risen then without the angel's help? Yes sure, he that raised himself, surely could have removed the stone: but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave; and by setting our surety at liberty, proclaims our debt to the divine justice fully satisfied. Besides, it was fit that the angels who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Observe, 3. How unable the keepers of the graves were to bear the sight and presence of the angel; *they shook for fear and became as dead men*. Angels being pure and perfect spirits, man is not able to bear the sight of an angel, no not in human shape, without terror and affrightment; and if the sight of an angel be so dreadful, what is the sight of God himself?

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here; for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay:

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him. Lo, I have told you.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's resurrection asserted and declared, *He is risen*. God never intended that the darling of his soul should be lost in an obscure sepulchre. *He is not here*, says the angel; that is, in the grave, where you laid him, where you left him. Death hath lost its prey, and the grave has lost her guest. Observe, 2. It is not said, he is not here, for he is raised; but, *He is risen*. The word im-

ports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickening principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead, Acts i. 3. *He showed himself alive after his passion*. Learn hence, That it was the divine nature or Godhead of Christ, which raised his human nature from death to life. Others were raised from the grave by Christ's power, he raised himself by his own power. Observe, 3. The testimony or witness given to our Lord's resurrection; that of an angel; *The angel said he is not here, but risen*. But why is an angel the first publisher of our Lord's resurrection? Surely the dignity of our Lord's person, and the excellency of his resurrection, required that it should be first published by an angel; and accordingly it is worthy our observation, how very serviceable and officious the holy angels were in attending upon our Saviour in the days of his flesh; an angel foretels his conception to the blessed Virgin; an angel proclaims his birth to the shepherds; an angel succours him in his temptation in the wilderness: an angel comforts him in his agony in the garden; and at his resurrection *the angel rolls away the stone from the sepulchre*, and brings the first tidings of it to the women. In his ascension the angels bore him company to heaven: and when he comes again to judgment, *he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels*. Observe, 4. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first made known, *to women*, to the two Mary's. But why to women? God will make choice of weak means for producing great effects, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honor of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, Almighty God intermixes divine power with human weakness. Thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost; but his mother, a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse: so the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves; but the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, and the graves opening, showed a mixture of divine power. God will honor what instruments he pleases, for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these women, the two Marys, is the discovery of Christ's resurrection first made? Possibly it was a reward for their magnanimity and masculine courage. These women cleaved to Christ when the apostles fled from him and forsook him; they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they watched his sepulchre. These women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes the women apostles to the apostles; he sends them to tell the apostles of the resurrection, and they must have the news at the second hand. O what a tacit rebuke was thereby given to the apostles! A secret check, that they should be thus out-done by poor women. These holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles here come after them in their rewards and comforts. Observe, 5. The evidence which the angel offers to the woman, to evince and prove the verity and certainty of our Saviour's resurrection; namely, by an appeal to their senses; *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*. The senses, when rightly disposed, are the proper judges of all sensible objects; Christ himself did appeal to his disciples' senses concerning the truth of his own resurrection: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself;" and indeed, if we must not believe our senses, we shall want the best external

evidence for the proof of the truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles: for what assurance can we have of the reality of those miracles, but from our senses? therefore, says our Saviour, "If ye believe not me, yet believe the works that I do;" that is, the miracles which I have wrought before your eyes. Now as my senses tell me that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure me that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false. From the whole note, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotency of his godhead, revived and rose again from the dead, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable joy and consolation of believers.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 ¶ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Observe here, What haste and speed these holy women make to carry the news of Christ's resurrection to the apostles; such as find and feel their hearts grieved for the absence and want of Christ, will be very ready to comfort such as are in the same condition. O how glad are these holy women to carry the good news of their Lord's resurrection to the heart-broken disciples! Observe, 2. How these holy women hastened, in obedience to the angel's command, to tell the disciples to meet with Christ in the way. Such as obey the directions of God's ministers, seeking Christ in his own way and means, shall find him to their comfort sooner than they expected. These holy women find Christ before they looked for him: *As they went to tell his disciples, Jesus met them.* O! happy women, while they were weeping for a dead Christ, they find a living Jesus. Observe, 3. The affectionate and loving title which Christ puts upon his disciples: *Tell my brethren.* He might have said, "Go tell those apostate apostles, that cowardly left me in my danger, that durst not own me in the high-priest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, nor within the sight of my sepulchre." Not a word of this, by way of upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice, but all words of kindness: *Go tell my brethren.* Where note, That Christ calls his disciples *brethren*, after his resurrection and exaltation, as he had done before in his state of humiliation, to show the continuance of his former affection to them, and that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection to his despised members: but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his abasement, are so still after his exaltation and advancement. Observe lastly, The place where Christ chooses to meet with and speak to his disciples, not in Jerusalem but in Galilee; "I go before them into Galilee, there they shall see me." Jerusalem

was now a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction; Christ would not show himself openly to them, but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry was more acceptable. Such places wherein Christ is most welcome to preach shall be most honored with his presence. *In Galilee they shall see me.*

11 Now, when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers.

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Observe here, 1. How the priests and elders endeavour by a notorious lie to hinder the belief of our Lord's resurrection, they suborn and bribe the soldiers to say that his corpse was stolen out of the grave: lies have been an old refuge which the enemies of Christ have all along had recourse unto; lying is an ancient device of satan. But observe, 2. What an improbable and unlikely lie this was, which they put into the soldiers' mouths to vouch; "Say, his disciples came and stole him away, while we slept." Frivolous excuse! carrying with it a most self-evident contradiction. If the soldiers were asleep, how could they discover the disciples stealing away the body? if awake, why did they not prevent their stealing it? besides, how improbable was it that Christ's few and fearful disciples should attempt to open the sepulchre guarded by soldiers; and as unlikely was it that the soldiers should be all asleep together, and so fast asleep too, that the great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre should be rolled away, and not one of the soldiers awakened with the noise. Infatuation is the certain consequence of desertion of God. Yet observe farther, That this incredible falsehood finds a fast and firm rooting in the belief of the Jews to this day. Note thence, That it is a righteous thing with God to deliver up those to strong delusions, even to the believing of notorious lies, who will not yield their assent to divine truths upon the clearest evidence, and most convincing demonstration. How strange is it, that such falsehood as this should find belief among the Jews to this day? but where truth is obstinately rejected, a lie though ever so improbable, is received.

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went

away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him they worshipped him : but some doubted.

The meeting of our Saviour and his apostles upon a mountain in Galilee, was an appointed and general meeting. The mountain is supposed to be that near Capernaum, where he made that famous sermon, called, *The sermon on the mount* ; and the meeting is supposed to be appointed as a general rendezvous for confirming the faith of all his disciples in the certainty of his resurrection. Possibly our Lord appointed this place in Galilee, so far from Jerusalem, that his disciples might without danger come thither to see their Saviour alive again, after his crucifixion. This is judged to be that famous appearance of which St. Paul speaks, 1. Cor. xv. 6. "When he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." And those who saw him worshipped him, who before had doubted. Learn hence, That when faith is once satisfied, and sees Christ to be God, it engages the soul to worship him. Divine worship is due to Christ upon account of his divine nature. No creature can be the object of divine worship, therefore they who worship Christ by praying to him, and yet deny him to be God, are certainly idolaters. If Christ had an angelic nature, that had not made him capable of divine worship : for adoration is founded only on divinity, and what is but human or angelical, is not adorable.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 ¶ Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost ;

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Observe here, 1. A power asserted. 2. An authority delegated. 3. A command enjoined. 4. A promise subjoined. Observe, 1. A power and authority asserted by our Saviour, as belonging to himself ; "All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth." 1. In heaven ; which comprehends a power in sending the Holy Ghost ; a power over angels, and all the hosts of heaven, and a power to dispose of heaven to all that shall believe in him. 2. In earth : which comprehends a power to gather a church out of all nations, and authority to rule, govern, and defend the same against all its enemies. Learn hence, That all power and authority concerning the church of God, was given unto Christ, and conferred upon him, upon the account of his meritorious death and triumphant resurrection. *All power is given unto me* : that is, as Mediator ; but this power was inherent in him as God from all eternity. Observe, 2. This power delegated by Christ to his apostles ; "Go ye, therefore, and teach and baptize all nations ; in-

structing them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." Here is a threefold power delegated by Christ to his apostles ; 1. To congregate and gather a church, a christian church, out of all the heathen nations throughout the world. Before, he had confined them only to Israel ; now, they must travel from country to country, and proselyte the heathen nations, which before had been taught of the devil, and were led away by his oracles and delusions. *Go, and disciple all nations*, without any distinction of country, sex, or age whatsoever, and make the gospel church as large as you can. Thence note, That the apostles and first planters of the gospel, had a commission from Christ to go amongst the pagan Gentiles, without limitation ; and were not to take up their settled residence in any one nation, but to travel from country to country, instructing them in the mysteries of the gospel. The second branch of their power was to baptize in the name of the whole Trinity ; "Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Where observe, That all adult and grown persons are to be first taught and instructed, before they be baptized. But it follows not from hence, that the children of such parents may not be baptized before they are taught : for the apostles were to baptize all nations, of which children are a chief, if not the chiefest part. Besides, those that were proselyted to the Jewish religion, though before they were circumcised themselves, they were instructed in the law of God ; yet when they were circumcised themselves, their children were not denied circumcision at eight days old. In like manner we have no reason to deny the children of baptized parents who are in a covenant themselves, the sign an seal of the covenant, which is baptism. God having assured his people, "that he will be the God of them, and of their seed." If this privilege be denied, the children of christian parents are in a worse condition than the children of the Jews : and consequently infants are in a worse condition since Christ's coming, than they were before, and the privileges of those that live under the gospel are straiter and narrower than those that lived under the law. Observe farther, In whose name persons are to be baptized ; "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Where we have a profession of our belief in the Holy Trinity, a dedication of the person to the worship and service of the Holy Trinity, and a stipulation or covenant promise that we will continue faithful in the service of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to our lives' end. The third branch of the power which Christ delegated to his apostles, was, by their ministry, to press upon all his converts an universal observance of and obedience to all their commands ; "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." Where note, 1. That preaching is the ordinary and instituted means to convert nations unto God. 2. That preaching must not only go before baptism, but follow after it. Obedience must be pressed upon, and practised by all those that enter into covenant with God, otherwise they lie under a great condemnation. 3. That preaching of the gospel is a chief part of the minister's work, and no apostle thought himself above that duty. 4. As the apostles did not, so the ministers of Christ ought not to teach any thing but what Christ commands them. 5. As they are to teach what Christ commands them, so they are to teach all things whatsoever Christ commands them : "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I com-

mand you." Lastly, Observe the promise enjoined: "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world." That is, I am, and will be, with you and your successors, lawfully called by my power and authority, by the blessing and assistance of my Holy Spirit. I will be with you, to uphold my own ordinance, to protect, encourage, and reward you, and all your successors in the faithful discharge of your trust; and this is not for a day, a year, or an age, but to the end and consummation of all ages. Learn hence, That the ministry of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are a standing and perpetual ordinance, to continue in the christian church throughout all ages. Learn, 2. That all the faithful ministers of Christ, in what part of the world soever

God shall cast their lot, and in what time soever they shall happen to live, may comfortably expect Christ's gracious presence with their persons, and his blessings upon their endeavours. "Lo I am with you *I am always with you*, and to the end of the world I will be with you." Thanks be to Christ, for the gracious promise of his spiritual and perpetual presence with his ministers to the end of the world. May this promise cause us to gird up the lions of our minds, increase our diligence, zeal, and fervor, accounting no labor too great, no service too much, no sufferings too severe, so that we may *but finish our course with joy*, and fulfil the ministry we are engaged in. Amen.

THE END OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

THE
HOLY GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
SAINT MARK.

Saint Mark, the writer of this compendious History of our blessed Saviour's Life and Death, was the disciple and companion of St. Peter; and some affirm, that he wrote his Gospel from St. Peter's mouth; it being dictated by St. Peter, and indited by the Holy Ghost. But since we are assured that the Spirit of God indited the book, we need not trouble ourselves to find out whose hand it was that held the pen.

CHAPTER I.

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God;

The word gospel signifies a message of glad tidings, and intimates to us, that the doctrine of the gospel contains the most gladsome tidings, the most joyful message, that ever was sent from God to mankind: happy tidings concerning our reconciliation with God, and salvation by Jesus Christ. O how highly should we prize, how steadfastly believe, how cordially embrace these good tidings of great joy! Observe, 1. This gospel is called, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, because Christ, as God, is the author of this gospel, and also the principal subject and matter of it: indeed St. John the Baptist was the first publisher and preacher of the gospel doctrine, but Christ himself was the first principal author, and likewise the chief subject-matter of it: for whatever is taught in the gospel, relates either to the person and offices of Christ, or the benefits received by him, or the means of enjoying those benefits from him. Observe, 2. How St. Mark styles Christ *the Son of God*, as St. Matthew had styled him before *the Son of David*; the one sets forth the verity of his human nature, the other the reality of his divine nature; signifying to us, that the true and promised Messiah was both God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever. He is true and real God, as well as the Father and the Holy Ghost: not a mere man, but God as well as man.

hold I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee.

St. Mark begins his gospel with an account of St. John the Baptist's preaching and ministry, and declares, 1. That the prophets of old, particularly Isaiah and Malachi, did long before foretel the Baptist's message and ministry; that he should go before Christ as his harbinger, to prepare the way for him; "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare thy way." Where note, 1. The dignity and authority of the ministers of Christ: they are his *messengers*, sent by him to deliver his mind and will unto his people. This ministerial mission is twofold, extraordinary and ordinary; the former when God immediately by himself calls men to the holy function; the latter when he uses the ministry of man in order thereunto. Observe, 2. The work and office of the ministers of Christ declared, and that is, to prepare people to receive Jesus Christ, offered and rendered to them in the gospel. "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare thy way before thee." Learn thence, That the great design and end of the ministry of the word, is to prepare and fit men for entertaining the holy religion of Christ in their hearts, and to oblige them to walk according to the rules and directions of it in their lives.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thee, who shall prepare thy way: every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: the rough places shall be smoothed out, and the crooked places shall be made straight: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

M M

Here note, 1. The title given to John the Baptist; he is called a *voice*, in respect to his ministerial office, which was to speak forth, to promulge and publish the doctrine of salvation. 2. The quality or kind of this voice, a *crying voice*, the voice of one crying. This implies, 1. His earnestness and vehemency, his zeal, and fervency, in preaching. When we lift up our voice, and cry aloud, we speak with earnestness and fervor. When our hearts are warmly affected with what we preach, we may hope to affect the hearts of our hearers. Why has God commissioned men rather than angels, to be the preachers and dispensers of his word, but because we can speak to, and treat with, sinners more feelingly and more affectionately than the angels can? 2. This crying of the holy Baptist in his preaching, implies his liberty and boldness, as well as his vehemency and earnestness, in delivering of his message. The lifting up of the voice in speaking, argues boldness and courage in the speaker; as, on the contrary, the depressing of the voice sheweth timorousness. Learn hence, That the ministers of the word are to use both zeal and earnestness, and also courage and boldness of spirit, in delivering the word and message of God; not forbearing to reprove sin, nor concealing any part of God's truth, for fear of men's displeasure. Observe, 3. The sum and substance of what he cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;" that is, "Make ready yourselves, prepare your own hearts, to entertain the doctrine and glad tidings of the gospel." It is a metaphorical speech, taken from the custom of loyal and dutiful subjects, who when their prince is coming to lodge in their city, they prepare and make ready the way for his coming, by removing every thing that may obstruct or hinder his progress. Learn hence, That man's heart by nature is very unfit to embrace and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ, we have naturally no fitness, no disposition, no inclination, to believe in him, or submit unto him. 2. If ever we desire to entertain Christ in our hearts, we must first prepare and make fit our hearts for the receiving and embracing of him. For though "the preparation of the heart be from the Lord," yet he requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours. He prepares our hearts by enabling us to the preparation of our own hearts. This is done by getting a sight of the evil of sin, a sense of our misery without Christ, an hungering and thirsting desire after him, a true faith in him. Christ will lodge in no heart that is not thus made ready to receive him.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

A twofold account is here given of St. John's execution of his ministry and office: first, his baptizing; secondly, his preaching. *John did baptize*; that is, admit persons into the church, by washing them with water. John baptized in the name of Christ, who was to come; the apostle baptized in the name of Christ, already come. The second part of this office was preaching. Where note, That preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are to go together, and belong only to the ministers of the word, lawfully called. *John did baptize and preach*; but where and what did he preach? The place where, was

the wilderness; a place not much frequented, though not altogether uninhabited; a solitary, mean, and obscure place. Thither God had called him, and there he contents himself. Learn hence, That the ministers of God must be content to execute their ministry where God calls them, be the place ever so mean and obscure, and the people ever so rude and barbarous; John was a preacher of great note and fame; Jerusalem, the chief city, might seem more fit for him; but God had called him to preach in the wilderness, and he would not leave it. We must not leave our place because it is mean and obscure, nor desert our people thinking them too base to instruct; but where God has called us, we must there abide, till he that called us thither, remove us thence. Observe farther, As the place where the Baptist preached, *in the wilderness*, so the doctrine which he preached, namely, *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*; that is the doctrine of baptism, which sealeth the remission of sins to the party baptized. Learn hence, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, and the indispensable duty of every gospel minister. John Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: "They went out preaching every where, that men should repent." "The baptism of repentance (says the learned Lightfoot) belongs to children, though they know not what repentance means, because it engages them to repentance when they come to years to understand that engagement. For thus it was with the children circumcised, they became debtors to observe the whole law, though they knew not what the law meant, yet circumcision bound them to it, when they came to years of discretion.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Here we have an account of the success of St. John's ministry: 1. In the general concourse and resort of the people to it, *All Judea and Jerusalem*; that is, a great many of all degrees and ranks, of all ages and sexes. John was framed for a prophet, and a prophet was now a great rarity. Malachi was the last prophet before John, and he lived about five hundred years before John. Now the excellency of his person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, that the Messiah was come, and the austerity of his life and conversation, all these caused the people to flock unto him. Learn hence, That it is a great encouragement to the ministers of Christ, when people show themselves ready and forward to repair unto the places where the word and sacraments are dispensed to them: *all Judea and Jerusalem* attended upon John's ministry. The second fruit of John's ministry was, that the people were ready to receive at his hand the sacrament of baptism; *They were all baptized of him in Jordan*. Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ ought not only to preach the word, but also to dispense the sacraments to their people, even to all that do desire them, and are fit to be partakers of them. A third fruit of John's ministry was, his hearers' profession of their true repentance, by the *confession of their sins*. As the profession of repentance is requisite in all that are baptized, so a free and vo-

January, an ingenuous and impartial confession of sin, is a good evidence and testimony of the truth and sincerity of our repentance.

6 And John was clothed with camels' hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

This verse acquaints us with the strictness and austerity of St. John's life in the wilderness; which is laid down in two things, in his mean and frugal apparel, and his sober and temperate diet. His apparel was rough and hairy, and his girdle of leather; as Elijah, his forerunner, was clad before him, 2 Kings i. 8. His diet was coarse and ordinary, locusts and wild honey: that is, such plain and ordinary food as the wilderness afforded. His example teaches us, That the ministers of the gospel are not to affect either bravery in apparel or delicacy in diet; but both by their habit and diet, set an example of gravity and sobriety before their people; being in these, as well as in other things, an example unto their flocks.

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Observe here, 1. The high opinion that the Baptist had of Christ. *He is mightier than I*; that is, a person of greater dignity and excellency by far than myself; whence may be gathered, that though Christ was man, he was not mere man, but more than man; even very God, equal with his Father; for "John Baptist was the greatest of them that were born of woman." Mat. xi. 11. Yet says he, *Christ is mightier and greater than I*. How so? but in regard to the dignity of his person, being both God and man in two distinct natures and one person. Observe, 2. The humble and low estimation that the Baptist had of himself; *His shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose*; a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the basest and meanest service for Christ. O! how well doth humility of mind, an humble apprehension, a low esteem and opinion of themselves, and their own gifts and abilities, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe, or do the meanest office for him.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

John showed the dignity of Christ's person above his own, in the former verse; in this, he declares the excellency of Christ's office, and the meanness of his own! I wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit. Thence learn, That though the ministers of Christ do, by Christ's command, dispense the outward ordinance of baptism, yet it is Christ himself, that, by the inward work of his Spirit, doth make it effectual to

such as receive it.—*I baptize with water, but he with the Holy Ghost.*

9 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway, coming up out of the water, he saw the Heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

See the note on Mat. iii. 13. Observe here, 1. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John; Christ, though he was John's Lord and Master, yea, Lord of heaven and earth, yet cometh to hear John preach, and will be baptized of his messenger. Thence learn, That the greatest persons should neither think themselves too great nor too good, to come unto the ministers of God, to hear the word from their mouth, or to receive the sacrament at their hand. Christ the Son of God, was content to be baptized of John, a mean person in comparison with himself. How dare then the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God? Observe, 2. The solemn investing of Christ into the office of Mediator, by a threefold miracle: namely the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice or testimony concerning his Son: *The heavens were opened*, to show that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. As Christ opened heaven by his meritorious passion, so he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession. Next, *the Holy Ghost descends like a dove* upon our Saviour. Here we have a proof and evidence of the blessed Trinity. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends in the likeness of a dove. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ? First, For the designation of his person, to show that he was the person set apart for the work and office of a Mediator. Secondly, for the sanctification of his person for the performance of that office. This was Christ's unction, the day in which he was anointed above his fellows to be the king, priest, and prophet of his church: Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me, &c." Observe, 3. The voice of God the Father pronounced, 1. The nearness of Christ's relation to himself: *This is my Son*. 2. The endearedness of his person: *This is my beloved Son*. The fruit and benefit of this near and dear relation unto us; *In whom I am well pleased*. Hence learn, 1. That there is no possibility for a person to please God out of Christ; neither our persons nor performances can find acceptance but through him, and for his sake. 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ground and cause of all that love which God the Father sheweth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us, as a reconciled father: out of him a consuming fire

12 And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Immediately; That is, 1. After his baptism. Christ is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation; such as are baptized with Christ, and entered into the profession of christianity, must look to be assaulted with satan's temptations. Again, *immediately*, that is, 2. After the Father had declared his complacency in him, and being well pleased with him. Learn thence, That great manifestations of love from God are usually followed with great temptations from God. *The Spirit driveth him*, that is, the Holy Spirit of God. For the devil is seldom, if ever called the Spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as *evil spirit*, or the *unclean spirit* and the like; *Christ was led by the Spirit*, says St. Matthew, chapter iv. 1. *He was driven by the Spirit*, says St. Mark; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God to be tempted by satan, and did not go of his own private motion to enter the lists with satan. *Teaching us our duty*, not to run into or rush upon temptation, without a warrant and call from God. Observe next, The place where satan assaulted Christ with his temptation: it was a solitary wilderness. No place can privilege us from temptations, or be a sanctuary from satan's assaults. The solitary wilderness has a tempter in it; yea, satan often makes use of men's solitariness to further his temptations; and such as separate themselves from human society, and give themselves up to solitude and retirement, give great advantages to the tempter to tempt them. Observe next, The time and continuance of our Holy Lord's temptations: not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month, but for *forty days, and forty nights*; not all the time, but very often in that time. *Teaching us what we are to expect from satan*; temptations not a few: he will not solicit us once, but often, and follow us with fresh assaults: but the only way to overcome him is, as often to resist him. Observe farther, A special aggravation of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness, *He was with the wild beasts*, having no comfort from man, but only wild beasts for his companions, which were more likely to annoy and hurt him, than any way to help and comfort him. Here we have an evidence of the divine power of Christ, who, as, Lord of the creatures, can alter and change the nature of the creatures at his pleasure: restraining the most savage and hurtful beasts from hurting either himself or any of his people. Observe lastly, The supply sent in to Christ in the hour of temptation: *The angels came and ministered unto him*; food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul. Learn thence, That those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting satan, shall find that the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them to send in succour and relief at last. "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

14 ¶ Now, after that John was put in

prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.

In this our Saviour's first beginning to preach the gospel, we have an account of the time when, and the place where, and the sum of what he preached. Observe, 1. The time when our Lord began to preach, and that was *after John the Baptist was cast into prison*. Where note, 1. The undue reward which the ministers of God do sometimes meet with from a wicked world: they are hated, persecuted, and imprisoned, for their courage in reproving sin: John for reproving Herod's incest was put in prison. Note, 2. John was no sooner in prison, and stopped and hindered from preaching, but Christ began to preach. See the care and kindness of God towards his church, in that he never leaves it wholly destitute of the means of instruction; when some of his faithful ministers are restrained from preaching, he stirreth up others in their room, not suffering all their mouths to be stopped at once. Observe, 2. The place where our Lord first preached in Galilee. The land of Canaan in our Saviour's time, was divided into three principal provinces: on the south Judea; on the north Galilee; in the midst of Samaria. Galilee was divided into Upper and Lower Galilee; the Higher was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, because it was the outmost part of the land, and so next unto the Gentiles. In this Upper Galilee Capernaum was the metropolis or chief; and Chorazin a lesser city. Now much of our Saviour's time was spent in Galilee; he was conceived and brought up at Nazareth, a city of Galilee; he first preached at Capernaum in Galilee; he wrought his first miracle at Capa in Galilee; his transfiguration was upon mount Tabor in Galilee; and our Saviour's ordinary residence was in Galilee. He came into Judea, and up to Jerusalem only at the feasts; and after his resurrection he appoints his disciples to meet him in Galilee. Only his nativity, his passion, and ascension were proper to Judea. His nativity at Beth-lehem, his passion at Jerusalem, and his ascension upon mount Olivet, hard by Jerusalem. Now all this demonstrates Christ to be the true and promised Messiah: for, according to prophecy, the Messiah was to have his presence and principal abode in the province of Galilee, Isaiah ix. 1, 2, 3, &c. Yet because he was of Galilee the Jews would not believe him to be the Messiah, saying in scorn, *Can any good thing come out of Galilee*; Whereas our Saviour's habitation and free conversation there was proof unto them, and ought to have persuaded them that according to prophecy he was the very Christ. Observe, 3. The sum of what our Lord preached, namely, a doctrine, and an exhortation. His doctrine is, *That the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*: that is, that the time foretold by the prophets, when the kingdom of the Messiah should begin was now come. The exhortation is, *Therefore repent, and believe the gospel*. From the former, note, That the Messiah's coming, or our Saviour's appearing in the flesh, was exactly at the time foretold by the holy prophets: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of the Messiah is at hand." Note, 2. That the great doctrines

of repentance and faith are taught only in and by the gospel, and accordingly ought in a special manner to be preached and insisted upon by the ministers of the gospel. The doctrine of Christ and his ambassadors, is and ought to be the same; they both teach the great doctrines of faith and repentance to a lost world; *Repent, and believe the gospel.*

16 ¶ Now, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: (for they were fishers:)

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James, *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother, who also were in the ship, mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

In this history of our Saviour's calling the four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, observe these particulars, 1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen: Christ took thereby effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instruments should not carry away the glory of the work. Observe, 2. Christ called his apostles by couples, two and two; first Peter and Andrew, then James and John; thereby signifying to us, that the work of the ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it. All the ministers of God should join their hearts and hands, and set their shoulders as one man to this great work; and all little enough, God knows, to carry it on with advantage and success. Observe, 3. The work which they are called to, from being *fishermen*, to be *fishers of men*, from catching fish with the labor of their hands, to catch men with the labor of their tongues. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command; first to follow him, before they be sent out by him; *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers before we are his ambassadors; we must learn Christ before we preach him, otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, but not for souls. Observe, 5. The gracious promise which Christ gives his apostles for their encouragement; namely, to qualify them for, and to succeed them in their office; *I will make you fishers of men.* Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part; but the blessing and success is Christ's; our labor is only in the cast; Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more wallow in the mud; (No. 9.)

and verily we shall labor all our days and catch nothing, if Christ do not bring our fish to net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the throwing and casting of it. Observe, 6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Saviour's call. Straightway they forsook their father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus. Whom Christ calls, he calls effectually; and draws whom he calls, and works their hearts to a ready compliance with their duty. Observe, 7. That upon their call to the ministry, they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and gets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, That the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves up to their great work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs, and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity, in providing for a family can excuse a minister's encumbering himself with worldly concerns and business.

21 And they went into Capernaum: and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Our Saviour having called his disciples, Peter, and Andrew, James and John, to follow him in order to their preaching of the gospel; here we may observe how he went himself along with them, teaching personally in the synagogues wherever he came; he did not send his apostles forth as his curates, and lay at home himself upon his couch at ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen, that set others to the drag, but care only to feed themselves with the fish? not willing to wet their hands with the net, or take any pains themselves! Our Saviour did not thus; but when he sent forth his apostles, he still preached himself: he went into their synagogues and taught. Observe farther, the success of his preaching; the people were astonished at his doctrine, struck with admiration, apprehending and believing him to be an extraordinary prophet, sent from God. Learn thence, That such is the efficacy of Christ's doctrine, especially when accompanied with the energy and operations of his Holy Spirit, that it makes all his auditors admirers; causing astonishment in their minds, and reformation in their manners. Observe lastly, The reason of our Lord's success in preaching; *He taught as one having authority.* He taught in his own name, as being Lord of his doctrine; not saying with the prophets, *Thus saith the Lord*; but *I say unto you.* And he wrought powerful miracles, which accompanied his doctrine. As Christ was careful to preserve the authority of his person and doctrine with the people; so it is the duty of his ministers to demean themselves amongst their people, that neither their authority may be contemned, nor their persons despised, but their doctrine and themselves revered and obeyed.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out.

24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, inasmuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

St. Mark having given an account of our Saviour's doctrine which he preached, verse 15, namely, the doctrine of faith and repentance, he now acquaints us, in the remaining part of this chapter, with the miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine, and they are three; First, *The casting of a devil out of one possessed*, verse 23. Secondly, *The curing of Peter's wife's mother of a fever*, verse 29. Thirdly, *The cleansing of a leper*, from verse 10, to the end of the chapter. His first miracle was the casting of a devil out of one possessed. *There was a man with an unclean spirit*: that is, an unclean spirit did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Among the many calamities which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, that we are liable to be bodily possessed by satan. The devil has an inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other; but blessed be God, though his malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; as he cannot do all the mischief he would, so he shall not do all he can. O, how much is it our interest as well as our duty, by prayer to put ourselves morning and evening under the divine protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits! Observe, 2. The attribute or title given to the devil, he is called an *unclean spirit*. The devils, those wicked spirits of hell, are most impure and filthy creatures; impure by means of their original apostacy, impure by means of their actual and daily sins, such as murder, malice, lying, and the like, by which they continually pollute themselves; impure by means of their continual desire and endeavour to pollute mankind with the contagion of their own sin. Lord, how foul is the nature of sin, which makes the devil such a foul and unclean creature? Observe, 3. This unclean spirit no sooner saw Christ, but he cried out. Whence note, That the greatness of Christ's power (being the Son of God) over devils and wicked spirits is such, that it is very terrible and tormenting to them; it was terrible to them in a state of humiliation on

earth, and made them cry out; but O, how terrible will his power be to them at the great day, when "Christ shall come in the flaming fire to render vengeance both on men and devils!" Observe, 4. The substance of the devils' outcry: "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?" Where note, 1. That though the devils are now full of sin and discontent as they can be, yet are they not so full of misery and torment as they shall be, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" says St. Matthew, chap. viii. 29. "Art thou come to destroy us?" says St. Mark; that is, to bring upon us our full and final destruction. Implying, That the devil has not yet his full judgment and complete damnation. Therefore there is certainly a day of judgment to come, and the devils are in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of that great day. But some, by these words, *Art thou come to destroy us?* understand as much as, "Art thou come to restrain us from the exercise of our power?" Learn we thence, That the devil thinks himself destroyed when he is restrained from doing mischief. Observe, 5. The title which the devil puts upon our Saviour; "Jesus of Nazareth the Holy One of God." Although there was ground for the common people's calling Christ, *Jesus of Nazareth*, because he was bred and brought up there, and lived there during his private life, till about thirty years of age; though he was not born there, but at Bethlehem; yet it is conceived that the devil gave this title to our Saviour in policy, to disguise the place of Christ's nativity, that so the Jews might not believe him to be the true Messiah, because he was of Nazareth; whereas the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem. Therefore to the intent that the Jews might be at the greater loss, concerning Christ, and in doubt of his being the true Messiah, the devil here calls him not Jesus of Bethlehem, but *Jesus of Nazareth*. But how comes the next title out of the devil's mouth; *The Holy One of God*? Could an apostle, could Peter himself make a profession beyond this? But how comes the devil to make it? For no good end or purpose we may be sure: for he never speaks the truth for truth's sake, but for advantage. Probably, 1. He made this profession, that so he might bring the truth professed into suspicion, hoping that a truth which received testimony from the father of lies would be suspected. 2. It might perhaps be done that the people might believe that our Saviour had some familiarity with satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem so much to honor him. From this instance and example, learn, That it is possible for a person to own and acknowledge Christ to be the true and only Saviour, and yet to miss of salvation by him. If a speculative knowledge, and a verbal profession of Christ, were sufficient to salvation, the devil himself would not miss of happiness. Observe, 6. How our Saviour rebukes the devil for his confession, and commands him silence; "and Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace." But why was this rebuke given the devil when he spake the truth? Answer, 1. Because Christ knew that the devil confessed this truth on purpose to disgrace the truth. 2. Because the devil was no fit person to make this profession. A testimony of truth from the father of lies, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Yet the devil's evidence, that Christ was the Holy one of God, will rise up in judgment against the wicked pharisees, who shut their eyes against the miracles, and

stopt their ears against the doctrine of the *Holy One of God*. Observe lastly, How the unclean spirit obeys the voice of Christ, though with great reluctance and regret! "When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice he came out." Christ is Lord over the wicked angels, and has an absolute power and authority to over-rule them, and command them at his pleasure: if Christ says to the evil spirit, *Come out, he must come*. Yet observe the devil's spite at parting, *he tears the man, tortures his body, throws him violently from place to place, showing how loth he was to be dispossessed*. Where satan has once gotten an hold, and settled himself for a time, how unwilling is he to be cast out of possession! yea, it is a torture and vexation to him to be cast out: it is much easier to keep him out than to cast him out. Satan may possess the body by God's permission, but he cannot possess our hearts without our own consent and approbation; it will be our wisdom to deny him entrance into our souls at first, by rejecting his wicked monitions and suggestions; for when once entered, he will, like the "strong man armed, keep the house, till a stronger than he casts him out."

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

29 And forthwith when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

The second miracle which our Saviour wrought in this chapter to confirm the truth and authority of his doctrine, was his raising up of *Peter's wife's mother* from her bed of sickness. Where note, 1. That St. Peter, now a disciple, and afterwards an apostle, was a married person. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the ministers of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor think themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, Heb. xiii. 4. "Marriage is honorable amongst all men" Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness: strength of grace, and dearth of respect even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. God's own children are visited with bodily sicknesses as well as others. Observe, 3. The charitable care of St. Peter, and the other disciples, forthwith to acquaint Christ with the condition of this sick person: *Anon they tell him of her*. The care of our fel-

low christians, especially when the number of our near and dear relations, in a time of sickness is not to be deferred or delayed. Outward help for their bodies, and the spiritual help of our prayers for their souls, are both straightway to be afforded them. Observe, 4. Christ's divine power manifested in this miraculous cure: "He no sooner took her by the hand, but the fever left her." The miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in curing an ordinary distemper after a miraculous manner, namely, 1. By a touch of the hand. 2. The recovery was instantaneous and sudden: *Immediately the fever left her*. 3. The visible effects of her recovery instantly appeared; *She arose and ministered unto Christ and his disciples*. That she could arise argued her cure miraculous; that she did arise and did administer unto Christ, argued her thankfulness. Learn thence, That after Christ hath graciously healed any of us, it ought to be our first work and care to administer unto Christ: that is to employ our recovered health in the service of Christ, and to improve our renewed strength to the honor and glory of Christ.

32 ¶ And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of diverse diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

The Evangelist here declares sundry other miracles wrought by our Saviour before the door of St. Peter's house where he now was; he healed all the diseased that were brought unto him, and cast devils out of them that were possessed with them. But how comes it to pass, that we read of so many possessed with devils in our Saviour's time, and so few either before or since? Answer, 1. Probably satan perceiving that the Messiah was come in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover greater malice and enmity against mankind. 2. Perhaps Almighty God permitted satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power by casting satan out; and accordingly we find our Saviour dispossessing all that were possessed by satan. It is added, "that he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him." That is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, to whom it belonged not to publish the gospel, lest the world should take from thence an occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly from the devil's owning Christ to be the holy one of God, the pharisees concluded, that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them, and thereupon their affirmation was grounded, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, &c."

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Observe here, 1. The duty performed by our Saviour, namely, prayer, solitary and private prayer. He went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable, nor acceptable: there are times and cases when a christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that intercourse which passes between him and his God. Observe, 2. Christ chooses the opportunity of the morning for prayer. *He rises a great while before day* to set about this work. Teaching us, That the morning is a fit season, yea, the best season, for private duties; now our spirits are freshest and our minds freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us. It is better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer.

36 And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Observe here two things: First, The great end of Christ in his incarnation, and coming into the world, namely, as a prophet sent from God to reveal his will, and to publish the doctrine of the gospel. *Therefore came I forth*: that is, to preach and plant the gospel. Secondly, It being Christ's design not only to plant, but to propagate, the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to any particular place, no, not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolves to preach the word in the smallest towns and villages. Leaving his ministers herein an instructive example to be as willing to preach the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest cities, if God calls them thereunto. Let the place be ever so obscure and mean, and the congregation ever so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct an handful of people.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And, as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter.

The last miracle of our Saviour's recorded in this chapter, is the healing of a leper: he came beseeching Christ to heal him, "Saying, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Where, Observe, 1. He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts Christ's willingness to heal him; "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." Christ's divine power must be fully assented to and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal this distressed person, "Jesus touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean." By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched, therefore Christ's touching this leper showed him to be above the law, and that he was the Lord of it, and might dispense with it; and his healing the leper by the word of his mouth, and touch of his hand, showed him to be truly and really God. Leprosy among the Jews was an incurable distemper, called *the finger of God*, a disease of his sending, and of his removing. Our Saviour, therefore, as a proof of his being the true Messiah, tells John's disciples, Matt. xi. 5. that "the lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised," by him: which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of lepers is as much an act of divine power as the raising of the dead: and accordingly 2 Kings v. 7, it is said, "Am I a God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?" Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure was a proof of Christ's divine power; *immediately his leprosy was cleansed*. Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. The cause moving our Saviour to cure this leper; his bowels were moved with tender pity and compassion towards him. Christ's exercising acts of mercy and compassion with such condolency and sympathizing pity, should by way of example teach us to be inwardly moved with tender compassion and mercy towards such as are in misery. We are not only to draw out our bread, but to draw out our soul to the hungry. Observe, 5. A two-fold charge and command given by Christ to the leper after his cure. 1. To conceal, and to tell it to no man. Where the great modesty, humility, and piety of Christ is discovered, together with the care of his own

safety. His modesty in not desiring his good deeds should be published and proclaimed. His humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation. His piety, in desiring all honor and glory should redound entirely to God. And the care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the pharisees. The second part of the charge given to the recovered leper, was "to show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them;" that is, to testify to the Jew, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand, and that he was the true and promised Messiah. Learn thence, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time of its continuance did endure: though he came to destroy that law, yet while it stood he would have it punctually observed. Observe, 6. Notwithstanding our Saviour's strict prohibition, the leper publishes the fame of this miracle. It is likely his intention might be good, in extolling his great benefactor, but his acting contrary to Christ's command was a fault, and shows the corruption of human nature, it being most forward to do that which is most forbidden. It is a sin to do any thing against the command of Christ, though with ever so good a meaning, purpose or intention, and to exalt and honor Christ.

Observe lastly, The inconveniences which attended our Saviour upon this indiscreet publication of the miracle: and they were two: 1. Our Saviour *could no more enter into Capernaum*, and other cities, to preach in an open manner as he had done, by reason of the great concourse of people after him. 2. The fame of this miracle brought the people about him *from all quarters*; not so much to hear as to see; not so much to hear his holy and heavenly doctrine which he taught as to gratify their curiosity with the sight of the miracles which he wrought. O! how many thronged after Christ more to have their bodily diseases cured, than their souls healed! Christ desired not their flocking after him upon this account; therefore he retires from the breath of popular applause: he would not "openly enter into the city, but was without a desert place." O great humility! How little did our blessed Redeemer regard the applause and commendation of men! Constantly we find him, as soon as his public preaching and working of miracles was over, withdrawing himself from the multitude into some private place apart: he doth not stay in the crowd with his ear open to listen how men admire the preacher, and applaud the sermon. Plainly showing, that he sought his Father's glory, not his own praise or the people's commendation: leaving his example as an instructive pattern to all his ministers and ambassadors to take heed of vain-glory; not to affect popularity, or to seek the applause and commendation of men, in what they do, resolving, that man's opinion shall be nothing with them, but that the pleasing of God, and doing their duty to the souls of their people, shall always be their whole scope.

CHAPTER II.

AN D again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days: and it was noised that he was in the house.

(No. 10.)

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter, we find how industriously our blessed Saviour withdrew himself from the concourse and throng of people which flocked after him from every quarter; and to show how little he affected the applause and commendation of the multitude, "he left the cities, and was without in desert places." Hereby giving his ministers an instructive example to avoid vain-glory, and to shun popular applause. But now the words before us show that our Saviour having *entered* (privately as is probable) *into the city of Capernaum*, it is presently noised and reported that *he was in the house*, and a mighty concourse and throng of people after him; insomuch that neither the house nor hardly the streets, could contain them. Thence learn, That such as seek least after honor and applause from men, are oftentimes most famous and renowned. Our Saviour was so far from seeking the people's praise and commendation, that he came into Capernaum without observation, and betook himself to his dwelling-house there; but the more he sought to lie hid, the more he was taken notice of. Honor flies from them that pursue it, and pursues those that fly from it. The way to be honored, is to be humble. God seldom honors a proud man, by making him eminently serviceable or successful. Observe farther, The people being come together, our Saviour takes the opportunity to preach: *And he preached the word unto them*. Teaching his ministers by his example, to embrace all opportunities, in season and out of season, on the Lord's day and on the week day, to edify our people by our ministry, by our public exhortations, by our private instructions, prudent admonitions and holy examples.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts.

7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned

within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion..

Here we have the relation of our Saviour's miraculous healing of one sick of the palsy at Capernaum. Where observe, 1. The diseased and distressed person; *one sick of the palsy*; which disease being a resolution or weakness of the nerves, enfeebles the joints, and confines the person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out the palsy and leprosy, incurable diseases, to work a cure upon such as were afflicted with them: now this person was so great a cripple, by reason of the palsy, that he was borne of four. He could not go, nor was capable of being led, but was carried by four in his bed or couch. Observe, 2. As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of their faith. The man and his friends had a firm persuasion that Christ was clothed with a divine power and able to help him. Accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncovered some part of it, and let the bed down with the sick man in it into the room where Christ was. Observe, 3. No sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ exerts his divine power in healing. And see the marvellous efficacy of faith, it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals body and soul too. "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Thereby our Saviour shows them, that sin is the original cause of all bodily diseases; and consequently, that in sickness, the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon. The sense of pardon in some degree will take away the sense of pain. Observe, 4. The exception which the scribes took against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him. They accuse him of the sin of blasphemy; urging, that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin. The doctrine was true, but their application false. No thing more true, than that it is the greatest degree of blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate to himself the incommunicable prerogative of God, which consists in an absolute and authoritative power to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sin, which he had as God from all eternity, and as Mediator, God and

man in one person when here upon earth; this was blasphemy in them; the challenging of it none in him.

Observe, 5. Our Saviour gives these scribes a twofold demonstration of his godhead; 1. By letting them know that he knew their thoughts: "Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves." To search the hearts, and to know the thoughts and reasonings of men, is not in the power of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. 2. By assuming to himself a power to forgive sin: for our Saviour here by assuming to himself a power to forgive sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his godhead: *For who can forgive sins but God only?* Observe, 6. The effect of this miracle upon the minds of the people; they marvelled and were amazed, but did not believe. They admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe him to be God. Learn thence, That the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit. The one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

13 And he went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14 ¶ And as he passed by he saw Levi, *the son of Alpheus*, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And when the scribes and pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard *it* he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied pains and diligence which our Saviour used in the execution of his ministerial office and calling: no sooner had he done preaching in Capernaum, and healing the sick of the palsy, but he goeth out thence to the sea-side, to preach there. O blessed Saviour! how perpetually wert thou employed in the labors of thy calling, in the service of thy Father, and for the good of mankind! thou wentest about doing good, setting a pattern for all thy ministers to follow. How doth the example of thy laborious diligence at once instruct and shame us! Observe, 2. The number of our Lord's disciples not being filled up, ob-

serve what a free and gracious, unexpected and undeserved choice he makes. Levi, that is, Matthew, (for he hath both names) a grinding publican, who gathered the taxes for the Romans, and was probably guilty, as others were, of the sins of covetousness, extortion, and oppression; yet he is called to follow Christ as a special disciple. Learn thence, That such is the freeness of God's grace, that it calls and converts sinners unto Christ, when they think not of him nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet he is at this time called by him. Matthew, a publican; Zaccheus, an extortioner; Saul a persecutor: all these are brought home to God as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace. Observe, 3. Matthew's ready compliance with Christ's call: *He arose and followed him*. When the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Christ oftentimes speaks by his words to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit, efficaciously to our hearts, satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall with Levi instantly arise, and follow our Saviour. Observe, 4. Levi, or Matthew, to show his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a dinner. The servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, that when Christ was invited to any table, that he ever refused to go; if a publican, if a pharisee invited him, he constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts us when we feast him. Learn hence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very excessive in their love unto him. Matthew touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe, 5. The cavil and exception which the scribes and pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners: he justifies himself, telling them, that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion, *They that are whole need no physician, says Christ, but they that are sick*. As if our Lord had said, "With whom should a physician converse, but with sick patients? Now I come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men, surely, then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, *for they that are sick need the physician*: but as for you scribes and pharisees, who are well and whole in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you; for such as think themselves whole desire no physician's help." From this assertion of our Saviour, these truths are suggested to us. 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the physician appointed by God for the cure of this disease. 3. That there are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 4. That such and only such, as find themselves spiritually sick, are the subjects capable of Christ's healing. "They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the (*opinionatively*) righteous, but the (*sensible*) sinners to repentance."

18 And the disciples of John and of the

pharisees used to fast: and they come, and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and the pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man, also, seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Observe here, 1. A great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in the manner of fasting. John's disciples imitated him, who was a man of an austere life, and much given to fasting: therefore is said *to come neither eating nor drinking*, Mat. xi. 18. On the other side, Christ's disciples follow him, who *came eating and drinking*, as other men did; and yet though there was a great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in matters of practice, yet were they all of one faith and religion. Thence learn, That there may be unity of faith and religion among those who do not maintain an uniformity of practice. Men may differ in some outward religious observances and customs, and yet agree in the fundamentals in faith and religion. Thus did John's disciples and Christ's; the one fasted often, the other fasted not. Observe, 2. In that the disciples of the pharisees used to fast as well as John's disciples, we may learn, That hypocrites and wicked men may be, and sometimes are, as strict and forward in the outward duties of religion, as the holiest and best of christians: they pray, they fast, they hear the word, they receive the sacrament; they do, yea, it may be, they out-do and go beyond the sincere christian in external duties and outward performances. Observe, 3. The defensive plea which our blessed Saviour makes for the not fasting of his disciples; he declares that it was neither suitable to them, nor tolerable for them, thus to fast at present. Not suitable in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them. This made it a time of joy and rejoicing, not of mourning and fasting. Christ is the bridegroom, and his church the bride: whilst therefore, his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting were improper for her. But when Christ's bodily presence shall be

removed, there will be cause enough to fast and mourn. Again, this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for the disciples: for they were raw, green, and tender, not fit for austerities; nor could bear as yet the severities of religion, no more than an old garment could bear a new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment comes to a stretch: no more than old bottles can keep new wine. As if our Saviour had said, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted: they cannot, therefore, bear the severities of religion presently: but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down my Holy Spirit upon them, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins." Now the intended lesson of instruction from hence is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, and weak christians, to be put upon the severer exercises of religion, or to be urged to the performance of such duties as are above their strength. But they ought to be handled with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here recommends prudence to his ministers, in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing.

23 ¶ And it came to pass, that he went through the corn-fields on the sabbath-day, and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath-day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God, in the days of Abiathar the highpriest, and did eat the show-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Observe here, 1. The poverty, the low estate and condition of Christ's own disciples in this world; they wanted bread, and are forced to *pluck the ears of corn* to satisfy their hunger. God may, and sometimes doth suffer his dearest children to fall into straits, to taste of want, for the trial of their faith and their dependance upon his power and providence. Observe, 2. How the pharisees (who accompanied our Saviour only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with every thing that either he or his disciples did) blame this ac-

tion of the disciples, namely, their plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day. Yet note, 1. It was not any theft which the disciples were charged with, for to take in our necessity, so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose that, if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft. But it is the servile labor on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the pharisees scruple. Whence observe, How zealous hypocrites are for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater, and are superstitiously addicted to outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them, neglecting moral duties. Observe farther, 3. How our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in gathering the ears of corn in their necessity, by the practice and example of David. Necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat. For in cases of necessity, a ceremonial precept must give way to a moral duty. Works of mercy and necessity, for preserving our lives, and for the better fitting us for sabbath-services, are certainly lawful on the sabbath-day. Observe, 4. A double argument which our Saviour uses, to prove that the sabbath's observation may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity. 1. Drawn from the end of the sabbath's institution; *The sabbath was made for man*; that is, instituted of God for the good and benefit of mankind, both with respect to their souls and to their bodies. The outward observing and keeping of the sabbath is subordinate to the good of man, and therefore the good of man is to be preferred before the outward keeping of the sabbath. 2. Argument is drawn from the authority which Christ the institutor of the sabbath has over it. *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*; that is, he has authority and power both as God and Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change the sabbath, to dispense with the breach of it upon a just and great occasion; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done upon the sabbath-day; which was the proposition which our Saviour undertook to prove.

CHAPTER III.

AND he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath-day; that they might accuse him.

3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-day, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? but they held their peace.

The former part of this chapter reports to us a miraculous cure wrought by Christ upon a man who had a withered hand. The place where he wrought it was the synagogue; the time when, was the sabbath-day; the man-

ner how, was by speaking a word; the persons before whom, were the envious and malicious pharisees. These men were always cavilling at our Saviour's doctrine, and slandering his miracles; yet our Saviour goes on with his work before their faces, without either interruption or discouragement. Learn thence, that unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us for well-doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty, either towards God or towards our neighbour. Though the pharisees watched our Saviour, and when their envy and malice could find no occasion of quarrel, they could invent and make one; yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that he bids *the man which had the withered hand, stand forth*; to show that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it, as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we will follow the example of our blessed Redeemer.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: And his hand was restored whole as the other.

Observe here, 1. The pharisees' sinful and graceless disposition, and that was, hardness of heart. The heart of man is naturally hard, and full of obstinacy and enmity against Christ; but there is an acquired hardness, which continuance in sin occasions; the pharisees labored under both. Observe, 2. A double affection which this hardness of heart found in the pharisees did stir up in Christ; namely, anger and indignation, grief and commiseration; "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Learn hence, 1. That human passions are not sinful, and that Christian religion doth not destroy natural affection. 2. That anger at sin, either in ourselves or others, if kept within due bounds, is not only lawful, but commendable. This passion of anger was found in him, in whom was no sin. 3. That our anger against sin ought to be accompanied with grief and compassion towards sinners. We should pour out our tears of compassion, when men pour forth their abominations. 4. That of all sins, hardness of heart and unbelief are most grievous and offensive, most displeasing and provoking to Jesus Christ: "He looked about with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Observe, 4. The instantaneous cure which our Saviour wrought upon the man that had the withered hand, our Saviour did not touch him, but only said to him, *Stretch forth thine hand*, and it was presently cured. Learn hence that Christ having absolute power over all bodily diseases and infirmities, to cure them miraculously without means, only by a word speaking, is one argument that proves him to be truly and really God.

6 And the pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

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7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea.

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake unto his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And the unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, 'Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Observe here, 1. What dismal effect this famous miracle of Christ had upon the pharisees and Herodians. Instead of being convinced by it, they conspire against him for it.—These Herodians and pharisees were of different opinions, enemies to one another, yet they join together in seeking the death of Christ. The pharisees were against paying tribute to Cesar, looking upon themselves as a free people, and accounting the Roman emperor an usurper. The Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king of the Jews, was zealous for having the Jews pay tribute to Cesar; and such of the Jews as sided with him, particularly his courtiers and favorites, were styled Herodians: but both pharisees and Herodians take counsel against Christ. Learn thence, That unity and consent is of itself alone far from being a mark and note of the true church. Unity in the faith and doctrine of Christ, and in the profession and practice of the true religion, is a note indeed of the true church: but unity in opposing Christ, his person, his doctrine, his people, is so far from being a mark of the true church, that it is the badge of the anti-christian synagogue. Observe, 2. The prudent means which our Saviour uses to preserve himself from the rage of the pharisees, *he withdrew himself from them*. Christ's example teaches his ministers their duty in a time of danger to fly from persecution, and to endeavour to preserve their lives, unless when their sufferings are like to do more good than their lives. Observe, 3. The great zeal and forwardness of the people in flocking after our Saviour's ministry; people come now at first from all places and countries, from Judea, from Idumea, from beyond Jordan, from Tyre and Sidon, to hear his doctrine and see his miracles. The people came from all parts when our Saviour first began to preach. His ministers find it thus: at their first coming amongst a people their labors are most acceptable, and they do most good; our people's affections are then warmest, and

perhaps our own too. Observe, 4. What sort of people they were which attended thus zealously upon our Saviour's ministry, they were the common and ordinary people; *The poor received the gospel*, whilst the pharisees, and other men of most account, the mighty, the noble, and the wise men after the flesh, despised our Saviour's person, slighted his ministry, and sought his life. The ordinary and meanest sort of people ever have been more zealous and forward in embracing the gospel, than ever the great, the rich, and the honorable part of the world have been. It is a sad, it is a certain truth, heaven is the place where few, comparatively, of the great men of the world are like to come; their temptations are many, their lusts are strong, and their great estates, through their own abuse, become fuel to their lusts. Observe, 5. The behaviour of the unclean spirits (the devils) towards our Saviour, and our Saviour's carriage towards them; "They fall down at the very sight of him, they cry out, and confess him to be the Son of God; but he sharply rebukes them, and charges them that they should not make him known." Not that our Saviour would have the knowledge of his person suppressed, but because the devils were not fit persons to preach Jesus Christ. A truth out of the mouth of the father of lies, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Besides, the time appointed for the full and clear manifestation of the godhead of Christ, was not yet come. This was not to be done till after his resurrection; the divine nature was to be hid under the veil of Christ's flesh during his state of humiliation and abasement.

13 ¶ And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 And James, *the son of Zebedee*, and John, the brother of James; (and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder,)

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, *the son of Alphaeus*, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: And they went into an house.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so the christian church became planted by twelve apostles. The person commissioning them was Christ; none may undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those

whom Christ appoints and calls. The persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles; to teach us, That Christ will have such as preach the gospel to be disciples before they are ministers, trained up in the faith and doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Observe farther, The holy preparative which our Saviour uses in order to this election of his apostles, he goeth up into a mountain to pray upon that great occasion. So says St. Luke, chap. vi. 12. "He went up into a mountain to pray, and spent the night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and of them he chose twelve." In this prayer, no doubt, he pleaded with his Father to furnish all those that were to be sent forth by him with all ministerial gifts and graces. Learn thence, That as prayer is a necessary preparative to all duties, so more especially before the public election and ordination of the ministers of the church, solemn prayer is to be used by such as are to ordain and choose them; our Lord's practice is to be a standing rule herein to all church officers. Observe again, Though Christ called his apostles now; yet he did not send them forth now: "He ordained twelve that they should be with him. That is, that they might converse with him, and be eye-witnesses, and ear-witnesses, of his life, doctrine, and miracles. And having been thus with Christ, and fitted and prepared by him for their work, afterwards they went forth. Thence learn, That such as are to take upon them the office of the ministry, ought first to be fitted and prepared for it, then solemnly called to it, before they enterprise and undertake the execution of it: if the apostles here, who are called and qualified extraordinarily, were to spend some time with Christ to receive direction and instruction from him before they went forth to preach: how much more needful is it for such as are ordinarily called to be well fitted and furnished for the ministerial service before they undertake it? Observe next, How the several names of the apostles are here registered and recorded: God will honor those that honor him, and are the special instruments of his glory. Of these apostles, Peter is named first, and Judas last. Peter is named first, because probably elder than the rest, or because for order's sake he might speak before the rest. From whence may be inferred, a primacy, but no supremacy, a priority of order, not a superiority of degree. As the foreman of a grand jury has a precedence, but no pre-eminency; he is first in order before the rest, but no authority or power over the rest. Judas is named last: with a brand of infamy upon him; and that he was a traitor, the person that betrayed his Lord and Master. Whence learn, That though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry. Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister. The mission of a person may be valid, though he be not sanctified. Observe lastly, That our Saviour surnamed James and John, Boanerges, the sons of thunder. St. Jerome thinks this name was given them, because being with Christ in the mount at his transfiguration, they heard the Father's voice out of the cloud like thunder: others think them so called, because they were more vehement and earnest than the rest in preaching, and did with greater zeal and power sound forth the doctrine of the gospel like thunder. It is very probable, that Christ gave them this name from a foresight of the heat and zeal of their temper, of which they soon gave an instance, in desiring fire to come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him; for they said he is beside himself.

22 ¶ And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem, said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can satan cast out satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house.

28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Observe here, 1. How truly our Lord's words were verified, John vi. 34. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me:" for he and his apostles going into an house to refresh themselves in their hunger, the people pressed upon him so fast to hear the word, that he regards not the satisfying of his hunger, but applies himself to instruct the people. Lord! how exemplary was thy zeal and diligence in preaching the everlasting gospel to a lost world! As it is instructive to, may it be imitated and followed by, all thy ambassadors; Observe, 2. The rash censure of our Saviour's friends, that is his kinsmen, concerning his action, in neglecting to eat bread, and suffering the multitude thus unseasonably to press upon

him. They conclude he is beside himself, out of his right mind; and accordingly went out to lay hold upon him. Learn hence, 1. That the forward zeal and diligence of Christ and his ministers in preaching the gospel, is accounted madness and frenzy by a blind world. But they may say with the apostles, 2 Cor. v. 13. "If we be besides ourselves, it is unto God." But who were the persons that thus looked upon our Saviour as beside himself? Verily his own kindred and relations according to the flesh. Learn hence, That oft-times the servants of God meet with the strongest temptations from, and are most discouraged and molested by, such as are their nearest relations by blood or alliance. This is a great trial, to find our relations setting us back, instead of helping us forward, in the ways of religion; but we must bear it patiently, knowing, that not only others of God's children, but Jesus Christ, his own and only Son, did experience this trial. Observe, 3. The malicious and wicked slander which the scribes endeavoured to fix on our blessed Saviour; namely, that he was possessed of the devil, and by familiarity with him, and help from him, cast forth devils out of others. Good God! how was thine own and only Son, the holy and innocent Jesus, censured, slandered, and falsely accused of the worst of crimes; of gluttony, of blasphemy, of sorcery! Can any of thy children expect freedom from the persecution of the tongue, when innocency itself could not protect thy holy Son from slander and false accusation? Observe, 4. Our Saviour's answer and just apology for himself, in which are contained, 1. A confutation of their calamity and slander. 2. A reprehension of the scribes for the same. 1. To confute this slander, our Saviour, by several arguments, shows, how absurd and unlikely it is that the devil should cast out himself, and any ways seek to oppose and destroy his own kingdom. As if our Saviour had said, "Is it likely that satan would lend me his power to use it against himself? Surely satan would do nothing to weaken his own interest, or shake the pillars of his own kingdom. Now if I have received any power from satan, for destroying him and his kingdom, then is satan like a family divided within itself, and like a kingdom divided against itself, which can never stand, but be brought to desolation." Our Saviour having sufficiently shown that he did not work his miracles by the power of the devil, he next informs them from whence he had that power, even from God himself; and accordingly he compares satan to a strong man, well armed with weapons to defend his house; and he compares himself clothed with divine power, to one that is stronger than the strong man. So that the argument runs thus: the devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power but God's only that is stronger than his. If then, says Christ, I were not assisted with a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man, who reigns in the bodies and souls of men as in his house, for it must be a stronger than the strong man that should bind satan, and who is he but the God of strength? Learn hence, That Christ's divine power is only superior to satan's strength. He only can vanquish and over-rule him at his pleasure, and drive him out of that possession which he holds either in the bodies, or in the souls of men. Observe, 5. The charge which our Saviour brings against the scribes and pharisees blaspheming his divine power in working miracles. He charges them with sinning the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. "All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, but he that shall blas-

pheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness." As if Christ had said, All the reproaches which you cast upon me as man, are pardonable; as when you check me with the poverty and meanness of my birth, when you censure me for a wine-bibber, a glutton, a friend and companion of sinners, and the like unjust censures: but when you blaspheme that divine power by which all my miracles are wrought, and contrary to the conviction of your own enlightened minds, maliciously ascribe all my miracles to the power of the devil, which were wrought indeed by the power of the Holy Ghost; this makes your condition not only dangerous but desperate, because you resist the last remedy, and oppose the best means for your conviction. For what can be done more to convince you that I am the true and promised Messiah, than to work so many miracles before your eyes to that purpose! Now, if when you see these you will say, It is not the Spirit of God that works these, but the power of the devil; as if Satan would conspire against himself, and seek the ruin of his own kingdom; there is no way or means left to convince you, but you will continue in your obstinacy, and malicious opposition to truth, to your unutterable and inevitable condemnation.

31 ¶ There came then his brethren and his mother, and standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren?

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Observe, here, 1. The verity and truth of Christ's human nature; he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him by the mother's side, called here his brethren, that is, his kinsmen. Observe, 2. That the mother of Christ, though she was a blessed and holy woman, yet she was not free from sin, but failings and infirmities are found with her. It was a fault to interrupt our Saviour unseasonably at this time, when he was preaching to the people. The like we see in her at other times, Luke ii. 48. and John ii. 3. No saint here on earth ever was in a state of sinless perfection. Blessed be God, we are hastening to such a state. Observe, 3. That Christ did not neglect his holy mother, or disregard his poor kindred and relations, but only showed that he preferred his Father's work and business, before their company and acquaintance at this time. Observe, 1. How exceeding dear obedient christians are to Jesus Christ; he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural. Alliance by faith is more valued by our Saviour, than alliance by blood. To bear Christ in the heart is a greater honor than to bear him in the womb.

Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied us even now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love him we may. His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied us. Though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, in affinity, in consanguinity: yet in heart, in faith, in love, in service, he is or may be ours. Verily, spiritual regeneration bringeth men into a more honorable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did.

CHAPTER IV.

AND he began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with the blasphemous slander which the scribes and pharisees cast upon our blessed Saviour, accusing him of casting out devils by the help of the devil. This did they, no doubt, to discredit his person, and hinder his ministry; yet, for all this the people follow him in great multitudes, more than ever, to hear him, and be instructed by him. Thence learn, 1. That all the power and malice of Satan and wicked men shall not be able to suppress the gospel, or hinder the free course of it; yea, the more it is oppressed, the more it shall prevail; the more the scribes and pharisees disgraced our Saviour, and vilified his doctrine, the more the people followed him in troops to be partakers of his ministry. Observe, 2. The place where our Lord now preached, *in a ship*. Not that he declined the temple, or the synagogue, when he had opportunity, but in the want of them Christ thought an house, a mountain, a ship, no unmeet place to preach in. It is not the place that sanctifies the ordinance, but the ordinance that sanctifies the place. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's gestures in preaching; *he sat*, it being the custom of the Jewish church to do so, Matt. xxiii. 2. "The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses' chair." Learn thence, That in indifferent rites and orders, touching the outward worship of God, we are to confirm ourselves to the laudable custom of the church in which we live, and whereof we are members. This did our Saviour, and so ought we. Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's preaching, it was by parables and similitudes, which was an ancient way of instruction among the Jews, and a very convincing way; working upon men's minds, memories, and affections, all at once, making the mind attentive, and the memory retentive, and the auditors inquisitive after the interpretation of the parable. Some are of opinion that our Saviour's parables were suited to his hearers' employments; and accordingly many of his bearers being husbandmen, he resembles his doctrine to seed sown in the field. For thus he speaks:

3 Hearken, behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

6 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6 But when the sun was up it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up, and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Several things are here observable; as, 1. How Christ begins and ends the parable with an admonition to diligent and serious attention. Hearken, says Christ, verse 3. And *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, verse 9. This shows us at once the people's backwardness and negligence in applying their minds to hear and receive the word of God, and also shows the minister's duty to excite and stir up their people's diligence and attention in hearing God's word.—Observe, 2. What is the general scope and design of this parable: namely to show that there are four several sorts of hearers of God's word, and but one good one, but one sort only who hear to a saving advantage. Now as to the matter of the parable, Note 1. The sower is Christ and his apostles; he the principal sower, they subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own seed, they his seed. Woe unto us if we sow our own seed, not Christ's. Note, 2. The seed sown, the word of God: fabulous legends, and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, these are not seed, but chaff, or their own seed, and not Christ's. Our Lord's field must be all sown with his own seed, with no mixt grain. Learn, 1. That the word preached, is like seed sown in the furrows of the field. As seed has a fructifying virtue in it, by which it increaseth and brings forth more of its own kind, so has the word of God a quickening power to regenerate and make alive dead souls. Learn, 2. From this parable, That the seed of the word, where it is most plentifully sown is not alike fruitful. Seed doth not thrive in all ground alike, neither doth the word fructify alike in the souls of men. There is a difference both from the nature of the soil, and from the influence of the Spirit. For though no ground be naturally good, yet some is worse than other. Learn, 3. That the

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cause of the word's unfruitfulness is very different; not the same in all. In some it is an hard heart of unbelief: in others the distracting cares of the world choke the word, like thorns which hinder the corn's growth, by overshadowing it, by drawing away the moisture and heat of the earth from it, and by hindering the influence of the sun from cherishing it. Unto which may be added the policy of satan, that bird of prey, which follows God's plough, and steals away the precious seeds of the word out of the furrows of their souls. Learn, 4. That the best ground doth not bring forth increase alike. Some good ground brings forth more, others less: some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold. In like manner, a man may be a profitable hearer of the word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion of fruit as others, provided he brings forth as much as he can.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him, with the twelve, asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive: and hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted, and *their sins* should be forgiven them.

13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Observe here, The disciples' question, and our Saviour's reply. Their question is about the sense and meaning of the parable. They own their ignorance, and desire better information. It is no shame for the best of ministers, yea, the best of men, to acknowledge their own ignorance in the mysteries of religion, and to attend upon the means of instruction, in order to their further information. In our Saviour's answer, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, &c." Observe, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is a matchless and invaluable privilege practically to understand gospel mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in, and partakers of, but only those to whom it is given. 4. That it is a righteous thing with God to give such persons over to further blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, who wilfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the light and evidence of it. The pharisees had all along shut their eyes and said, they would not see; and now Christ closes their eyes, judicially, and says, they shall not see. "Seeing ye shall see and not perceive; and hearing ye shall hear, and not understand."

14 ¶ The sower soweth the word.

15 And these are they by the way-side,

Q q

where the word is sown; but when they have heard, satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground: who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word.

19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Here our Saviour applies himself to interpret and explain the foregoing parable: *the seed* is the word, *the sower* is the preacher, *the soil* is the heart and soul of man. Some hearers Christ compares to the *highway* ground, in which the seed lies uncovered for want of the harrow of meditation. Others to *stony* ground, in which the word has no root. No root in their understandings, in their memories, wills and affections; but they are instantly offended, either at the depth or profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity and strictness of the word, or else at the plainness and simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to *thorny* ground; worldly and covetous desires are as thorns choking the good seed; they shadow the blade when sprung up, keep off the influences of the sun, and draw away the fatness of the soil from the seed. All these mischievous effects have thorns among the seed. And the like ill effects have worldly affections and covetous desires in the soul of man, rendering the seed of the word unfruitful and unprofitable. But the good christian hears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it steadfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit perseveringly. Learn, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good hearers of the word, but such as bring forth fruit answerable to their hearing. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word in Christ's account if he brings forth the best fruit he can, though it be not in so great a proportion as others do. As some grounds bring forth thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold; in like manner do all sincere hearers of the word. They all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity, though not all equally,

and none to perfection. Theophylact's note on the place: "How small is the number of good men, and how few are saved! For only the fourth part of the seed fell upon good ground, and was preserved." Others observe a gradation here: The seed sown in the highways comes not up at all; that on stony ground comes up, but increaseth not; that among thorns increaseth but bears no fruit; only that seed which fell on good ground brings forth fruit unto perfection.

21 And he said unto them. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not be set on a candlestick?

22 For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear

24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear, shall more be given.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Observe here, 1. The end and design of Christ in revealing his word and will to his disciples, and in communicating to them the light of spiritual knowledge: namely, that they may communicate it to others, and not to keep it close unto themselves. Even as the candle in an house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it; in like manner ought all christians, particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, to direct persons in their way towards heaven. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves; but communicate it to others, and employ it for the good and benefit of others. Observe, 2. The cautionary direction given by Christ to his disciples. *To take heed how they hear the word.* Such as would profit by hearing of the word, must diligently attend to the matter of the doctrine which they hear, and also to the manner how they hear. Such is the majesty and authority of the person that speaks to us in the word, such is the sublimity and the spirituality of the matter, and so great is our danger if we miscarry under the word, that it nearly concerns us to *take heed*, both *what we hear* and *how we hear*. Observe, 3. The argument which our Saviour makes use of to quicken his disciples to communicate the knowledge and improve the grace they had received for the good and benefit of others. *To him that hath shall be given.* That is such as improve their spiritual gifts shall have them increased; such as improve them not shall have them blasted. Learn hence, That the best course we can take to increase and thrive in grace, is to

exercise and improve it. He that hides his talent, doth not only forfeit it, but is in danger of being punished severely for the non-improvement of it.

26 ¶ And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.

27 And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.

This parable of our Saviour is an instructive lesson to the ministers of the gospel, faithfully to do their parts in sowing the seed of the word amongst their people, and then not to be over solicitous about the event, but to leave the issue to God; not to be discouraged, though the fruit of their labor doth not presently appear. Accordingly Christ propounds the laborious husbandman to his minister's imitation. As the husbandman, when he has prudently and painfully cast his seed into the ground, is not anxiously disquieted, but goes to bed and rests in hope, and at length the corn springs up; first the blade, and then the ear, then the grain: in like manner let the ministers of God do their duty without discouragement, in the morning sow their seed, and in the evening not to withhold their hand. And although the seed sown doth not appear presently, it may be not in our days, but seems rotten among the clods; yet it may appear afterwards with a plentiful increase, when our own heads are laid among the clods, verifying that saying of our Saviour, *One soweth and another reapeth*: Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the word is the ordinary, the necessary, and the principal means which God has appointed for sowing the seed of grace in the hearts of his people. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground." 2. That the virtue and efficacy of the word preached doth not depend upon the parts of a man, but upon the power of God. *The seed springeth up he knoweth not how*. Learn, 3. That the word of God sincerely preached may be successful, though it be not presently successful, the seed sown in one minister's days may spring up in another's. Happy we, if as God's husbandmen, we are employed in ploughing, sowing, or reaping; our Lord will reward us *secundum laborum, non fructum*; not according to our success, but according to our endeavours. The care and endeavour is ours, but the blessing and success is God's.

30 ¶ And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31 *It is* like a grain of mustard-seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth.

32 But when it is sown it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able, to hear it.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them; and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

The design of our Saviour in this parable, is to show how the gospel-church, from small and little, from unlikely and contemptible beginnings, should spread and increase, fructify and grow up: like as mustard-seed, one of the smallest of grains, grows up to a considerable tallness, even Christ foretels that the gospel should spread and increase, nations and countries becoming christians. Hence learn, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God, it has had, and shall have, a wonderful increase.

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And, when they had sent away the multitude, they took him, even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him!

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but dangers attend and difficulties do accompany them: a tempest arose and the ship was covered

with waves, which Christ himself was in, with his disciples. Learn hence, That the presence of Christ himself does not exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and danger. Here is a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ himself was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when this tempest arose; he being wearied with the labors of the day, was laid down upon a pillow to sleep at night, thereby showing himself to be truly and really man: and that as he took upon him our human nature, so he assumed the infirmities of our nature also, as weariness and pain, hunger and thirst. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to Christ; they awake him with a sad outcry; *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* Here was faith mixed with human frailty. They believed that he could save them; but being asleep, they concluded he must be awakened before they can be saved by him: whereas, though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, That the prevalency of fear, in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may argue weakness of faith, yet is no evidence of a total want of faith: in the midst of the disciples' fears they believed Christ's power. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour, first to the winds, next to the fears of his disciples. "He rebukes the winds," and instantly *they are calm*. When the sea was as furious as a madman, Christ with a single word calms it. Learn hence, That the most raging winds and outrageous sea cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ. Christ, as God, lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act most lawlessly. Observe farther, Christ rebukes his disciples' fears, *Why are ye fearful?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears were up: they forgot that the Lord High Admiral of the ocean was on board the ship; and were as much over-set with their boisterous passion, as the vessel was with the tempestuous winds; and accordingly Christ rebukes the tempest within, before the storm without. First he calms their hearts, then he quiets the seas. From this instance of the disciples we may gather that great faith in the habit may appear little in act and exercise; the disciples' faith, in forsaking all, and following Christ, was great faith: but in this present act their faith was weak, through the prevalency of their fears. O the imperfect composition of the best of saints! Faith and fear will take their turns, and act their part, whilst we are upon the stage of this world; ere long our fears will be vanquished, and our faith swallowed up in vision! Lord set our souls in long-ing for that joyful hour.

CHAPTER V.

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And, when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains;

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city and in the country: And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it, told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not; but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. And all men did marvel.

This piece of history gives us a very sad relation of a person that was possessed with a legion of devils; we read of few, if any in the Old Testament, that were thus possessed, but of many in the New Testament. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; therefore he suffered satan to enter some human bodies, to show his divine power in casting him out. Note here, 1. That the evil angels by their fall lost their purity, but not their power; for with God's permission they have power, not only to enter into men's bodies, and possess them, but also to distemper their minds and drive them to phrenzy and madness, causing them to offer violence to their own lives, and to do hurt and mischief to their own bodies. Thus did this possessed person here, wounding and cutting himself with stones. Note, 2. That the reason why the evil angels do not oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God. The devils cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Note, 3. That the place where these evil spirits delighted to make their abode, among the tombs or graves, places desolate, forlorn, and solitary, which are apt to breed horror of mind, and give advantage to temptations. Learn thence, That it is dangerous, and very unsafe, for persons, especially in whom melancholy prevails, to give themselves to solitariness, to frequent desolate, and forlorn places, and to affect the being much alone; it giving advantage to satan to set upon them with powerful temptations. It is better to frequent human society, and especially to delight in the society and communion of the saints, by means whereof we may be more and more strengthened and fortified against satan's temptations. Note, 4. That the devils own Christ to be the Son of God, and that he came into the world to be a Saviour, but not a Saviour to them; therefore they cry out, *What have we to do with thee?* or thou with us? O! what an uncomfortable confession and acknowledgment is this, to own Christ to be a Saviour, and at the same time to know, that he is none of our Saviour! Note, 5. That though the devils do own Christ to be the Son of God, and do pay homage and worship, and yield subjection to him, as his slaves and vassals, yet it is not a free and voluntary service, but extorted rather, and forced from them by the power of Christ. "He worshipped and cried out, (No. 10.)

saying, What have I to do with thee?" Note, 6. What a multitude of evil spirits do enter into one man. O the extreme malice and cruelty of the devil against mankind, in that so many evil spirits did at once afflict and torment a single person, even a legion, many thousands of them. Observe also, The unity and agreement which is amongst these evil spirits in doing mischief; though there was a legion of them in this one person, yet they have all but one name. Learn, That the very devils have a sort of unity among themselves, and in their malice and mischievous designs against mankind, they are as one. How happy were it if good men were so much united in designs and endeavours for the glory of God, as devils conspire and combine against it! Note, 7. The outcry which the devil makes at the appearance and approach of Christ, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* From thence learn, 1. That there are tortures appointed to the spiritual natures of evil angels. 2. That the devils are not so full of torments as they shall be. Although they are as full of discontent as they can be, there will be a time when their torments shall be increased, when they shall have their fill of torment. This they know, and accordingly thus they pray, *Torment us not before the time;* that is, increase not our torments before the appointed time of their increase. Note, 8. The devil's request, 1. *Not to send them out of the country,* verse 10, for being now among heathens, they thought they were among their own, and not in Christ's jurisdiction, as being not amongst his people. 2. For permission and leave to go into the herd of swine. Where observe, first the devils' malice; he will hurt the poor beasts, rather than not hurt at all. Secondly, His powerful restraint; he cannot hurt a pig without permission: *Suffer us to enter.* Satan's malice indeed is infinite, but his power is bounded: it is *Potestas sub potestate.* A power under a power. If he could not hurt the swine, much less can he afflict the body or soul of man without leave or licence. Note, 9. How satan's request is yielded to by our Saviour; he permits the devils to enter into the swine, not to satisfy their desire in doing mischief; but first to show his power over the devils, that they could do nothing without his permission: next, to show how great the power and malice of the devils would be if, not restrained: And lastly, That the miracle of casting out such a multitude of devils might appear to be the greater. Learn hence, That sometimes Almighty God, for wise ends and just causes, doth suffer the devil to enjoy his desire, in doing hurt and mischief unto the creatures; *Jesus said unto them, Go.* Note, 10. What a contrary effect this miracle which Christ wrought had upon these people; instead of believing his divine power, upon the sight of his miraculous healing the possessed, the loss of their swine enrages them, and makes them desire Christ to depart from them; carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour, and had rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profit. So desirous were these Gadarenes to get rid of our Saviour's company, that they pray and beseech him to depart out of their coasts. Learn hence, Sad is the condition of such from whom Christ departs; more sad the condition of such who say unto Christ, Depart; but most sad the case of them who pray and beseech Christ to depart from them. Thus did these Gadarenes desire and beseech Christ to depart from them: which accordingly he did, and we read no more of his return to them. Note lastly, How desirous the possessed man was to

continue with Christ; after he was, come to himself, *he prayed that he might be with him.* This he might desire, partly to testify his thankfulness to Christ, partly out of fear of being re-possessed again by satan, or perhaps to have the opportunity of hearing Christ's doctrine, and seeing his miracles: for such as have once *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, and experienced the pleasure and profit of Christ's company, are very desirous of the continuance of it, and exceeding loath to part with it: however, our Saviour at this time did not think fit to suffer him, knowing that more glory would redound to God, by publishing the miracle to his friends. Christ expects, after eminent deliverances wrought for us, that we shall be the publishers of his praise, and declare to all, far and near, the great things which God hath done for us. Add to this, that our Saviour might not permit this man to be with him, to avoid the suspicion of vainglory; of which he might have given some umbrage, had he carried about with him those upon whom his greatest miracles were wrought. And lastly, To show that Christ in his absence, as well as when present, is able to protect those that believe and trust in him from the malice of evil spirits.

21 ¶ And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea.

22 And behold there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name: and when he saw him, he fell at his feet.

23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24 And Jesus went with him, and much people followed him, and thronged him.

Observe here, 1. The person who came to Christ on behalf of his sick daughter, described by this name, *Jairus*: by his office, *a ruler of the synagogue*: by his gesture, *He fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped him.* This gesture of his was not only a sign of tender affection in him towards his daughter, but also an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; yet his confining Christ's power to his bodily presence, and to the touch of his hand, was a token of the weakness of his faith. "Come, says he, and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." As if Christ could not have cured her without either coming to her, or laying his hand upon her. Note, All that come to Christ are not alike strong in faith. Yet our blessed Redeemer refuses none who come to him with a sincere faith, though in much weakness of faith. Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour complies with Jairus' request, *Jesus went with him.* Although his faith was but weak, yet our Saviour doth not reject, or deny his suit, but readily goes with him. Learn

hence, How ready we should be to go to Christ in all our distresses, afflictions, and necessities, who is ready to hear, and so forward to help us, if we seek him in sincerity, though our faith be feeble. Observe, 3. The great humility of our blessed Saviour, in suffering himself to be thronged by poor people. *Much people followed him, and thronged him.* O humble and lowly Saviour! How free was thy conversation from pride and haughtiness! How willing to converse with the meanest of the people for their advantage! Our Lord did not only suffer them to come near him, but even to throng him: what an example is here for the greatest persons upon earth to imitate and follow, not to despise the persons, nor disdain the presence of the meanest and poorest of the people; but to look upon some with an eye of favor, upon others with an eye of pity, upon none with an eye of contempt.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment:

28 For she said, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

21 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

As our Saviour was on his way to Jairus' house, a diseased woman comes behind him, touches his clothes, and is presently healed; the virtue lay not in her finger, but in her faith, or rather in Christ, which her faith instru-

mentally drew forth. Observe here, 1. The diseased person, a woman with a bloody flux. Let women here take notice of the miseries which the sin of the first woman has brought upon all women, amongst which this is one, that it has made their bodies subject to unnatural issues and fluxes of blood. Observe, 2. The long continuance of this disease, *twelve years*. It pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions upon some of his children in this life, and particularly to keep some of them a very long time under bodily weakness, to manifest his power in supporting them, and to magnify his mercy in delivering them. Observe, 3. This poor woman was found in the use of means: she sought to physicians for help, and is not blamed for it, though *she had spent all she had upon them*. The use of physic is not to be neglected by us in times of sickness, especially in dangerous diseases of the body. To trust to means, is to neglect God; and to neglect the means, is to tempt God. The health of our bodies ought to be dear and precious to us, and all lawful means ought to be used both to preserve it, to recover it, and confirm it. Observe, 4. The workings and acting of this poor woman's faith: her disease was unclean by the ceremonial law, and therefore to be separated from society; accordingly she is ashamed to appear before Christ, but comes behind him to touch his clothes, being firmly persuaded that Christ had a power communicated by God unto him, miraculously to cure incurable diseases. And see how our Saviour encouraged her faith, though she did not believe him to be the eternal Son of God, but one to whom God had communicated a power of healing bodily diseases; yet says Christ, *This thy faith hath made thee whole*. Learn hence, That faith oftentimes meets with a better welcome from Christ, than it did or could expect. This poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing. Observe, 5. Christ would have this miracle discovered: he therefore says, *Who touched me?* and *I perceive that virtue is gone out of me*. First, In reference to himself, to manifest his divine power, that by the touch of his clothes he could cure such incurable diseases. Secondly, in relation to the woman that she might have opportunity to give God the praise and glory for the cure. And thirdly, With respect to Jairus, that his faith might be strengthened in the belief of Christ's power to raise his daughter. Now from those words, *Virtue went out of Christ*, and he healed them, is evident that the virtue which did these miraculous cures resided in Christ, and was not communicated to him; and consequently proves him to be God: for the divine virtue, by which the prophets and apostles did their cures, is ascribed to God; as Acts xix. 11. *God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul*. But the miracles done by Christ are ascribed to the divine virtue dwelling in him. Accordingly, here he says, *I perceive that virtue is gone out of me*.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the rulers of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37 And he suffered no man to follow him save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly,

39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and saith unto her, *Talitha Cumi*; which is, being interpreted, Damsel (I say unto thee) arise.

42 And straightway the damsel arose and walked: for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Observe here, 1. The doleful news brought to Jairus' ears, *Thy daughter is dead*. The Lord sometimes suffers the faith of his saints to be hard put to it, greatly assaulted with difficulties and trials. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's seasonable word of comfort; *Be not afraid, only believe*. Christ is ready to comfort believers in the hour of their strongest temptations and greatest trials. Observe, 3. Christ's application of himself to the raising unto life Jairus' dead daughter. In order to which, 1. He goes into the house with only three of his disciples, which were sufficient to witness the truth of the miracle. Our Saviour, to avoid all show of vain-glory, and to evidence that he sought not ambitiously his own honor and praise, would not work this great miracle publicly before all the people. 2. He rebukes them for the show they make of immoderate grief and sorrow for the dead damsel; they wept and wailed greatly with minstrels and musical instruments, according to the custom of the heathens, who by a mournful sort of music did stir up the passion of grief at their funerals. To mourn immoderately for the dead is a heathenish practice and custom. It is hurtful to the living, and dishonorable to the dead; nor is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. 3. He adds a reason for this rebuke and reproof

given them; *The damsel is not dead but sleepeth. Vobis mortua, mihi dormit*: She is dead to you, but asleep to me: not so dead to be beyond my power to raise her to life." Souls departed are under the conduct of angels to their several regions of bliss and misery. It is very probable that the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels near her dead body, waiting the pleasure of God in order to its disposal, either to restore it again to the body, or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Observe farther, The nature of death in general, and that of the saints in particular, described; *It is a sleep*. Sleep is a state of rest; sleep is a sudden surprisal; in sleep there is an insensible passage of our time; the person sleeping shall certainly awake, either in this world, or in the next. It will be our wisdom to prepare for the bed or the grave, and so to live, that when we lie down in it, there may be nothing to disturb our rest. Observe next, The words which our Saviour used at the raising of the damsel, *Talitha cumi*, Syriac words, to show the truth of the miracle; not like a conjuror, muttering a charm in unknown words to himself, and also to show the greatness of the miracle, that he was able to raise by a word speaking. Observe lastly, The charge given by our Saviour, not to divulge this miracle; *He charged them straitly that none should know it*. That is, not to divulge it imprudently to such of the scribes and pharisees as would not be convinced by it, but only cavil at it, and be the more enraged against him, and seek his death before his time was come. Also not to divulge it unseasonably, and all at once, but gradually and by degrees; for it was the will of God, that the divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and on the sudden, but by little and little, during his state of humiliation; for his resurrection is the time appointed for the full manifestation of his godhead, Rom. i. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*.

CHAPTER VI.

AND he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? and they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet

is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could do there no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

Our blessed Saviour having in the former chapter wrought two famous miracles, in curing a woman of a bloody issue, and raising Jairus' daughter from death, we find him here in the beginning of this chapter passing *into his own country*, that is, the city of Nazareth in Galilee, called his own city and country, because he was there conceived, there brought up; there Joseph and Mary, and his kindred, dwelt, and Christ with them, during his private life, which was till he was thirty years of age. Now our Saviour being come into his own country; Observe, 1. What his employment was, he preached in their synagogues and held communion with the Jewish church, although she had many corruptions in her. Teaching us, by his example, not to desert and forsake the communion of such a church, in which there is found neither heretical doctrine nor idolatrous worship, although many things be found in her culpable and blameworthy. The Jewish church was certainly such, and yet our Saviour maintained not occasional only, but constant communion with her. Observe, 2. The influence and effect which our Saviour's preaching had upon his own countrymen, the people of Nazareth; it did work admiration in them, but not faith: *they were astonished*, but did not believe. Men may be mightily moved and affected by the word, and yet may never be converted by it; the men of Nazareth wondered, and they did not believe in him, but were offended at him. Observe, 3. The ground and cause of this their offence, and that was the meanness of his extraction, and the poverty of his condition; *Is not this the carpenter?* From whence the ancient fathers and particularly Justin Martyr, concluded that our Saviour did work at his father Joseph's trade, during his father's life, and thence was called *the carpenter's son*; and when Joseph was dead (which was before Christ was thirty years old, when he entered upon his public office) he was then called *the carpenter*. The ancients say, he spent his time in making ploughs and yokes, and that thence it was that he drew so many similitudes in his preaching from the yoke and the plough. This we are sure of, that our Lord lived not thirty years before his manifestation idly and unprofitably. It is most probable that he followed his father's calling, and wrought under him, it being said, *he was subject to him*, Luke ii. 15. as a child to a parent, and as a servant to his master. As to this, that it seems not only true but requisite, that Christ should be of some trade, because by the Jewish canons, all fathers were bound to teach their children some trade; yea, says the learned Dr. Whitby, their most celebrated rabbins thought it a great reproach not to be of some trade; doubtless our Lord, during his private life, did give no example of idleness. Indeed, after he enter-

ed upon his prophetic office, he no longer followed Joseph's calling, but applied himself wholly to the work of the ministry; he made no more ploughs, but one to break up hard hearts; no more yokes, but one for the devil's neck. However, in regard of our Saviour's low extraction and mean education, *his countrymen were offended at him.* Learn hence, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition, was that which multitudes stumbled at, and which kept many, yea most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in an humbled and abased Saviour. Learn, 2. That it is the property and practice of profane men to take occasion, from the outward quality and condition of God's ministers, both to despise their persons, and to reject their doctrine. Observe, 4. The reason assigned by our Saviour why the men of Nazareth despised him and set him at nought, because he was their countryman and acquaintance; their familiarity bred contempt. Teaching us, That very often the faithful ministers of God are most contemned and dishonoured, where they are most familiarly known. Sometimes the remembrance of their mean original and extraction, sometimes the poverty of their parents' condition, sometimes the indecencies of their childhood, sometimes the follies of their youth, are ripped up; all which are occasions of contempt, and gave ground for this proverbial saying, *That a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country.* Which, like other proverbial speeches, holds true in general, and that for the most part it is so, but it is not universally true in all persons and cases. However, this good use may be made of our Saviour's observation, to teach his ministers to be wise, in conversing with their people, not to make themselves cheap and common in every company, not too familiar with all sorts of persons, nor be too light and vain in any company; for this will certainly breed contempt both of their persons and ministry. Our duty is, by strictness and gravity of deportment, to maintain our esteem in the consciences of our people, and to temper gravity with condescending affability. That minister which prostitutes his authority, frustrates the ends of his ministry, and is the occasion of his own contempt. Observe, 5. How this people's contempt of Christ's person, and unbelief of his doctrine, did hinder Christ from working miracles among them. *He could do no mighty works there.* Not because he was unable, but because they were unwilling. Not as if their infidelity abated his divine power, but they were unprepared to receive any benefit by him; his miracles would have been cast away upon such invincible persons. Who will sow upon barren sands, or water dead plants? it was an act of justice in Christ to deprive the pharisees of those advantages which they had so long resisted. Christ had a natural ability to do mighty works there, but no moral ability. He could not do it honourably, their unbelief was a moral hindrance; so then this ability proceeded from no deficiency in Christ's power, but from a defect in their faith. He could not, because he would not; and he would not, because it was not fit for him so to do. Although Christ be omnipotent, and has all power in his hands, yet unbelief binds his hands, and hinders him in the execution of that power. Unbelief is such a sin as keeps men from being partakers of the benefits of Christ. Observe, 6. How the incredulity and unbelief of this people was so great, that Christ wondered at it: *He marvelled because*

of their unbelief. Not because he was ignorant of the cause of it, but because he had used such marvellous means for the curing them of their unbelief. Learn hence, that unbelief is a great sin at all times; but when marvels are wrought for the cure and healing of it, and it remains uncured, it is a marvellous sin, and justly causes admiration and wonder in Christ himself; *He marvelled because of their unbelief.*

7 ¶ And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse:

9 But *be* shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when you depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, than for that city.

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil, many that were sick, and healed *them.*

We heard before, chap. iii. of our Saviour's solemn calling his apostles to their work and office: now he sends them forth to execute their office. Where Observe, 1. The person that sends them forth, Christ. Learn thence, That none ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function in the church, till thereunto lawfully called by Christ himself. The apostles were immediately called and sent forth by Christ himself, and received the doctrine which they taught immediately from Christ's own mouth. His ministers are now called mediately, they receive their authority from Christ, by the hands of the governors of his church. Observe, 2. The manner of their sending, by two and two in a company, partly to make their message of more authority; partly to testify their mutual consent in the doctrine which they taught; and partly to comfort and encourage, to help and strengthen, to assist and support, each other; in imitation of this example

the Jesuits send forth their emissaries by pairs. Learn hence, That the ministers of the word do stand in great need of the mutual help and comfort, of the united assistance and encouragement, of each other, in the weighty duties of their calling and function; like labourers in the harvest-field, they should help one another, the strong endeavouring to strengthen the hands of the weak. But, Lord, what tears are sufficient to bewail the want of love and unity, yea, the prevalence of that fear and malignity which is found too often amongst the ministers of the gospel! So that instead of going forth by two and two, happy is he that is alone in a place. Well might Melancthon bless God when he lay a dying, that he was going to a place where he should be freed from the implacable hatred of divines. This is, and ought to be, for a lamentation. Observe, 3. The power given by Christ to work miracles, for confirming the doctrine of the gospel which the apostle preached; he gave them power over unclean spirits, and they cast out devils, and anointed with oil them that were sick and healed them. This power to work miracles was necessary for the apostles; partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor unlearned men, but principally to gain credit and authority to their doctrine, for the doctrine of faith in the Messiah, is now come, and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews; the truth and certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified by Christ and his apostles' miracles, some of which were casting out of devils; and by anointing with oil, to heal and recover sick persons. This gift of healing remained some time in the church, as appeared by St. James v. 14. *Is any sick? anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.* Where Observe, that the apostles did not use oil as the instrument and means of healing (for then the cure had not been miraculous) but only as a symbol of the cure, or as an outward sign and testimony of miraculous healing: which outward sign was for the strengthening of the faith of such as were healed; assuring them, that as certainly as their bodies were anointed, so certainly should their health and strength be restored. The papists upon this, ground their sacrament of *extreme unction*, but very vainly; for the apostles anointed those that were sick, as a sign of their recovery; but the papists anoint those that have the pangs of death upon them, that their sins may be blotted out, and the snares of the devil avoided. Observe, 4. The charge given by Christ to his apostles at the time of their sending out. This is threefold: first, touching their preparation for their journey, he bids them not take much care, nor spend much time in furnishing themselves with victuals, money, apparel, weapons of defence, and the like; only taking a walking-staff in their hands, because they were to finish their journey speedily, and to return again to Christ. This command of our Saviour to his apostles, not to incumber themselves when going forth to preach the gospel, teaches his ministers their duty to free themselves as much as possibly they can from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in the performance of their office and function. 2. Tim. ii. 4. *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.* Secondly, touching their lodging in their journey. Our Saviour advises them not to change it, during their stay in one place; but into whatsoever house they first entered, they should continue there till they departed out of that place; that so they might avoid all shew of lightness and inconstancy, and testify all gravity and stayed-

ness in their behaviour, this being a special mean to win authority to their persons and ministry. Thirdly, Christ gives a charge to his apostles, touching their carriage towards such as should refuse to give entertainment to them and their doctrine. They were to denounce the judgments of God against such contemners, by shaking off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them. Thence learn, That the contempt of God's ministers, and especially of their ministry and doctrine, is an odious and execrable sin, detested by God, and which ought to be abhorred by man. *Shake off the dust of your feet.* This action was emblematical, signifying that Almighty God would in like manner shake them off as the vilest dust. Learn, 2. That wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony; either a testimony for or against a people. For if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons much more. Observe lastly, The dreadful judgment denounced by our Saviour against the contemners of the apostles' doctrine; *Verily it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.* Where note, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That of all sinners the condition of such will be saddest at the day of judgment, who having lived under the gospel, have died after all in impenitency and infidelity; *Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

14 And king Herod heard of him; for his name was spread abroad: and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias' sake his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.

18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not,

20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and

observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper unto his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee:

22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24 And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? and she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the King, and asked, saying, I wilt that thou give me by and by in a charger, the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison.

28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

The history of John the Baptist's death is here recorded by this Evangelist, as St. Matthew had done before, chap. xiv. 1, 2. Here we have these particulars farther observable; 1. The character and description of a zealous and faithful minister. He is one that deals plainly, and dares tell the greatest persons of their faults. Herod, though a king, is reproved by the Baptist for his incest, in taking his brother's wife. The crown and sceptre of Herod could not daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in the ministers of God both courage and impartiality. Courage, in fearing no faces; impartiality, in sparing no sins. Observe, 2. Who it

was that commanded the Baptist to be beheaded; it was *Herod the king, whom he had reproved*. How sad is it when kings, who should be the nursing fathers of the church, do prove the bloody butchers of the prophets of God. The severest persecutions which the prophets of God have fallen under are usually occasioned by their telling great men of their crimes. Men in power are impatient of reproof, and imagine that their authority gives them a licence to transgress. Observe, 3. The time of the Baptist's death; it was upon Herod's birth-day. It was an ancient custom among the eastern kings, to celebrate their birth-days; Pharaoh did so, Gen. xl. and Herod here, but both with blood; yet these personal sins do not make the practice unlawful, when we solemnize our birth-days with thankfulness to our Creator and Preserver, and recommend ourselves by prayer to his gracious providence and protection for the remainder of our days: this is an act of piety and religion. But Herod's birth-day was kept with reveling, with feasting, with music and dancing; all which were made sinful to him by the circumstances which did attend it. Great men's feasts and frolics are too often the season and occasion of much sin. Observe, 4. The instigators and promoters of the Holy Baptist's death; *Herodias and her daughter*. Lord! how deadly is the malice of souls debauched with lust! Imprisonment would not satisfy them, they must have his blood. Resolute sinners, who are mad upon their lust, run furiously upon their opposers, and resolve to bear down all opposition they meet with in the gratification of their unlawful desires. Observe, 5. With what great reluctance Herod consented to this villainy: *The king was exceedingly sorry*. Wicked men oft-times sin with a troubled and disturbed conscience; there is a mighty struggle between their reason and their lusts; but at last they master their consciences and choose rather to gratify their lusts, than to obey their reason. So did Herod here; for notwithstanding his sorrow, he commands the act; he sent and beheaded John in the prison. Observe, 6. The motives and inducements which prevailed with Herod to behead this holy man. 1. The conscience of his oath: *Nevertheless for his oath's sake*. See his hypocrisy; he made scruple of a rash oath, who made no scruple of real murder. See here not only the folly but great impiety of rash vows; especially in ignorant persons, who think themselves obliged by them; whereas it is their duty, first to repent of them, and then to break them as fast as they can. St. Chrysostom says, Herod might have spared the Baptist's head, and yet have kept his oath to Herodias; for he swore to give her only half of his kingdom, and his head was worth more than his whole kingdom. 2. Respect to his reputation, not only for his oath's sake, but *for them that sat with him*. They heard him promise, and will be witnesses of his inconstancy if he do not perform. Insisting upon punctilios of honour, has hazarded the loss of millions of souls. 3. His great unwillingness to discontent Herodias and her daughter. O! vain and foolish hypocrite, who dreaded the displeasing a wanton mistress, more than the offending of God and conscience! Observe, 7. These bloody women do not only require the Baptist to be beheaded, but *that his head be brought in a charger to them*. What a dish was here to be served up at a prince's table on his birth-day! a dead man's head swimming in blood! How prodigiously insatiable is cruelty and revenge! Herodias did not think herself sate till John was

dead; she would not think him dead till his head was off, and would not believe his head was off till she had it in her hand. Revenge never thinks it has made sure enough. O! how cruel is a wicked heart, that could take pleasure in a spectacle of so much horror! Methinks I see how that holy head was tossed upon Herod's table by impure and filthy hands. That true and faithful tongue, those sacred lips, those chaste eyes, those mortified cheeks are now insultingly handled by a lewd and incestuous harlot, and made a scorn to Herod's drunken guests. Observe, 8. That neither the holiest of the prophets, nor the best of men, are more secure from violence than from natural death. The holy Baptist, who was sanctified in the womb, conceived and born with so much miracle, lived with so much reverence and observation, is now at midnight obscurely murdered in a close prison. Observe, 9. That it is as true a martyrdom to suffer for duty as for faith. He dies as truly a martyr that dies for doing his duty, as he that dies for professing his faith, and bearing witness to the truth. Observe, 10. How far men may go in religion, and yet be far enough from saving grace; they may reverence God's ministers, believe them to be holy and just men, hear them with delight and pleasure, protect and defend them from their opposers; they may reform and do many things; and yet be far from the kingdom of God. Herod did all this; he knew John to be a holy and just man, revered and respected him, guarded and kept him safe from Herodias' malice. For though he was imprisoned before, yet Herod suffered none to hurt him, but heard him often with pleasure and delight. Wicked and unregenerate men may be so affected with the word of God, as to become protectors and defenders of those that dispense it, and yet receive no saving advantage by it. The plain and powerful preaching of the word may win upon, and prevail with, an unregenerate man, to perform many good duties, and to forsake many known sins; and yet may he, after all, remain under the power of hypocrisy. Nay, from Herod's examples we may learn, That a wicked man may take some pleasure and delight in hearing the word preached; either the generality of the truths asserted, or the novelty of the notions delivered, or the wit and fancy, the graceful elocution and delivery of the preacher, may create a present delight; but it is neither a spiritual delight, nor an abiding delight. "And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb." When his disciples heard of it, that is, the disciples of John hearing that their holy master was thus barbarously murdered, they took up his dead body, and decently interred it. Learn thence, That the faithful servants of God are not ashamed of the sufferings of the saints, but will testify their respects unto them, both living, dying, and dead. The disciples of John gave their master an honourable and respectful burial, fearing neither Herod's power, nor Herodias' malice.

30 ¶ And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31 And he said unto them, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile; for there were many coming

and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and out-went them, and came together unto him.

34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

Observe here, 1. How the report of John's death being brought to Christ, he presently withdraws, and his disciples with him, from that place unto the desert. Christ will not long continue his presence in those places where any of his servants are slain, and others of them are in danger. Observe, 2. How our Saviour, upon the notice of John's death, flies into the desert for his own preservation: *His hour was not yet come*, and therefore he keeps out of Herod's way. It is no cowardice to fly from the rage of persecutors. Christ himself both practised it, and directed his disciples to it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city fly to another*. We must not expose our lives to hazard, but when the laying down our lives would do God and religion more service than we can do by living. Observe, 3. With what condolency and sympathizing pity our blessed Saviour exercised acts of mercy and compassion, when the objects of compassion were before him. "Jesus seeing the multitude, was moved with compassion towards them." Christ, when here on earth, did bear a tender and compassionate heart towards poor creatures in distress and misery; and to our comfort he retains the same compassionate nature and disposition now in heaven which he had here on earth. Observe, 4. The ground or cause of this compassion in our Saviour, because *they were as sheep having no shepherd*. Learn thence, That the case of such a people is very sad, and their condition to be much lamented and pitied, who are destitute of able, faithful, and conscientious pastors and teachers, to feed them with the spiritual food of the word and sacraments. Where provision fails, the people perish. But was the Jewish church now without pastors, as sheep without a shepherd? Had they not the pharisees, the scribes and doctors, to teach and instruct them? Yes, no doubt! but they were no pastors in Christ's account, because unfaithful pastors. Thence learn, That idle, negligent, and unfaithful pastors, are no pastors in the sight of God, and in the account of Christ." Jesus had compassion on the multitude, because they were as sheep having no shepherd."

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread : for they have nothing to eat.

37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give them to eat ?

38 He saith unto them, how many loaves have ye ? go and see. And when they knew, they say Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.

41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them ; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, and in the history of it these following particulars are observable. Note, 1. The disciples' pity towards the multitude, who had long fasted, and wanted now the ordinary comforts and supports of life. It well becomes the ministers of Christ to respect the bodily necessities, as well as regard the spiritual wants of persons. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make to Christ on behalf of the multitude, *Send them away, that they may buy victuals.* Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith. A strong charity in desiring the people's relief ; but a weak faith, in supposing that they could not be otherwise relieved but by sending them away ; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could also feed them miraculously if he pleased ; all things being equally easy to an almighty power. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's strange reply to his disciples' request ; they need not depart ; *give ye them to eat.* Need not depart ! Why, the people must either feed or famish. Victuals they must have, and a dry desert will afford none. Yes, says Christ to his disciples, *Give ye them to eat.* Alas, poor disciples ! they had nothing for themselves to eat, how then should they give the multitude to eat ? When Christ requires of us what we are unable to perform, it is to shew us our impotency and weakness, and to provoke us to look up to him,

and depend by faith on his almighty power. Observe, 4. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the earth has for his household and family ; *Five barley loaves, and two small fishes.* Teaching us, That these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered ; our belly must not be our master, much less our God. The end of food is to sustain nature, we must not stife it with a gluttonous variety. And as the quality of the victuals was plain, so the quantity of it was small ; five loaves and two fishes. Well might the disciples say, *What are these among so many ?* The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce. Observe, 5. How Christ, the great master of the feast, doth marshal his guests. *He commands them all to sit down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.* None of them reply, " Sit down, but to what ! Here are the mouths, but where is the meat ! We may soon be set, but when or whence shall we be served ? " Not a word like this ; but they obey and expect. Lord, how easy is it to trust to thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, or money in the purse ! but when our stores are all empty, and we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, is a true and noble act of faith. Observe, 6. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour ; *He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and they to the multitude.* 1. He blessed them, teaching us by his example, never to use or receive the good creatures of God for our nourishment, without prayer and praise ; never to sit down to our food as a beast to his forage. 2. He brake the loaves. He could have multiplied them whole, why then would he rather do it in the breaking ? Perhaps to teach us, that we may rather expect his blessing in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing ; liberality is the way to riches. 3. Christ gave the bread thus broken to his disciples, that they might distribute it to the multitude. But why did our Lord distribute the loaves by his disciples' hands ? Doubtless to gain respect to his disciples from the people, and the same course doth our Lord take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the world by his own immediate hand, chuses rather by the hand of his ministers to divide the bread of life among his people. Observe, 7. The certainty and the greatness of the miracle : *They did all eat and were filled.* They did all eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to satiety and fulness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet *twelve baskets of fragments remain.* More was left than at first set on. It is hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they ate, we may wonder that they left any thing : if what they left, they ate any thing. Observe, 8. These fragments, tho' of barley loaves and fish-bones, must not be lost, but at our Saviour's command, gathered up. The liberal house-keeper of the world would not allow the loss of his orts. O how tremendous will their account be ; who having large and plentiful estates, spend them upon their lusts, being worse than lost in God's account.

46 ¶ And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go

to the other side before, unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out.

50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased. And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52 For they considered not *the miracle of the loaves*: for their hearts was hardened.

This paragraph acquaints us with another miracle which our Saviour wrought in walking upon the sea to his disciples: and herein we have observable, 1. His sending his disciples to sea, he constrained them to go into a ship; not compelling them against their wills, but commanding them to take ship, and go before him. No doubt his disciples were loath to do this, unwilling to leave him, and to go without him; for they that have once tasted the sweetness of Christ's company and acquaintance, are hardly and difficultly drawn away from him. Observe, 2. Christ having dismissed his disciples and the company, retires into a mountain to pray; to teach us, That when we address ourselves to God in duty, we take all helps, furtherances, and advantages, for the doing of our duty. We must dismiss the multitude, before we address to God in prayer; we must send away the multitude of worldly cares, worldly thoughts, worldly concerns, and business, when we would wait upon God in duty. Observe, 3. The great danger the disciples were in, and the difficulties they were to encounter with. *They were in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves, and the winds were contrary*: and, which was saddest of all, Christ was absent. The wisdom of God sometimes suffers his children and people not only to be distressed, but greatly distressed with a variety of distresses. Observe, 4. The seasonable succour and relief which Christ afforded his disciples? *In the fourth watch he came unto them, walking upon the waters.*

It was not a stormy and tempestuous sea that could separate betwixt him and them, he that waded through a sea of blood, and a sea of wrath, to save his people, will walk upon a sea of waters to succour and relieve them. And the time was the fourth watch; about four in the morning, when they had been many hours conflicting with the waves and in great danger of their lives. To teach us, That Christ sometimes lengthens out the trials of his children before he delivers them; but when they come to an extremity, that is the season of his succour. Observe, 5. How the disciples took their deliverer for their destroyer; *When they saw Christ; they cried out.* Their fears were highest when their deliverer and deliverance were nearest; God may be coming with salvation and deliverance to his people, when they for the present cannot discern it. Observe, 6. When the disciples were in the saddest condition, one word from Christ revives them; it is a sufficient support in all afflictions to hear Christ's voice speaking to us, and to enjoy his favourable presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I*, and then let evils do their worst: that one word, *It is I*, is sufficient to allay all storms, and to calm a thousand tempests. Observe, lastly, What influence and effect this miracle had upon the disciples, *They were sore amazed, and beyond measure astonished*; they wonder at the ceasing of the winds, and calming of the seas; but they had forgotten the miracle of the loaves; which was a great stupidity and dulness in them, and argued hardness of heart, and want of consideration in them. Learn thence, That there is much stupidity of mind, and hardness of heart, remaining unmortified in the best of saints, whilst here in an imperfect state; the work of grace and sanctification is but imperfect in the best.

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him.

55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Here observe, 1. The unwearied diligence and industry of our Saviour in going about to do good: he no sooner landeth, but he goeth to Gennesaret, and healeth their sick. It was the great business and constant employment of our Saviour's life to travel from place to place, that he might be useful and beneficial to mankind; he went to those that could not, and to those that would not, come to him. Observe, 2. The people of Gennesaret's charity to

their sick neighbours; they sent abroad to let all the country know, that Christ the great physician was come amongst them. There is a duty of love and mercy which we owe unto those that are in affliction and misery; namely, To afford them the best help, relief, and succour, we are able, both in their inward and outward afflictions. Observe, 3. The suddenness and certainty of cure; they touched him, and were made whole. The healing virtue lay not in their fingers, but in their faith; or rather in Christ, whom their faith apprehended.

CHAP. VII.

THEN came together unto him the pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands, they found fault.

3 For the pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4 And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

5 Then the pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: *he shall be free*.

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father, or his mother.

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered. And many such like things do ye.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with the conference and disputation, which our Saviour had with the pharisees, about their superstitious observations of the Jewish traditions. These traditions were such rites and customs, as were delivered to them by the elders and rulers of the Jewish church in former times; which traditions they valued and regarded more than the express commandments of God. Learn thence, That superstitious men are always more fond of, and zealous for, the traditions of men in divine worship, than for the express and positive commands of God. Secondly, That it is the manner of such persons to tie others to their own practice and example in matters of religious worship, and to censure and condemn all those who do not conform to them in the smallest matters. The pharisees here censure the disciples for eating with unwashen hands, because it was their custom to wash when they did eat; yet did not Christ or his disciples refuse to wash before meat, as it was a civil and decent custom, but because the pharisees made it a religious rite. Teaching us, That what is in itself indifferent, and may without offence be done as a civil custom, ought to be discountenanced and opposed when required of us as an act of religion. The Jews, fearing lest they should touch any person or thing that was unclean, and so be defiled unawares, did use frequent washings, as of cups, pots, vessels, tables, beds, or couches, which they lay upon when they ate. Thus pharisaical hypocrisy puts God off with outward cleansing, instead of inward purity: regarding more the outward cleanliness of the hand, than the inward purity of the heart. This was the accusation of the pharisees, to which our Saviour replies, by way of recrimination, that if his disciples did not observe the tradition of the elders, they (the pharisees) "did reject and make void the commandment of God, and did worship him in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Learn hence, That all service and worship which is offered to God, according to man's will and ordinances, and not according to the rule of God's own word, is vain and unprofitable: Divine institution is the only pure rule of religious worship, as the substance of it; here what God doth not command, he forbids. Observe next, The instance which our Saviour produces of the pharisees violating an express command of God, and preferring their own traditions before it: he instances in the fifth commandment, which requires children to relieve their parents in their necessities. Now though the pharisees did not deny this in plain terms, yet they made an exception from it; which if children pleased, might render it vain, void, and useless. For the pharisees taught, That in case the child of a poor

parent, that wanted relief, would give a gift to the temple, which gift they called *corban*, that is, a gift consecrated to God and religious uses, that then the children of such poor parents were discharged from making any further provision for their aged and impotent parents: but might reply after this manner, "That which thou askest for thy supply is given to God, and therefore I cannot relieve thee." So that covetous and graceless children looked upon it as the most frugal way, once for all, to fine to the temple, rather than pay the constant rent of daily relief to their poor parents. Learn hence, That the practice of moral duties is required before, and is more acceptable to Almighty God, than the most solemn acts and exercises of instituted worship whatsoever. "I will have mercy, says God, rather than sacrifice; and to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than burnt-offerings." Secondly, That no duty, gift, or offering to God, is accepted, where the duty of charity is neglected: it is much more acceptable to God to refresh the bowels of his saints, who are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, than to adorn material temples with gold and silver. *Corban* is a Syriac word, signifying a gift given unto God. The pharisees applied these gifts to the use and service of the temple; possibly to repair, beautify and adorn it; which had not been amiss, if they had not taught that such gifts to the temple did discharge children from the duty of charity to their natural parents: *These things they ought to have done, in the first place, and not to leave the other undone.*

14 ¶ And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand.

15 There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him.

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of

men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Our blessed Saviour, leaving the pharisees with some dislike, applies himself to the multitude, and instructs them in a very necessary and useful doctrine, touching the true original cause of all spiritual pollution and uncleanness; namely, The filthiness and impurity of man's heart and nature. And that it is not the meat eaten with the mouth, but the wickedness of the heart, vented by the mouth, which pollutes a person in God's account. The heart and soul of man alone is capable of sinful defilement. Nothing can defile a person in God's account, but that which defileth the inward man. Learn hence, 1. That the heart of man is the sink and seed-plot of all sin, the source and fountain of all pollution. 2. That all the impurity of the life proceeds from the impurity and filthiness of the heart. Men's lives would not be so bad if their hearts were not worse. The disciples desiring the interpretation of the foregoing parable, our Saviour gives it them; but withal expostulates with them for not understanding a matter so obvious and plain, *Are ye yet without understanding?* As if he had said, "Have ye sat thus long under my ministerial teaching, and enjoyed the benefit of my conversation, and yet are no farther proficient in knowledge?" Plainly intimating, that Christ expects a proficiency in knowledge from us proportionable to the opportunities, and means of knowledge enjoyed by us. Having given them this rebuke, he next acquaints them with the sense and meaning of the parable; namely, That it is out of a wicked and sinful heart, that all sin and wickedness doth proceed. Though the occasions of sin are from without, yet the source and original of it is from within. The heart of man is as a cage full of unclean birds: *Hence proceeds evil thoughts*, either against God or our neighbours. *Adulteries*, or all the sins of the flesh. *Murders*; That is, all cruelty and hard dealing towards others. *An evil eye*; that is, an envious spirit, which frets and grieves at the happiness of others, called an evil eye, because envy doth much shew and manifest itself in the outward countenance, and especially by the eyes. From the whole, Note, That the best way to hinder the progress of sin in this life, is to mortify it in the heart, to crucify all inordinate motions, lusts, and corruptions, in their root; for the heart is the first seat and subject of sin, from whence it flows forth into the life and conversation.

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid,

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-phenician by nation. And she besought

him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled : for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord : yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way : the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil was gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

All along in the history of our Saviour's life, we are to take notice how he went about from place to place doing good. Being now come into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, he finds a poor woman of the race of the Canaanites, who becomes first an humble supplicant, and then a bold beggar, on the behalf of her possessed daughter. Where observe, 1. That though all Israel could not example the faith of this Canaanite, yet was her daughter tormented with the devil. Learn thence, That neither truth of faith, nor strength of faith, can secure against Satan's inward temptations, or outward vexations : and consequently, the worst of bodily afflictions are no sufficient proof of divine displeasure. Observe, 2. The daughter did not come to Christ for herself, but the mother for her. Perhaps the child was not so sensible of its own misery, but the mother feels both the child's sorrow and her own. True goodness teaches us to appropriate the afflictions of others to ourselves, causing us to bear their griefs, and to sympathize with them in their sorrows. Observe, 3. The seeming severity of Christ to this poor woman; he calls her not a woman, but a *dog*; and, as it were, spurns her from the table. Did ever so severe a word drop from those mild lips? What shall we say? Is the Lamb of God turned a lion, that a woman in distress, imploring pity, should be thus rated out of Christ's presence? But hence we learn, How Christ puts the strongest faith of his own children on the severest trial. This trial had never been so sharp, if her faith had not been so strong : usually, where God gives much grace, he tries grace much. Observe, 4. The humble carriage of this holy woman; her humility grants all, her patience overcomes all, she meekly desires to possess the dog's place; not to croud to the table, but to creep under it, and to partake of the crumbs of mercy that fall from thence. Nothing is so pleasing to Christ as to see his people follow him with faith and importunity when he seems to withdraw himself from them.

31 ¶ And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech : and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue.

34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36 And he charged them that they should tell no man. But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.

37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, he hath done all things well : he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.

See here, 1. The bitter fruits and sad effects of sin, which has brought deafness, dumbness, and blindness, upon the human nature. As death, so all diseases entered into the world by sin; sin first brought infirmities and mortality into our natures, and the wages of sin are diseases and death. Observe, 2. That the blessing of bodily health and healing is from Christ; who by his divine power, as he was God, miraculously and immediately healed them that were brought unto him. Observe, 3. The actions and gestures which our Saviour used in healing this deaf person. He puts his finger into his ears, he spit, and touched his tongue. Not that these were means or natural causes effecting the cures, for there was no healing virtue in the spittle; but only outward signs, testimonies, and pledges, of Christ's divine power and gracious readiness to cure the person in distress. Observe, 4. How Christ withdrew the person from the multitude, whom he was about to help and heal. Teaching us, in all our good works to avoid all shew and appearance of ostentation and vain glory: to set God's glory before our eyes, and not to seek our own praise. Observe, 5. The effect which this miracle had upon the multitude; it occasioned their astonishment and applause: *They were astonished, and said, He hath done all things well.* It becomes us both to take notice of the wonderful works of God, and also to magnify and extol the author of them. This is one way of glorifying our Creator.

CHAP. VIII.

IN those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus

called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.

3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way : for divers of them came from far.

4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness ?

5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven.

6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground : and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them ; and they set them before the people.

7 And they had a few small fishes ; and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8 So they did eat, and they were filled ; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets.

9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand. And he sent them away.

This chapter begins with the relation of a famous miracle wrought by our Saviour ; namely, his feeding of four thousand persons with seven loaves, and a few fishes. And here we have observable, first, the tender care which Christ took of the bodies of men, to provide all necessities for their support and comfort ; *he giveth us richly all things to enjoy.* The great housekeeper of the world openeth his hands, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. How careful was our Saviour here that the bodies of poor creatures might not faint, nor be over weak and weary by the way ! Therefore he would not dismiss them without refreshment. Observe, 2. The original source and spring from whence this care that Christ had of the multitude did proceed and flow ; namely, from that sympathizing pity and tender compassion which the merciful heart of Christ did bear towards persons in distress and misery. Learn hence, That the tender pity and compassion of Christ is not the spring and fountain of spiritual mercies only, but of temporal blessings also ; *I have compassion on the multitude who have nothing to eat.* Observe, 3. How the disciples, not seeing any outward, visible means for the people's support, conclude it impossible for so many to be satisfied with the little supply they had ; namely, seven loaves and a few small fishes. Learn thence, That a weak faith soon grows thoughtful, and sometimes distrustful at the sight of difficulties. Whence say

the disciples, *can these men be satisfied with bread ?* Not considering that the power of God in blessing our food, is far above the means of food. It is as easy for him to sustain and nourish us with a little as with much ; *Man liveth not by bread,* but by the blessing of God upon the bread he eats. Observe, 4. That although Christ could have fed these four thousand without the loaves, yet he takes and makes use of them seeing they may be had. Learn hence, That Christ did not neglect his own appointed ordinary means nor do any thing in an extraordinary way, farther than was absolutely necessary. Christ was above means, and could work without them, and when they failed, did so ; but when the means were at hand, he made use of them himself, to teach us never to expect that in a way of miracle, which may be come at in a way of means. Observe, 5. From our Lord's example, that religious custom of begging a blessing upon our food before we sit down to it, and of *receiving the good creatures of God with thanksgiving.* How unworthy is he of the crumbs that fall from his own table, who with the swine look not up unto, and takes no thankful notice of, the hand that feeds him ? Observe, 6. The certainty and greatness of the miracle : *They did all eat, and were filled.* They did all eat, not a crust of bread, or bit of fish, but to satiety and fulness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet *seven baskets remain ;* more is left than was at first set on. It is hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or miraculous leaving. If we consider what they ate, we may wonder that they left any thing ; if what they left, that they eat any thing. Observe lastly, Our Lord's command to gather up the fragments, Teaches us, That we make no waste of the good creatures of God, The fragments of fish-bones and broken bread must be gathered up ; the liberal housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. Frugality is a commendable duty. God hath made us stewards, but not absolute lords of his blessings. We must be accountable to him for all the instances of his bounty received from him.

10 ¶ And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11 And the pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ? Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given to this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again, departed to the other side.

Observe here, 1. The unreasonable practice of the wicked pharisees in asking a sign of Christ : that is, some new and extraordinary miracle to be wrought by him, to demonstrate him to be the true and promised Messias ; but had not our Saviour shewed them signs enough already ? What were all the miracles daily wrought before their eyes, but convincing signs of his divine power : But in-

fidelity, mixed with obstinacy, is never satisfied. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's carriage towards these obstinate pharisees, who persisted in their unbelief; *He sighed deeply in his spirit*, and mourned for the hardness of their hearts. Learn thence, That to grieve and mourn for the sins of others, to be affected with them, and deeply afflicted for them, is a gracious and Christ-like temper. It is not sufficient to make an outward shew of grieving for others sins, but we ought to lay them to heart, and to be inwardly afflicted for them. *Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit.* Observe, 3. A sharp reproof given by our Saviour to them. At the same time that our Saviour did inwardly grieve for the pharisees wickedness, he did openly reprove them for it. It is not sufficient that we mourn for the sins of others, but we must prudently reprove them, as occasion is offered, and our duty requireth. Observe, 4. The sin which the pharisees are reprov'd for; namely, for *seeking after a sign*: that is, for demanding new miracles, after he had wrought so many before their eyes, to prove the divinity of his person. Learn thence, That it is a sin for any to require new signs and miracles for the confirmation of that doctrine which has been already sufficiently confirmed by miracles; yea, an heinous sin, which deserveth a sharp reproof and censure. Observe lastly, Our Saviour's peremptory denial of the pharisees presumptuous request; *There shall be no sign given to this generation*: this is no such sign or miracle as they desire or would have; no sign or miracle shall be wrought at their motion and suit. Although after this, Christ of his own accord, and at his own pleasure, wrought many miracles before their eyes. Such as wilfully harden themselves against the light of their own consciences, are righteously delivered up to hardness of heart, and final impenitency. These hypocritical pharisees shut their eyes against the most convictive evidence; and they are given up to their own obstinacy; our Saviour left them, and departed.

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

14 Now *the disciples* had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves saying, *It is because we have no bread.*

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your hearts yet hardened?

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of

fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? and they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, how is it that ye do not understand.

Observe here, 1. How dull the disciples of Christ were under Christ's own teaching, and how apt to put a carnal sense upon his words. They apprehended he had spoken to them of the leaven of bread, what he intended of the leaven of the pharisees' doctrine. Observe, 2. The rebuke our Saviour gives his disciples for not understanding the sense and signification of what he spake. Christ is much offended with his own people, when he discerns blindness and ignorance in them, after more than ordinary means of knowledge enjoyed by them: *How is it that ye do not yet understand?* Observe, 3. The metaphor by which Christ sets forth the corrupt doctrines of the pharisees and Herodians. He compares it to leaven; partly for its sourness, and partly for its diffusiveness. Now *the leaven of Herod*, or the Herodians, is supposed to be this: That because Herod was made king of the Jews, and lived at the time when the Messiah was expected, there were those that maintained the opinion that he was the promised Messiah; which opinion Christ compares to leaven, because as that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread with which it is mixed, so false doctrine was not only evil and corrupt in itself, but apt to spread its contagion farther and farther, to the infecting of others with it. Learn thence, That error is as damnable as vice; and persons erroneous in judgment to be avoided, as well as those that are wicked in conversation; and he, that has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles, as he is of debauched practices. Observe, 4. Our Saviour does not command his disciples to separate from communion with the pharisees, and oblige them not to hear their doctrine but only beware of their errors; which they mixed with their doctrine. We may and ought to hold communion with a church, though erroneous in judgment, if not fundamentally erroneous. For separation from a church is not justifiable upon any other grounds than that which makes a separation between God and that church, which is either apostasy into gross idolatry, or in point of doctrine, into damnable heresy. Observe, 5. The fault observed by our Saviour in his disciples, hardness of heart; *Have ye your hearts yet hardened?* There may be, and oft-times is, some degree of hardness of heart in sincere Christians; but this is not a total hardness; it is lamented and humbled for, not indulged and delighted in. As Christ is grieved for the hardness of his people's hearts, so are they grieved also; it is both bitter and burdensome to them.

22 ¶ And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and

when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up : and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Here we have recorded a special miracle wrought by our Saviour at Bethsaida, in curing a blind man brought unto him. Where observe, 1. What evident proof the pharisees had of Christ's divine power and godhead : he had before caused the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk ; now he makes the blind to see ; yet did the pharisees obstinately resist all means of their conviction, and continued in their opposition to truth, to their inevitable and unutterable condemnation. Observe, 2. The wonderful humility, the great condescension of Jesus Christ towards this blind man ; *He took him by the hand, and led him, himself.* A great evidence of his condescending humility, and of his goodness and mercy ; shewing how ready and willing he was to help and heal him ; see here a singular pattern of humility and condescending grace and mercy in our dear Redeemer, in that he vouchsafed with his own hands to take and lead a poor blind man through the streets of Bethsaida, in the sight of all the people. Let us learn of him, *who was thus meek, and lowly in heart.* Observe, 3. Our Lord leads the blind man out of the town before he heals him, not in the town where all the people might take notice of it. Thereby teaching us to avoid all shew of ambition, all appearance of vain-glory ; in what we do. *Even as Christ sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him.* Observe, 4. The manner of the cure wrought upon this blind man ; it was gradual, and by degrees ; not instantaneous, and at once : he had first a dark, dim, and obscure sight, afterwards a clear, and a perfect sight. Christ thereby, gave evidence of his absolute and omnipotent power, that he was not tied to any particular means, or manner, or order of working ; but wrought his miracles variously, as he saw to be most fit for the glory of God, and the benefit of his people. Observe lastly, The charge, given by our Saviour not to publish this miracle in the town of Bethsaida : a place where Christ had so often preached, and wrought so many miracles ; but the inhabitants had obstinately and contemptuously undervalued and despised both his doctrine and miracles ; therefore we read, *Mat. xi. 21.*

that our Saviour denounced a "woe against Bethsaida, assuring her, that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for her." The higher a people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. Such a people as have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged.

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cesarea Philippi ; and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am ?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist : but some say, Elias, and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? and Peter answereth, and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31 And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter saying, Get thee behind me, Satan : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

These verses relate to us a conference which our Saviour had with his disciples, touching their own and others opinion of his person. Where observe, 1. The place where Christ and his disciples did confer ; it was in the way as they walked together. Teaching us our duty to take all occasions and opportunities for holy conference, to good discourse touching spiritual things, when in the house, when in the field, when travelling in the way. *Mat. iii. 16.* Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. Observe, 2. The conference itself : *Whom do men say that I am ?* That is, What do the common people think and speak of me ? Not as if Christ were ignorant what men said of him, or did vain-gloriously enquire after the opinion of the multitude concerning him ; but with an intention more firmly to settle and establish his disciples in the belief of his being the true and promised Messiah. The disciples tell him, That "some said, He was John the Baptist, others Elias, others one of the prophets." It is no new thing, it seems, to find diversity of judgments and opinions concerning Christ, and the affairs of his kingdom. When our Saviour was amongst men, who daily conversed with him, yet was there then a great diversity of opinions concerning him. Observe, 3. How St. Peter, as the mouth of all the apostles, and in their names make a full and open confession of Christ, acknowledging him to be

the true and promised Messiah; *Peter said, Thou art the Christ.* Whence note, That the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of the disciples' faith from seeing him to be truly and really God. 2. That Jesus the son of the virgin Mary, was the Christ, the true Messiah, or the person ordained by God to be the Mediator betwixt God and man: the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind; *Thou art the Christ.* Observe, 4. The charge and special injunction given by our Saviour to tell no man of him: that is, not commonly and openly to declare that he was the Son of God and the true Messiah; because he was now in his state of humiliation, and the glory of his divinity was to be concealed till his resurrection. Christ had his own fit times and proper seasons, in which he revealed the great mysteries of his kingdom to the world. Observe, 5. The great wisdom of our Saviour in acquainting his disciples with the near approach of his death and passion; thereby to prevent that scandal and offence which otherwise they might have taken at his sufferings; the better to fit and prepare them to bear that great trial, and to correct the error which they had entertained touching an earthly kingdom of Christ: that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince. Observe, 6. St. Peter's carriage towards Christ upon this occasion: *He took him aside;* and began to blame him for affirming that he must die. O how ready is flesh and blood to oppose all that tends to suffering! What need have we to be fortified against the temptations of our friends, as well as of our enemies! Satan sometimes makes use of good men as his instruments to do his work by, when they little suspect it. Little did Peter think, that Satan now set him on work to hinder the redemption of mankind, by dissuading Christ from dying. Observe, 7. With what indignation Christ rejects Peter's admonition; *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Christ heard Satan speaking in Peter; it was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it, therefore Christ calls Peter by Satan's name: They that will do the devil's work, shall have the devil's name too. He that would hinder the redemption of mankind is Satan, an adversary to mankind. From our Saviour's smart reproof given to Peter, we learn, That no respect to men's persons, or regard to their piety, must cause us to flatter them in their sins, or move us to speak favourably of their sins. As well as our Saviour loved Peter, he rebukes him severely. O Lord! so intent was thy heart upon the great work of our redemption, that thou couldst not bear the least word that should obstruct thee in it, or divert thee from it.

34 And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour recommends his religion to every one's election and choice, not attempting by force and violence to compel any person to the em-

bracing of it. *If any man will come after me:* that is, if any man chooses and resolves to be a Christian. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded; namely, self-denial, gospel-suffering, and gospel-service. 1. Self-denial; *Let him deny himself.* By which we are not to understand, either the denying of our senses in matters of faith, or the renouncing of our reason in the matters of religion; but a willingness to part with all our earthly comforts, and temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ, when called thereunto. 2. Gospel-suffering; *He must take up his cross.* An allusion to the Roman custom, that the malefactor who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Where note, That not the making of the cross, but the patient bearing of it, when God has made it, and laid it upon our shoulders, is the duty enjoined. *Let him take up his cross.* 3. Gospel-service; *Let him follow me,* says Christ: that is, obey my commands, and imitate my example. He must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming his life, by that rule and pattern. Observe, 3. The reasons urged by our Saviour to induce men to a willingness to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; "He that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that is willing to lose his life for the gospel's sake, the same shall find it." Intimating to us, 1. That the love of this temporal life is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and renounce his holy religion. And, 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, requires it at our hand.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Our Saviour had shewn in the former verses the great danger of seeking to save our temporal life, by exposing to hazard our eternal life. This he confirms in the words before us by a double argument: the first drawn from the excellency of eternal life, or the life of the soul; the second from the irrecoverableness of this loss, or the impossibility of redeeming the loss of the soul by any way or means whatsoever. *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Learn, 1. That Almighty God has intrusted every one of us with a soul of inestimable worth and preciousness, capable of being saved or lost, and that to all eternity. 2. That the gain of the whole world is not comparable with the loss of one precious soul: the soul's loss is an inconceivable, irrecompensable, and irrecoverable loss.

38 Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him, also, shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

That is, whosoever shall deny or disown me, either in my person, my gospel, or my members, for any fear or favour of man, he shall with shame be disowned and eternally rejected by me at the great day. There are two passions that make persons disown Christ and religion in the duty of temptation; namely, fear and shame. Many good men have been overcome by the former, as St. Peter, and others; but we find not any good man in scripture guilty of the latter: namely, that denied Christ out of shame. This argues a rotten, unsound, and corrupt heart. If any man thinks it beneath his honour and quality to own the opposed truths and despised members of Jesus Christ, he will think it much more beneath him, his honour and dignity, to own them at the great day. Learn hence, That it is not sufficient that we own Christ by believing in him, but we must honour him with an outward professing of him also. Secondly, That such as are ashamed of Christ's doctrine or members, are ashamed of Christ himself. Thirdly, That such as either for fear dare not, or for shame will not, own the doctrine of Christ, or the members of Christ now, shall find Christ ashamed to own and confess them at the great day. "Whosoever is ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and wicked generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

CHAP. IX.

AND he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

There is a threefold sense and interpretation given of these words by expositors; 1. Some refer the words to the times of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was spread and propagated far and near, and the kingdom of God come with power. Learn hence, that where the gospel is powerfully preached, and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom. 2. Others understand these words of Christ's coming, and exercising his kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem: which some of the apostles then standing by lived to see. 3. Others (as most agreeable to the context) understand the words as relating to our Saviour's transfiguration. As if he had said, *Some of you*, meaning Peter, James, and John, shall shortly see me on mount Tabor, in such splendour and glory, as shall be a prælude, a shadow and representation of that glory which I shall appear in, when I come to judge the world at the great day. And whereas our Saviour says not, there be some standing here which shall not die, but, *which shall not taste of death*; this implies two things; 1. That after they had seen his transfiguration; they must taste of death as well as others. 2. That they should but taste of it, and no more. From hence learn, 1. That the faithful servants and disciples of Christ must at length, in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death as well as others. 2. That although they must taste, yet that they shall but taste of death; they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup; though they fall by the hand of death, yet

shall they not be overcome by it; but in the very fall get victory over it.

2 ¶ And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

Here we have the history of our Saviour's transfiguration, when he laid, as it were, the garments of our frail humanity aside for a little time, assuming to himself the robes of majesty and glory, to demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity; for this divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature; and also an emblem of that glory which he and his disciples, all his faithful servants and followers, shall enjoy together in heaven.

3 And his raiment became shining exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elias, with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5 And Peter answered, and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6 For he wist not what to say: for they were sore afraid.

7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.

8 And suddenly when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Observe here, 1. That to confirm the disciples' faith in the truth of Christ's divine nature, he was pleased to suffer the rays of his divinity to dart forth before their eyes, so far as they were able to bear it. His face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment with such a glorious lustre, as did at once both delight and dazzle the eyes of the disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witnesses of his glorious transfiguration; his three disciples, Peter, James and John. But why disciples? Why three disciples? Why these three? 1. Why disciples? Because this transfiguration was a type and shadow of his glory in heaven: Christ vouchsafes therefore the earnest and first fruits of that glory only to saints, upon whom he intended to bestow the full harvest in due time. 2. Why three disciples? Because three were sufficient to witness the truth and reality of this mira-

cle. Judah was unworthy of this favour; yet lest he should murmur or be discontented, others are left out as well as he. But, 3. Why these three, rather than others? Probably, 1. Because these three were more eminent for grace, zeal, and love towards Christ. Now the most eminent manifestations of glory are made to those that are most excelling in grace. 2. These three disciples were witnesses of Christ's agony and passion; to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision upon mount Tabor fitted them to abide the terror of mount Calvary. Observe, 3. The glorious attendants upon our Saviour, at his transfiguration. They were *two, two men*; and those two men, *Moses and Elias*. This being but a glimpse of Christ's glory, not a full manifestation of it, only two of the glorified saints attend at it. These two attendants are not two angels, but two men; because men were more nearly concerned than angels in what was done. But why Moses and Elias, rather than other men? 1. Because Moses was the giver of the law, and Elias the chief of the prophets. Now both these attending upon Christ, did shew the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their accomplishment and fulfilling in them. 2. Because these two were the most laborious servants of Christ, both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore are highly honoured by him. For, *Those that honour him, he will honour*. Observe, 4. The carriage and demeanour of the disciples upon this great occasion: 1. They supplicate Jesus, not Moses and Elias; they make no suit to them, but to Christ only: *Master, it is good being here*. O! what a ravishing comfort and satisfaction is the communion and fellowship of the saints! But the presence of Christ amongst them, renders their joys transporting. 2. They proffer their service to farther their continuance of what they did enjoy; *Let us make three tabernacles*. Saints will stick at no pains or cost for the enjoyment of Christ's presence and his people's company. Learn hence, That a glimpse of heaven's glory is sufficient to wrap a soul in extacy, and to make it out of love with worldly company. 3. That we are too apt to desire more of heaven upon earth than God will allow. We would have the heavenly glory come down to us; but are unwilling by death to go up to that. Observe, 5. How a cloud was put before the disciples' eyes, when the divine glory was manifested to them; partly to allay the lustre and resplendency of that glory which they were swallowed up with: the glory of heaven is insupportable in this sinful state; we cannot bear it unveiled: and partly to hinder their farther prying and looking into that glory. We must be content to behold God through a cloud *darkly here, ere long we shall see him face to face*. Observe, 6. The testimony given out of the cloud, by God the father concerning Jesus Christ his Son; *This is my beloved Son, hear him*. Whence note, 1. The dignity of his person; he is my Son: For nature co essential, and for duration co-eternal, with his Father. 2. The endearment of his relation; he is *my beloved Son*; because of his conformity to me, and compliance with me. Likeness is the cause of love; and an union and harmony of wills, causes a mutual endearing of affections. 3. The authority of his doctrine; *Hear ye him*; not Moses and Elias, who were servants, but Christ my Son, whom I have commissioned to be the great Prophet and Teacher of my church. Therefore, adore him as my Son, believe

in him as your Saviour, and hear him as your lawgiver. The obedient ear honours Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean.

11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12 And he answered, and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the Son of man that he must suffer many things; and be set at nought.

13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Observe here, 1. The strict injunction given by Christ to his disciples not to publish or proclaim this glorious vision at his transfiguration: till after his resurrection; because being now in a state of humiliation, he would have his divine majesty and glory veiled and concealed. Learn hence, That the divine glory of Christ's person, as God, was not to be manifested suddenly, and all at once, but gradually, and by steps. First, more obscurely, by his miracles, by the forced acknowledgments of devils, by the free confession of his disciples, and by the glorious vision of his transfiguration; but the more clear and full, the more public and open, manifestation of his divine glory, was at the time of his resurrection and ascension. Observe, 2. The disciples' obedience to Christ's injunction, touching the concealing of his transfiguration till after his resurrection; "They kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Not that they questioned the resurrection in general, but Christ's resurrection in particular, because his resurrection did suppose his death; and they could not conceive how the Messiah, whom they erroneously supposed must be a temporal prince, should suffer death at the hands of men. Observe, 3. The question which the disciples put to Christ, how the observation of the Jewish doctors holds good; namely, that Elias must come before the Messiah came; we see the Messiah, but no Elias. Our Saviour answers, *That Elias was come already*; not Elias in person, but one in the spirit and power of Elias, to wit, John the Baptist, who was prophesied of under the name of Elias; there being a great resemblance between the Elias of the Old Testament, and of the New, viz. John the Baptist, they were both men of great zeal for God and Religion, they were both undaunted reprovers of the faults of princes, and they were both implacably hated and perse-

cut for the same. Thence learn, That hatred and persecution, even unto death, has often been the lot and portion of such persons who have had the courage and zeal to reprove the faults of princes. "Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed."

14 ¶ And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And, straightway, all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him, saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered, and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answered him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him. And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came into him? and he said, Of a child.

22 And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24 And, straightway, the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And the Spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him; and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could we not cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Observe here, 1. The person brought to Christ for help and healing; one bodily possessed by Satan who had made him deaf and dumb from his childhood, and oft-times cast him into the fire and water, but rather to torment than to dispatch him. O how does Satan, that malicious tyrant, rejoice in doing hurt to the bodies, as well as the souls, of mankind! Lord abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. How great is thy goodness, in preserving us from the power and malice of evil spirits! and how watchful is thy providence over us to preserve us, when Satan is seeking, by all imaginable means and methods, to destroy us! Observe, 2. The person that represents his sad condition to our Saviour; his compassionate father who kneeled down, and cried out: need will make a person both humble and eloquent. Every one has a tongue to speak for himself, happy is he that keeps a tongue for others. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time; Satan had got possession! of his person very young, in his youth; nay in his childhood; and O how hard was it to cast him out, after such long possession! The disciples could not do it, with all their power and prayers: and when our Saviour himself, by the power of his Godhead, did dispossess him, it was with foaming and rending that he left him. Thus, when Satan gets possession of person's hearts in their youth, O how hard will it be to cast him out! It will put the soul to great grief, great pain, great sorrow of heart. Satan will endeavour to hold his own, and keep the sinner his slave and vassal, if all the power of hell can keep him. Lord! convince young persons, that it is easier to keep Satan out, than it is to cast him out, of the possession of their hearts. Observe, 4. The physicians which this distressed person is brought unto. First to the disciples, and then to Jesus. We never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we despair of the creature's help. But why could not the disciples cast him out? Christ tells them, because of their unbelief; that is, because of the weakness of their faith, not the total want of faith. Whence learn, That secret unbelief may lie hid and undiscerned in the heart, which neither others nor ourselves may take notice of until some trial doth discover it. Observe, 5. The poor man's humble request, and Christ's gracious reply. *If thou canst do any thing, help me*, says the father: *If thou canst believe, all things are possible*, says our Saviour. Note thence, That the fault is not in Christ, but in ourselves, if we receive not that mercy from him, which we desire and need. There is no deficiency in Christ's power, the defect lies in our faith. Hereupon the man

cries out with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." If these were tears of joy for the truth of his faith, then we may gather, that the lowest degree and least measure of faith is matter of joy unspeakable to the owner and possessor of it: if these were tears of sorrow for the weakness of his faith, then we may collect, that the remains of unbelief in the children of God do cost them many tears: they are the burden and sorrow of gracious souls. "The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." Observe, 6. With what facility and ease our Saviour cast out this stubborn devil, that had so long possessed this poor child, even with a word speaking. How long soever Satan has kept possession of a soul, Christ can eject and cast him out both easily and speedily; one word of Christ's mouth is sufficient to help us out of all distress, both bodily and spiritual. Yet did our Lord suffer the wicked spirit to rage and rend the child before he went out of him; not from any delight in the poor child's misery, but that the multitude, seeing the desperateness, of the case, might the more admire the power of Christ in his deliverance. Observe, 7. The sovereign power and absolute authority, which Christ had even here upon earth, when in his state of humiliation, over the devil and his angels; he commands him to go out, and enter no more into the child, and is obeyed. This was a proof and demonstration of the Godhead of our Saviour, that he had power and authority over devils, to command and over rule them, to curb and restrain them at his pleasure. And whereas Christ commands the devil not only to come out, but to enter no more into the person; it implies, that Satan being cast out of his hold, earnestly desires to enter in again to recover his hold, and to regain his possession; but if Christ says, Enter no more, Satan shall obey his voice. Observe, 8. The disciples enquire into the reasons why they could not cast this stubborn devil out, according to the power which he had given them to work miracles. Christ tells them it was, 1. Because of *their unbelief*; by which understand the weakness of their faith, not their total want of faith. 2. Because they did not in this extraordinary case apply themselves to the use of extraordinary means; namely, *Prayer and fasting*. Learn hence, First, That in extraordinary cases, where the necessities either of soul or body do require it, recourse must be had to the use of extraordinary means; one of which is an importunate application unto God by solemn prayer. Secondly, That fasting and prayer are two special means of Christ's own appointment, for the enabling of his people victoriously to overcome Satan, and cast him out of ourselves or others. We must set an edge upon our faith by prayer, and upon our prayer by fasting.

30 ¶ And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him: and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Observable it is, how frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings; and as the time of his sufferings drew near, he did more frequently warn them of it. But it was all little enough to warn them against the scandal of the cross, and to reconcile their thoughts to a suffering condition. The disciples had taken up the common opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and as such to reign here upon earth, and they knew not how to reconcile this with his "being delivered up into the hands of men that should kill him; and yet they were afraid to ask him concerning this matter." Now from Christ's frequent forewarning his disciples of approaching suffering, we may gather, That we can never hear either too often, or too much, of the doctrine of the cross, nor be too frequently instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering state. As Christ went by his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers likewise.

33 ¶ And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34 But they held their peace. For by the way they had disputed among themselves who *should be* the greatest.

35 And he sat down and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

It may justly seem a wonder, that when our blessed Saviour discoursed so frequently with his disciples about his sufferings, they should at the same time be disputing among themselves about precedence and pre-eminency, which of them should be the greatest, the first in place, and the highest in dignity and honour. But from this instance we may learn, That the holiest and best of men are subject to pride and ambition, prone to covet worldly dignity and greatness, ready to catch at the bait of honour, to affect a precedence before, and a superiority over, others. The apostles themselves were touched, if not tainted, with the itch of ambition. To cure which, our Saviour preaches to them the doctrine of humility. Where observe, 1. Our Lord doth not say, that he is first, but "he that desireth to be first, shall be last of all, and servant of all." Teaching us,

That all persons in general, and ministers in particular, ought not to seek out places of dignity and pre-eminency for themselves, but be sought out for them: he that is first in seeking them, usually least deserves them, and last obtains them; "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all." Observe, 2. Our Saviour teaches his disciples humility by the type and example of a little child, which he sets before them as the proper emblem of humility; shewing them that they ought to be as free from ambition as a young child, which affects nothing of precedency or superiority. Such as are of highest eminency in the church of Christ, ought to be adorned with humility, and look upon themselves as lying under the greatest obligations to be most eminently useful and serviceable for the church's good. Observe, 3. How exceedingly dear and precious such persons are to Christ, who resemble little children in true humility and lowliness of mind; assuring the world, that whatsoever kindness or respect they shew to them, he accounts shewn to himself; *He that receiveth them, says Christ, receiveth me.* So near is the union, so dear the relation, betwixt Christ and his members, that whatever good or evil is done to them, he reckons it as done unto himself.

38 And John answered him saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us, is on our part.

41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

The Evangelist here sets down a conference betwixt our Saviour Christ and St. John his disciple. Where observe, 1. St. John's relation of a matter of fact to Christ, namely, his forbidding one to cast out devils in Christ's name, that did not follow Christ as they did, being his professed disciples. Though only the disciples that followed Christ had a commission to work miracles, yet there were others, no enemies to Christ, who, in imitation of the disciples, did attempt to do the like; and God was pleased, for the honour of his Son, in whose name they cast out devils, to give them sometimes success. Almighty God may, and some-

times doth, give success to such actions and enterprizes as are good in themselves, though undertaken by persons that have no lawful call or warrant from God to do them. However, it was no small confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that Christ's name was thus powerful, even among those that did not follow him, and therefore could do nothing by compact with him. Observe, 2. The action of the disciples towards this person; *We forbade him.* This shewed, 1. Their ignorance in supposing that none could be true disciples, nor work miracles, but such as followed them; *We forbade him because he followed not us.* 2. Their rashness in forbidding him of their own heads, before they had consulted Christ about it. 3. Their envy and emulation in that they were grieved and discontented at this person's casting out devils because he was not a follower of them. O, the imperfect composition of the best of saints! how much weakness, infirmity, and corruption doth John the beloved disciple discover upon this occasion! the sin of envy and emulation against the gifts of God in others, is very natural to men, and to good men; yea, to the best of men. It is as difficult to look upon other men's gifts without envy, as to look upon our own without pride. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's answer and reply: *Forbid him not.* Because our Saviour knew that his enterprize of casting out devils in his name, would in some manner and measure redound to the glory of his name, although he undertook the matter without sufficient warrant from Christ. We ought not to censure and condemn those who do that which is good in itself, though they fail in the manner of it, and in the means they use for effecting it. Observe, 4. What encouragement our Saviour gives the world to be kind to his friends and followers: he assures them that *even a cup of cold water given for his sake, to such as profess his name, shall not miss of a reward.* Learn thence, That the least office of love and respect, of kindness and charity, shewn to any of the ministers or members of Jesus Christ, for his sake, is represented as done unto himself, and shall be rewarded by himself. Observe, 5. He shall gain that which he cannot lose, by parting with that which he could not keep. Observe, 6. What an heinous and grievous sin it is to scandalize or offend any of the disciples of Jesus Christ; he will most severely judge and punish such as give offence to them, by any wrong or injury done unto them, both in this life and the next. "It were better a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

In the former verse our Saviour dissuaded from the sin of scandal, or giving offence to the serious and sincere Christians, threatening a very grievous judgment against such as should any ways offend them; now in these six verses he prescribes a remedy against that and all other sins, namely, by avoiding all occasions that lead to sin. Here observe, 1. The admonition or warning given by Christ unto us, to remove far from us all occasion of sin, though ever so dear unto us. We are not to understand the command literally, as if it was our duty to maim our bodily members, but metaphorically to cut off all occasions that may betray us into sin. Hence note, That as sin may be avoided, it is our duty to avoid whatever leads unto it, or may be the instrument and occasion of it. Observe, 2. A reason enforcing the admonition: this is drawn from the benefit and advantage that will come by cutting of such occasions of sin. It will further us in our attainment of eternal life, and prevent our being cast into hell-fire. Now our Saviour affirms, that it is better for a man to enter into life with the love of all those things that are dear and precious to him in this world, rather than to go into hell with the fruition and enjoyment of them. Learn hence, That a diligent and daily care to avoid sin, and all occasions that lead unto it, will be a special means to escape the torments of hell, and further us in our attainments of heaven, and eternal life. Observe, 3. The description which our Saviour gives of the torments of hell: first, by its extremity; it is like a *gnawing worm*, and a *consuming fire*. Secondly, and by its eternity, a worm that *never dieth*, and a fire that is *never quenched*. Where note, That the remembrance of things past, the experience of things present, and expectation of things to come, are the bitings of the worm of conscience, at every bite whereof damned souls give a dreadful shriek; such as will not hear the voice of conscience, shall feel, and that to purpose, the sting of conscience. Learn hence, That there is most certainly a place and state of punishment and torment in another world for wicked men to suffer in, upon the score of sin committed in this world. Secondly, That the punishment and torments of the wicked in hell are intolerable and indeterminable, of exquisite pain, and endless duration: "Their worm never dieth, and their fire is not quenched."

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

"Every one shall be salted with fire;" that is, every one of them mentioned in the foregoing verses, who refuses to

"cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye;" that is, to mortify their bosom lusts, and beloved corruptions, which are as dear as a right hand or a right eye: every such wicked and unmortified person shall be salted with fire; that is, thrown into hell-fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; as our Saviour speaks, v. 4. And their being salted with fire, imports and implies, that as to their beings they shall be preserved, even as salt preserves things from corruption, that they may be the objects of the eternal wrath of God. So that for sinners to be salted with fire, is to be given up to everlasting destruction. Learn hence, that all such unsavoury sinners as indulge their corrupt lusts and affections, shall be salted with fire; that is, given up to everlasting destruction in hell-fire! *but every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*; that is, every Christian who has given up himself a real sacrifice unto God, shall be salted, not with fire, but with salt, to be preserved and kept savoury. The grace of mortification is that to the soul, which salt is to the body; it preserves it from putrefaction, and renders it savoury. Learn hence, 1. That every Christian in this life ought to be a spiritual sacrifice or oblation unto God. 2. That there is a putrid and corrupt part in every sacrifice, in every Christian, which must be purged out, and the sacrifice purified and cleansed from. 3. That the grace of mortification is the true salt which must clarify the soul, and with which every sacrifice must be salted, that will be a savoury offering unto God; "Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

50 Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Our blessed Saviour here compares Christians in general, and his ministers in particular, unto salt, for a double reason. First, Because it is the nature of salt to preserve things from corruption and putrefaction, and to render them savoury and pleasant. Thus are the ministers of Christ to labour and endeavour by the purity of their doctrine, to sweeten putrifying sinners: that they may become savoury unto God and man, and be kept from being fly-blown with errors and false doctrines. Secondly, Because salt has an acrimony, a piercing power in it, which subdues the whole lump, and turns it into its own nature. Such a piercing power is there in the ministry of the word, that it subdues the whole man to the obedience of itself; "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another;" that is, let all persons, especially ministers, retain a seasoning virtue in themselves, that they may sweeten and season others, even all that they converse with; and as salt has an uniting power, and knits the parts of the body salted together, so the upholding of union and peace one with another, will declare that ye have salt in yourselves. Learn hence, That it is the duty of all Christians, but especially of the ministers of the gospel, to maintain brotherly concord and agreement among themselves, both as an argument of their sincerity, and an ornament to their profession.

CHAP. X.

AND he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea, by the farther side of Jordan; and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2 ¶ And the pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him?

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this *cause* shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife:

8 And they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

The first verse of this chapter acquaints us with the great labour and pains our Saviour took in the exercise of his ministry, travelling from place to place, in an hot country, and on foot, to preach the gospel, when he was here upon earth; Teaching all persons, but especially ministers, by his example, to be willing to undergo pains and labour, even unto much weariness, in the service of God, and in the duties of their calling. For this is God's ordinance, that every one should feel the burden of his calling, and painfulness of it. But, Lord, how nice and delicate are some labourers in thy vineyard, who are willing to do nothing but what they can do with ease; they cannot endure

to think of labouring unto weariness, but are sparing of their pains, for fear of shortening their days and hastening their ends! Whereas the lamp of our lives can never be better spent, or burnt out, than by the lighting others to heaven. The following verses acquaints us with an ensnaring question which the pharisees put to our Saviour concerning the matter of divorce, concluding, that they should entrap him in his answer, whatever it was; if he denied the lawfulness of divorce, then they would charge him with contradicting Moses who allowed it. If he affirmed it, then they would condemn him for contradicting his own doctrine, St. Matt. v. 32, for favouring men's lusts, and complying with the Jews, who upon every slight and frivolous occasion, put away their wives from them. But such was the wisdom of our Saviour in all his answers to the ensnaring pharisees: that neither their wit nor malice could lay hold on any thing to entangle him in his talk. Observe therefore, The piety and prudence of our Saviour's answer to the pharisees; he refers them to the first institution of marriage, when God made husband and wife one flesh, to the intent that matrimonial love might be both incommunicable and indissoluble; and accordingly asks them, *What did Moses command you?* Thereby teaching us, that the best means for deciding all doubts, and resolving all controversies, about matters of religion, is to have recourse unto the scripture, or the written word of God: *What did Moses command you?* Observe farther, How our Saviour, to confute the pharisees, and convince them of the unlawfulness of divorce, used by the Jews, lays down the first institution of marriage, and shews them first the author, next the time, then the end of the institution. The author, God, *What God has joined together, &c.*

Marriage is an ordinance of God's own appointment, as the ground and foundation of all sacred and civil society. The time of the institution was, in the beginning. Marriage is almost as old as the world, as old as nature itself; there was no sooner one person, but God divided him into two; and no sooner were there two, but he united them in one. And the end of the institution of marriage, Christ declares was this, That there might be not only an intimacy and nearness, but also an inseparable union and oneness, by means of this endearing relation: the conjugal knot is tied so close, that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature. Stricter is the tie betwixt husband and wife, than that betwixt parent and child, according to God's own appointment. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." And whereas our Saviour adds, *what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.* Two things are hereby intimated to us, 1. That God is the author of the close and intimate union which is betwixt man and wife in the married condition. 2. That it is not in the power of man to untie or dissolve that union which God has made betwixt man and his wife in the married state; yea, it is a great sin to advise unto, or endeavour after, the separation of them. Observe lastly, Our Saviour's private conference with the disciples, after his public disputation with the pharisees, about this matter of divorce. He tells his disciples, and in them he tells all Christians to the end of the world, that it is utterly unlawful for man and wife to be separated by divorcement one from another, for any cause whatsoever, except only for the sin of adultery committed by either of them.

after the marriage. Learn hence, That according to the word and will of God, nothing can violate the bonds of marriage, and justify a divorce betwixt man and wife, save only the defiling of the marriage-bed, by adultery and uncleanness. This is the only case in which man and wife may lawfully part; and being for this cause parted, whether they may afterwards marry again to other persons has been much disputed; but that the innocent and injured person, whether man or woman (for there is an equal right on both sides) may not marry again, seems very unreasonable; for why should one suffer for another's fault?

13 ¶ And they brought young children to him that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them.

Observe here, A solemn action performed; children are brought to Christ to be blessed by him. Where note, 1. The persons brought, children, young children, sucking children as the word imports, St. Luke xviii. 15. *They brought them in their arms*, not led them by the hands. 2. The person they are brought unto, Jesus Christ. But for what end? Not to baptize them, but to bless them; the parents looking upon Christ as a prophet, a great prophet, the great prophet, do bring their infants to him, that they might receive the benefit of his blessing and prayers. Whence learn, 1. That infants are capable of benefit by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children, to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. If infants be capable of benefit by Christ, if capable of his blessing on earth and presence in heaven, if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory, then may they be baptized; for they that are in covenant, have a right to the seal of the covenant. If Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater, what reason have ministers to deny them the benefit of baptism, which is the less?

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Observe here, 1. A person addressing himself to Christ with an important question in his mouth. This person was

a young man, a rich man, and a ruler; a young man in the prime of his age, a rich man in the fulness of his wealth, and a ruler in the prime of his authority and power. From whence learn, That for young men, rich men, especially noblemen, to inquire the way to salvation, is very commendable, but very rare. Observe, 2. As the person addressing, so the manner of the address, he came running and kneeled to Christ. Where observe his voluntariness, he came of himself, not drawn by other's importunity, but drawn by his own personal afflictions. And his readiness, he came running. This shewed his zeal and forwardness to meet with Christ, and be resolved by him. And, lastly, his humility; he kneeled to him, as an eminent prophet and teacher, not knowing him to be the Son of God. Observe, 3. The address itself, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness to do some good thing, in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That the light of nature, or natural religion, teaches men that good works are necessary to salvation; or that some good thing must be done by them, who at death expect eternal life. It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal life.

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is God,*

As if Christ had said, *Why callest thou me good*, when thou dost not believe or own me to be God? *For there is none good*, that is, essentially or originally good, absolutely and immutably good, but God only; nor any derivately good, but he that receiveth his goodness from God also: there is no mere man that is absolutely and perfectly good of himself, but by participation and derivation from God only. See the note on St. Matt. xix. 17.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

Observe here, That the duties which our Saviour instances in, are the duties of the second table, which hypocrites are most failing in. But nothing is a better evidence of our unfeigned love to God, than the sincere performance of our duty to our neighbours. Love to man is a fruit and testimony of our love to God; "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. Learn hence, that such as are defective in the duties of the second table, charity and justice, do make but a counterfeit shew of religion, though they pretend to the highest measures and degrees of love to God. Here note, That there are two ways of injuring our neighbour, which ought to be avoided; namely, 1. By theft; and this either privately and clandestinely, without the knowledge of the owner; or openly and by force, against the consent of the owner: both these are forbidden in the eighth commandment. 2. By secret and cunning devices,

where the law and a pretence of right is made use of to cover the injury. This is forbidden in the tenth commandment, and here expressed by, *Thou shalt not defraud*. And surely all such endeavours to defraud, must shew a very covetous mind inclining a person against the dictates of his own conscience, to defraud another of his right.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

This assertion of the young man might be very true, according to the pharisees' sense and interpretation of the law, which only condemned the gross outward act, not the inward lust and motion of the heart. An outside obedience to the law this young man had performed; this made him think well of himself, and conclude the goodness of his own condition. Learn hence, How prone men are to think the best of themselves, and to have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God; *All these things have I kept from my youth*. It is a natural corruption in men to think too well of themselves, and of their own goodness and righteousness before God: but it is very dangerous and fatal so to do.

21 Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.

Observe here, 1. Christ's compassion towards this young man. He loved him with a love of pity and compassion, with a love of courtesy and respect. There may be some very amiable and lovely qualities in natural and unregenerate men; and goodness, in what kind or degree soever it is, doth attract and draw forth Christ's love towards a person. If Christ did love civility, what respect has he for sincere sanctity. Observe, 2. Our Lord's admonition. *One thing thou lackest*, which was true self-denial, in renouncing the sin of covetousness, and the inordinate love of worldly wealth. We ought, upon God's call, to maintain such a readiness of mind, as to be willing to part with all for God's sake which is dear unto us in this world. Observe, 3. Our Lord's injunction, *Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor*. This was not a common, but a special precept, belonging particularly to this young man. It was a commandment of trial given to him, like that given to Abraham, Gen. xxii. To convince him of his corrupt confidence in his riches; yet it is thus far of general use to us all, to teach us to condemn worldly possessions, as to be willing to part with them when they hinder our happiness and salvation. It follows, *And take up the cross*; an allusion to the Roman custom,

when the malefactor was to be crucified, he bore his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. It is not the making, but the patient bearing of the cross, which is our duty. Learn, That all Christ's followers should prepare their shoulders for Christ's cross. To bear the cross, implies faithfulness and integrity without shifting, patience and submission without murmuring, joy and cheerfulness without fainting. Observe, 4. The effect which our Saviour's admonition had upon this young person: *He was sad and grieved at that saying*. Thence note, 1. That carnal men are sad, and exceeding sorrowful, when they cannot win heaven in their own way. 2. That such as are wedded to the world, will renounce Christ rather than the world, when the world and Christ stand in competition.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who can then be saved?

27 And Jesus, looking upon them, saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

From this discourse of our holy Lord's concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulty that attends rich men in their way to heaven, we may collect and gather, first, That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven than other men. It is difficult to withdraw their affection from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their abundance. It is difficult to depend entirely upon God in a rich condition: for the rich man's wealth is his strong tower. Secondly, That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men; who by placing their trust, and reposing their confidence in riches, do render themselves incapable of the kingdom of God. Observe, 3. The proverbial speech which our Saviour makes use of to set forth the difficulty of a rich man's salvation: *It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye*. This was a proverb among the Jews, signifying a thing of great difficulty, next to an impossibility; and it implies thus much, That it is not only a very great difficulty, but an utter impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth, and place their confidence therein, to be saved, without an ex-

traordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for God to make a rich man happy, because he thinks himself happy without God. Observe, 4. The disciples are affected with wonder and admiration at this doctrine of our Saviour's, and cry out, *Who then can be saved?* Learn thence, That such are the special and peculiar difficulties which lie in the rich man's way to salvation, that their getting to heaven is matter of wonder and admiration to the disciples of Christ. Observe, 5. How our Saviour resolves this doubt, by telling his disciples, That what was impossible with men, was possible with God; implying, That it is impossible for any man, rich or poor, by his own natural strength, to get to heaven. And, 2. That when we are discouraged with the sense of our own impotency, we should consider the power of God, and fix our faith upon it; *With God all things are possible.*

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.

31 But many *that are first shall be last; and the last, first.*

The apostles having heard our Saviour's command to sell all and give to the poor, St. Peter, in the name of the rest, tells Christ, that *they had left all to follow him*. Where note, How Peter magnifies that little which he had left for Christ, and ushers it in with a note of admiration, *Lo! we have left all.* Learn hence, That though it be very little that we suffer for Christ, and have to forsake upon his account, yet are we apt to magnify and extol it, as if it were some great matter: *Behold, we have left all, and followed thee.* Observe next, Our Lord's kind and gracious answer, that those that leave all to follow him, shall be no losers by him, we may be losers for Christ, we shall never be losers by him, for whatever we part with in this world for the sake of Christ, "Houses or lands, brethren or sisters, we shall receive an hundred-fold now in this life." But how so? *Non formaliter, sed eminenter; non in specie, sed in valore:* "Not in kind, but in equivalency," not an hundred brethren, sisters, or lands in kind, but he shall enjoy that in God, which all creatures would be to him if they were multiplied an hundred times; and the gifts and graces, the comforts and consolations of the Holy Spirit, shall be an hundred times better portion than any thing we can part with for the sake of Christ. For the sense of those words, *The first shall be last, &c.* see the note, on Matt. xx. 19.

32 ¶ And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid. And he took

again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.

33 *Saying,* Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.

This is at least the third time that Christ had acquainted his disciples with his approaching sufferings. The first time he told his disciples of his death in general; the second time he declares the means, by treason; now he tells them the manner, by crucifying him: all this he did to prevent their dejection at his sufferings. Learn hence, That it is highly necessary that the doctrine of the cross be often preached to us, that so being armed with expectation of sufferings before they come, we may be the less dismayed and disheartened when they come. Our Lord's forewarning his disciples so frequently of his death and sufferings, was to fore arm them with expectations of his sufferings, and with preparation for their own. Observe farther, Who were the persons that were the instrumental causes of our Saviour's death, they were both Jews and Gentiles: "The Son of man shall be delivered to the chief priests, and they shall deliver him to the Gentiles." As both Jews and Gentiles had a hand in the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, so are they by faith capable of an interest in the merit of his death, and in the virtue and efficacy of his sufferings. Christ offered up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it.

35 And James and John the sons of Zebedee came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand and on

my left hand, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given* to them for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Observe here, 1. The ambitious suit and request of the two apostles, James and John, for dignity and superiority. "Grant that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory, or in thy kingdom." Where observe, That by Christ's kingdom and glory, they understood an earthly temporal kingdom; for of that sort the Jews did expect the kingdom of the Messiah should be, and the disciples themselves were tainted with the common errors. Learn hence, That ambition and inordinate desire of worldly honour and dignity, is a sin very natural and incident to the best of men: who can wonder to see some sparks of ambition in the holiest of God's ministers, when Christ's own apostles were not free from aspiring thoughts, even when they lay in the bosom of our Saviour! Observe, 2. Both the unseasonableness and unreasonableness of this request made by James and John; Christ speaks of his sufferings to them, and they sue for dignity and great places from him. *In optimis non nihil est pessimi*: the holiest, the wisest, and the best of men are not wholly free from passionate infirmities; who could have thought that when our Saviour had been preaching the doctrine of the cross to his disciples, that they should at the same time be seeking and suing to him for secular dignity and honour, pre-eminence and power? but the best of men are but men; none are in a state of perfection on this side heaven. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's answer to his disciples ambitious request, and the course which he takes to cool their ambition; he tells them, they must expect here, not crowns on their heads, but a cross on their backs; they must first taste of his sufferings, before they partake of his glory, and those who suffer most for Christ shall partake of the highest dignity and glory from him. Observe, 4. The presumptuous confidence which the apostles had of their own strength and ability for sufferings; *Are ye able, says Christ, to drink of my cup? We are able, says the disciples*. Alas! poor men, when it came to the trial, they all cowardly forsook him and fled. Those that are least acquainted with suffering, are usually the most confident undertakers. See note on Matt. xx. 22, 23.

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister.

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

To the end that our blessed Saviour might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in the apostles' minds, he tells them that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to gospel ministers, who ought to carry themselves with humility and condescension one towards another. Not that Christ directs to a parity and equality amongst his ministers, but only condemns the elevation of superiority, and the love of pre-eminence. Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of Christ ought to be so far from effecting a domination and superiority over their brethren, that in imitation of their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Observe, 2. That such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminence and superiority are most unfit for it; and they deserve it best who seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honour which the ministers of Christ should chiefly, yea only, affect, is in another world; and the way to be greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble, mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem. See note on Matt. xx. 28.

46 ¶ And they came to Jericho. And as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway-side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me*.

49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called; and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, arose and came to Jesus.

51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, That I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

This chapter concludes with the recital of a famous miracle wrought by our blessed Saviour upon blind Bartimeus, in the sight of a great multitude which followed him. Where note, 1. The blind man's faith, in acknow-

ledging Jesus to be the Messiah; for so much the title of the Son of David signified. 2. His fervency, in crying so earnestly to Christ for mercy and healing. *Have mercy upon me thou Son of David.* A true sense of want will make the soul cry unto Christ with earnestness and importunity. Observe, 3. The great compassion and condescension of Christ towards this poor blind man, he stood still, he called him, and enlightened his eyes. A mighty instance of Christ's divine power: he that can open blind eyes with a touch of his finger, and that by his own power, is really God; his touch is an omnipotent touch. Observe, 4. Although Christ well knew the condition of this blind man, yet before he will restore his sight, he must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for help and healing. Christ knows all his creatures' wants, but takes no notice of them till they make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. The course which the blind man takes to express his thankfulness to Christ for recovered sight; *He rose, and followed Jesus.* Mercy from Christ is then well improved, when it engages us to follow Christ. This should be the effect of all salvations wrought for us. He praiseth God best that serveth him most. The life of thankfulness consists in the thankfulness of the life.

CHAP. XI.

AND when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and, as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4 And they went their way, and found a colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5 And certain of them that stood there, said unto them, What do ye loosing the colt?

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our Saviour's solemn and triumphant riding into the city of Jerusalem: he who in all his journeys travelled like a poor man on foot, without noise and without train; now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for sinners, he rides, to shew his great for-

wardness to lay down his life for us: the beast he rides on is an ass, as the manner of kings and great princes anciently was, and to fulfil that prophecy, Zech. xi. 9. *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy king cometh riding upon an ass.* It was also an ass upon which man never sat before; signifying thereby, that the most ugly and untamed creatures become obsequious to Christ. Grotius observes, That such animals as had not been employed in the use of man, were wont to be chosen for sacred uses. Even heathens adjudged those things most proper for the services of the Gods which had never been put to profane uses. Thus in 1. Sam. vi. 7. we read, that the Philistines return the ark in a new cart, drawn by heifers never before put to the yoke; they thinking them polluted by being put to profane work. Our Saviour here chooses an ass which had never been backed before; and that the colt should so patiently suffer Christ to ride upon him, was miraculous. And this was a borrowed ass, whereby our Saviour's right to all the creatures was manifested, and accordingly he bids his disciples tell the owner, *That the Lord hath need of him.* Not your lord, or our lord, but *the Lord*; that is, he that is Lord of all, whose are the cattle on a thousand hills. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Christ's supreme right to the colt, he will not have it taken without the owner's knowledge and consent, *Tell him that the Lord hath need of him.* Observe lastly, What a clear and full demonstration Christ gave of his divine nature; of his omniscience, in foreseeing and foretelling the event; of his omnipotency, in inclining the heart, and overruling the will, of the owner, to let the colt go; and of his sovereignty, as he was Lord of his creatures, to command and call for their service when he needed them.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Observe, 1. The obedience of his disciples. First, they did as Jesus had commanded, they do not dispute their Lord's commands, nor raise objections, nor are afraid of danger; when our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy; what Christ commands we are not to dispute, but to obey. Observe, 2. The actions of the multitude in acknowledging Christ to be their King: they cast their garments on the ground, for him to ride upon, according to the custom of princes when they ride in state; and do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamations and loud hosannas, wishing all manner of

prosperity to their meek but mighty King. In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. O how far was our holy Lord from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur; He despised that glory which worldly hearts fondly admire; yet because he was a King, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, applauded, and blessed. But that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence. O glorious, yet homely pomp! O meek, but mighty prince!

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

12 ¶ And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon; and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

Some move the question here, how Christ came to curse a tree for want of that fruit which the season afforded not? It is answered, that naturalists observe, that the fig-tree puts forth her fruit as soon as her leaf; that tree is always bearing; and whilst one fig is ripe, another is green. And whereas it is said, *That the time of figs was not yet*; the meaning is, "That the time of gathering of figs was not yet;" but the tree having leaves, shewed it might have fruit: accordingly Christ goes in expectation of its having fruit; but finding none, either ripe or green, he curses the tree for totally disappointing his expectation. Besides, Christ was wont not only to speak, but work parables; and this action of his was typical, an emblem of Jerusalem's destruction in general, and of every person's in particular that satisfies himself with a withered profession, bearing leaves only, but no fruit: as this fig-tree was, so are they nigh unto cursing. From whence note, That all such as content themselves with a fruitless profession of religion, are in great danger of having God's blasting added to their barrenness.

15 And they come to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations, The house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people were astonished at his doctrine.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

No sooner had our blessed Saviour entered Jerusalem, but his first walk was to the temple, and his first work there was to purge and reform. All reformation of manners must begin at the house of God. Yet observe, Our Lord's business at the temple was not to ruin, but reform it only. Places dedicated to public worship, if profaned and polluted, ought to be purged from their abuses, not pulled down and destroyed, because they have been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple, which so offended our Saviour; I answer, in the outward court of the temple there was a public mart, or market kept, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves for sacrifice. Many of the Jews coming an hundred miles to the temple, it was burdensome to bring their sacrifices so far with them; wherefore the priests ordered, that sheep and oxen, meal and oil, and such other requisites for sacrifice, should be had for money close by the altar, to the great ease of the offerer; nothing could be more plausible than this plea. But the fairest pretences cannot bear out a sin with God. Therefore our blessed Saviour, in a just indignation, whips out these chapmen, casts down their tables, and vindicates the honour and reputation of his Father's house. Learn hence, That there is reverence due to God's house, for the owner's sake, and for the service sake. Nothing but holiness can become the place where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Observe lastly, The reason which our Saviour gives for this act of his: *Is it not written*, says he, *my house shall be called the house of prayer*? Where by prayer is to be understood the whole worship and service of God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house is certainly the chief work to be done in that house. Now God's house being called an house of prayer, certainly implies; that prayer is the chief and principal work to be performed in his house. Yet take we heed, that we set not the ordinances of God at variance, we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another, but reverence them all.

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

The blasting and sudden withering of the fig-tree at the word of Christ, plainly shewed his divine power, and by this miraculous operation, our Saviour designed to shew his disciples the mighty power of faith; that is, a full persuasion of the power of God, that he is able, and of the goodness of God, that he is willing, to grant whatever we ask according to his will, that has a tendency to his glory and our good. Learn hence, That faith is a necessary and principal ingredient in prayer, praying without faith, is like to a man's shooting without a bullet: it makes a noise, but doth no execution. Secondly, That whatsoever good thing God has made the matter of his promise, shall be given to good men in a way of performance, provided they pray in faith. "Whatsoever ye desire, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

There are two qualifications requisite in prayer, if we expect to find acceptance with God, namely, faith and love: to the first Christ had spoken in the former verse, to the latter in this. *When ye stand praying, forgive.* It was ordinary for the Jews to pray standing, yet in their solemn days of fasting they did kneel, and prostrate themselves before the Lord; but the Christians usually kneeled down and prayed, Acts ix. 40. Now the command here to forgive those that offend us before we pray, shews, 1. That no resentments of what our brother doth, should stick long upon our spirits, because they indispose us for that duty we are to be continually prepared for. 2. That there is some sort and kind of forgiveness to be exercised towards an offending brother before he asks it, and though he doth not shew any token of repentance and sorrow for it; because I am to pray for him out of love to him, and must lift up pure hands, without wrath. Learn hence, That they who are suing for, and expecting forgiveness from God, must exercise forgiveness towards others, or else their prayers are a sort of imprecation on themselves. 2. Observe, Christ speaks indefinitely; *When ye pray, forgive.* He doth not say, your brethren, but men: Matt. vi. 14. *If we forgive men their*

trespasses; that is, all men, good and bad, friends and enemies; if we forgive one another freely, our heavenly Father will forgive us fully. Our forgiving one another is the indispensable condition of God's forgiving us, and of hearing the prayers which are put up by us.

27 ¶ And they come again to Jerusalem: and, as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things?

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven: he will say, Why then did you not believe him?

32 But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus, answering, saith unto them. Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The pharisees having often questioned our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now, although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his daily miracles: for Almighty God never empowered any, to work miracles that were not sent by him. Our blessed Saviour, understanding their design, answers them one question by asking them another: says Christ; *That baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* Was it of divine institution, or of human invention? implying very plainly, that the calling of such as call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God: "No man ought to take that honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Heb. v. 4. The pharisees reply, They could not tell whence John had his mission and authority; this was a manifest untruth. By refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lye against the truth; one sin ensnares and draws men into the commission of many more. Such as will not speak exact truth, according to their knowledge, fall into the sin of lying against their knowledge and their conscience. Our Saviour answers them, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.* He doth not say, I cannot, or I will not tell you, but I do not, I need not tell you; because the mi-

acles which I work before you are a sufficient demonstration of my divine commission, that I am sent of God amongst you : for God never set the seal of his omnipotence to a lye, nor impowered an impostor to work real miracles.

CHAP. XII.

AND he began to speak unto them by *A* parables : A *certain* man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a *place* for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3 And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled.

5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6 Having yet, therefore, one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7 But those husbandmen said amongst themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8 And they took him, and killed *him*; and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

In this parable, the Jewish church is compared to a vineyard; Almighty God to an householder; his *planting*, *pruning*, and *fencing* his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it spiritually fruitful; His *letting it out to husbandmen*, signifies his committing the care of his church to the priests and Levites; the public pastors and governors of the church: His *servants* are the prophets and apostles, whom he sent time after time to admonish them to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost which God had expended on them: His *Son* is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish Church slew and murdered. The design and scope of the parable is to discover to the Jews, particularly to the pharisees, their obstinate impenitency under all means of grace, their bloody cruelty towards the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the

Son of God; for all which God would unchurch them finally, ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles, that should bring forth better fruit than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole, note, 1. That the church is God's vineyard. A vineyard is a place inclosed, a place well planted, well fruited, and exceeding dear and precious to the planter and the owner of it. 2. As dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent its being given to the other husbandmen, is to give him the fruit of it; it is but a vineyard that God left out; it is no inheritance. No people ever had so many promises of God's favour, as the Jews had, nor ever enjoyed so many privileges, whilst they continued in his favour, as they did; yet though they were the first and the natural branches, "they are broken off, and we Gentiles stand by faith; let us not be high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20.

9 What shall, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this scripture? The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them; and they left him, and went their way.

These words of our Saviour are taken out of the cxviiith psalm, which the Jews understood to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and accordingly Christ applies them to himself: the church is the building intended, Christ himself the stone rejected. The *rejecters*, or the builders rejecting, are the heads of the Jewish church; that is the chief priests and pharisees. God, the great master builder of his church, takes this precious foundation-stone out of the rubbish, and sets it in the head of the corner. Nevertheless, there are many that stumble at his stone; some through ignorance, others through fear and malice; some are offended at his person, others at his doctrine. "These shall be broken in pieces; but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind them to powder;" that is, Christ himself will fall as a burdensome stone upon all them that knowingly and maliciously oppose him; and particularly upon the Jews; who not only rejected, but persecuted and destroyed him. Thus Christ tells the chief priests and pharisees their particular doom, and also declares what will be the fatal issue of all that opposition which is made against himself and his church; it will terminate in the inevitable destruction of all its opposers; "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder."

13 ¶ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees, and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his* words.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true and carest for no man; for thou regard-est not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? and they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17 And Jesus answering, said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Observe here, A grand design to entangle our blessed Saviour in his discourse. Where note, 1. The persons employed to put the ensnaring question to Christ, namely, the Pharisees and Herodians. The pharisees was against paying tribute to Cæsar, looking upon themselves as a free people, and the emperor as an usurper, but the Herodians were for it. Herod being made by the Roman emperor king over the Jews, he was very zealous for having the Jews pay tribute to Cæsar; and such of the Jews as side with him, particularly his courtiers and favourites, were called Herodians. Note, 2. The policy and wicked craft here used, in employing these two contrary parties to put this question to our Saviour concerning tribute, thereby laying him under a necessity as they hoped, to offend one side, let him answer how he would; if, to please the pharisees, he denied paying tribute to Cæsar; then he is accused of sedition, if, to gratify the Herodians, he voted for paying tribute to Cæsar, then he is looked upon as an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to popular odium. Thus has it all along been the practice of Satan and his instruments, to draw the ministers of God into dislike, either with the magistrates or with the people, that they may fall under the censure of the one, or the displeasure of the other. Observe, 3. With what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them; he calls for the Roman penny, answering to sevenpence halfpenny of our money, two of which they paid by way of tribute, as poll money for every head to the emperor. Christ asks them, *Whose image or superscription this their coin bore?* They answer, *Cæsar's.* Render then, says he, to *Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* As if our Lord had said, "Your admitting of the Roman coin among you is an evidence that you are under subjection to the emperor, because

the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority; therefore you have owned Cæsar's authority over you by accepting of his coin amongst you: give unto him his just dues, and render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Learn hence, 1. That our Saviour was no enemy to magistracy and civil government; there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it, Matt. xvii. 27. 2. Where a kingdom is in subjection to a temporal prince, whether his right be by descent, election, or by conquest, the subjects ought, from a principle of conscience, to pay tribute to him. 3. That as Christ is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil dues: so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honour, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights; as Christ requires all his followers to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, so should princes oblige all their subjects to render unto God the things that are God's.

18 ¶ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: Last of all the woman died also.

23 In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24 And Jesus answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26 And as touching the dead that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: Ye, therefore, do greatly err.

Our blessed Saviour having put the Pharisees and Herodians to silence in the former verses, here he encounters the Sadducees. This sect derived its name from one Sadock, who denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and angels, and spirits. Here they propound a case to our Saviour, of a woman who had seven brethren successively to her husbands: they demand whose wife of the seven this woman should be at the resurrection? As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies, surely there will be of relations too; and the other world, if there be such a place, will be like this, in which men will marry, as they do here: and if so, whose wife of the seven shall this woman be, they all having an equal claim to her?" Now our Saviour, for resolving of this question, first shews the different state of men in this and in the other world. The children of this world, says our Saviour, marry and are given in marriage, but in the resurrection they do neither. As if Christ had said, "After men have lived a while in this world, they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world, men shall become immortal, and live for ever, and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease; for when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind." Observe, secondly, That our Saviour having got clear of the sadducees' objection, by taking away the foundation and ground work of it, he produceth an argument for the proof of the soul's immortality and the body's resurrection. "Those to whom Almighty God pronounces himself a God, are certainly alive; but God pronounced himself a God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, many hundred years after their bodies were dead, therefore their souls are yet alive; for otherwise God could not be their God: because *he is not God of the dead but of the living*. From the whole note, 1. That there is no opinion so monstrous and absurd, that having had a mother, will die for lack of a nurse. The beastly opinion of the mortality of the soul, and the annihilation of the body, find sadducees to profess and propagate it. Note, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable; accordingly as they behave themselves here. Though some men live like beasts, yet they shall not die like them, nor shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. That glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection, shall be like the glorious angels; not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility: as also in their manner of living, they shall stand in no more need of meat and drink than the angels do, but shall live the same heavenly, immortal, and incorruptible life that the angels live. Note, 4. That those who are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies at the resurrection shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls; if God be just, their souls must live, and their bodies must rise: for good must be rewarded, and wicked men punished somewhere; either in this life or in another. God will most certainly, at one time or other, plentifully reward the righte-

ous, and punish the wicked doers. But, this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires that it must be done in the next.

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.

31 And the second is like, namely, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these:

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Observe here, 1. A question propounded to our blessed Saviour, and his answer thereunto. The question propounded is this, *Which is the first and great commandment?* Our Saviour tells them, *It is to love God with all their heart and soul, with all their mind and strength*; that is, with all the powers, faculties and abilities of the soul, with the highest measures, and most intense degrees of love; this is the sum of the duties of the first table: *This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it*. He doth not say equal with it: although the duties of the second table are of the same authority, and of the same necessity with the first, as no man can be saved without the love of God, so neither without the love of his neighbour. Whence note, 1. That the fervency of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due: love must pass through, and possess all the powers and faculties of our souls; the mind must meditate upon God,

the will must choose and embrace him, and the affections must delight in him. The measure of loving God is to love him without measure; God reckons that we love him not at all, if we love him not above all. Note, 2. That thus to love God, is the *first great commandment*; great in regard of its object, which is God, the first cause and the chief good; great in regard of the obligation of it. To love God is so indispensable a duty, that God himself cannot free us from the obligation of it; for so long as he is God, and we his creatures, we shall lie under a natural obligation to love and serve him. Great also is this command and duty, in regard to the duration and continuance of it; when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition, love will then be perfected in a full enjoyment. Note, 3. That every man may, yea, ought to love himself; not his sinful self, but his natural self; especially his spiritual self, the new nature in him. This it ought to be his particular care to strengthen and increase. Indeed there is no express command in scripture, for a man to love himself, because the light of nature directs, and the law of nature binds, every man so to do. God has put a principle of self love, and of self-preservation, into all his creatures, but especially into man. Note, 4. That as every man ought to love himself, so it is every man's duty to love his neighbour as himself; not as he doth love himself, but as he ought to love himself; yet not in the same degree that he loves himself, but after the same manner, and with the same kind of love that he loves himself. As we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and continually, so should we love our neighbour also; though we love him not as much as we love ourselves, yet must we love him truly, as truly as we love ourselves. Note, lastly, That the duties of the first and second table are inseparable, namely, love to God, and love to our neighbour. These two must not be separated; he that loveth not his neighbour whom he hath seen, never loved God whom he hath not seen. A conscientious regard to the duties of both tables, will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Observe, lastly, The favourable censure which our Saviour passes upon the scribe: he tells him, "He was not far from the kingdom of God." Note here, 1. Some persons may be far, and farther than others, from the kingdom of heaven; some are farther in regard of the means; they want the ordinances, the dispensation of the word and sacraments; others are far from the kingdom of God, in regard of qualifications and dispositions; of the former sort, are all heathens without the pale of the church; they are *afar off*, as the apostle expresses it, Eph. ii. 13, of the latter sort, are all gross and close hypocrites within the church; who, whilst they continue such, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Note, 2. As some persons may be said to be far from the kingdom of God, so there are others which may be said, *not to be far*; such who have escaped the pollutions of the world, abstained from open and scandalous sins, are less wicked than multitudes are; but are strangers to an inward, thorough, and prevailing change in the frame of their hearts, and course of their lives: they have often said, *I would be*, but they never said, *I will be*, the Lord's. When the work of regeneration is brought to the birth, after all, it proves an abortion. Lord! what a disappointment will this be, to perish within sight of the promised land; to be near heaven in our expectation, and yet not nearer in the

issue and event? Woe unto us, if this be the condition of any of us, who have all our days sat under the dispensation of thy gospel.

35 ¶ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David, therefore, himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

The pharisees had often put forth several questions maliciously unto Christ, and now Christ puts forth one question innocently unto them; namely, What they thought of the Messiah whom they expected? They reply, that he was to be the Son of David; that is, a secular prince descending from David, who should deliver them from the power of the Romans, and restore them to their civil rites. This was the notion they had of the Messiah, that he should be a mere man, the son of David according to the flesh, and nothing more. Our Saviour replies, "Whence is it then that David calls the Messiah Lord?" Psal. cx. i. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand." How could he be both David's Lord, and David's son: no son being lord to his father! Therefore, if Christ were David's Sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son, as man, so he was David's son; as God-man, so he was David's Lord. Note, hence, 1. That although Christ was truly and really man, yet he was more than a bare man; he was Lord unto, and the salvation of, his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be God and man in one person; the Messiah as man, was to come forth out of David's loins; but as God man, he was David's Sovereign and Saviour: as man he was his Father's son; as God he was Lord to his own father.

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places,

39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts;

40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater damnation.

Observe here, What it is that our Saviour condemns; not civil salutations in the market-place, not the chief seats in synagogues, not the uppermost rooms at feasts; but their fond affecting of these things, and their ambitious

aspiring after them. It was not their taking, but their loving the uppermost rooms at feasts, which Christ condemns. Observe, 2. How our Saviour condemns the pharisees for their gross hypocrisy, in colouring over their covetousness with a pretence of religion, making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to *corban*; that is, the common treasury for the temple, some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Whence we learn, That it is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloke of religion. The pharisees made long prayers a cloke and cover for their covetousness.

41 ¶ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which making a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even all her living*.

As our blessed Saviour sat over against the treasury, that is, that part of the court of the temple where the *corban*, or chests for receiving the people's offerings and gifts, were set, he observed, and took notice of those that offered their oblations; and some that were rich offered very liberally; but a certain poor woman came and offered two mites. Our Saviour hereupon takes occasion to instruct his disciples in this comfortable truth; namely, "That Almighty God accepts the will of those that give cheerfully, though they cannot give largely." This poor woman cast in more, in respect of the inward affection of her heart, and in proportion to her estate, than all those that were rich and wealthy, that had cast in before her; a mite to her being more than a pound to them. From the whole note, 1. That the poorer, yea, the poorest sort of people, are not exempted from good works; even they must exercise charity according to their abilities. Learn, 2. That in all works of charity which we perform, God looks at the heart, the will and the affection of the giver, more than the largeness and liberality of the gift: "If there be a willing mind," says the apostle, 2 Cor. viii. 12, "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." 3. That a person ought sometimes to give what he cannot very well spare himself; and be ready to distribute not only to his power, but even above and beyond his power, 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3.

CHAP. XIII.

AND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

2 And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Our blessed Saviour being now ready to depart from the temple; never more, after this, entering into it; and his disciples shewing him with wonder and admiration the magnificent structures and buildings thereof, apprehending that in regard to its invincible strength it could not be destroyed, or that at least, in regard to its incredible magnificence, it was a great pity it should be destroyed; they say to Christ, *Master, Behold what buildings are here*; Not considering how sin would undermine and blow up the most famous structures. Sin brings cities and kingdoms as well as particular persons, to their end; not one stone of that magnificent structure, says Christ, shall remain unpulled down: which threatening was exactly fulfilled after Christ's death, when Titus, the Roman emperor, destroyed the city, burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, ploughed up the very foundation on which the temple stood; thus was the threatening of God fulfilled. Jer. xxvi. 18. "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become an heap." Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. It is neither the temple's strength nor beauty that can oppose or withstand God's power.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked him privately,

4 Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

A double question is here propounded to our Saviour by his disciples: namely, When the destruction of Jerusalem shall be? and, what shall be the sign of that destruction? See here, what an itching curiosity there is in the best of men to know futurities; to know things that shall come to pass hereafter; and when that hereafter is come to pass, O how happy were we, if as forward to obey the declaration of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the hidden counsels of his secret will! *Tell us*, says his disciples, *When shall these things be?*

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say, take heed lest any man deceive you:

6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*: and shall deceive many.

7 And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled; for *such things* must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in diverse places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

9 ¶ But take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

Here, and the following verses, Our Saviour gives his disciples the signs which should forerun the destruction of Jerusalem. The first of which was this, that "there should arise false christi, false prophets, and seducers;" such as Theudas, and others, under the name and person of the Messiah, some affirming themselves to be Christ personal, or the promised Messiah; others to be Christ doctrinal, affirming their erroneous opinions to be the mind and doctrine of Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That as there will be many seducers before the end of the world (for Jerusalem's destruction was a type and emblem of the world's destruction) and many will be seduced and misled by them: so it is the duty of Christ's own disciples to take heed lest they, "being also led away by the error of the wicked, do fall from their own steadfastness: Take heed, (says Christ,) that no man deceive you, for many will come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and will deceive many." The second sign of Jerusalem's destruction was, *wars and rumours of wars*; that civil broils, and intestine commotions among themselves; as also *famines and earthquakes*. Whence note, That war and fire, earthquakes and famines, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people, for their contempt of Christ and gospel grace. 2. That although these be very terrible judgments, and desolating calamities, yet to an incorrigible and irreclaimable people are they the forerunners of worse judgments. These *are*, says Christ, *the beginnings of sorrows*. The third sign of this approaching destruction, was a general persecution of the ministers of the gospel, for preaching the doctrine of the gospel to a lost world; "Ye shall be beaten and brought before kings for my sake, for a testimony." From whence note, That the preaching of the gospel, wherever it comes, will be for a testimony to them to whom it comes; either a testimony for them, or against them: to the humble it is a testimony for, to despisers and scornors it is a testimony against; if the dust of ministers' feet bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their

sermons much more. The word of God delivered in the scriptures, and dispensed in the ministry thereof, hath its divers and contrary effects upon different and contrary subjects; from both which yet Almighty God knows how to raise his own glory; to the humble and teachable, the gospel is in *adjutorium*; to the scornors and despisers of it, will be in *testimonium*; to some, the saviour of life unto life; to others, the saviour of death unto death.

11 But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now, the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son: and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Here our Saviour acquaints his disciples, that for preaching the gospel they should be brought before kings and rulers; but advises them, when they should be so brought, not to be anxiously thoughtful and sollicitous what they shall say: for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost what to say in that hour. Note here, That this promise seems to be peculiar to the apostles, and that it belonged to them only, when they were brought before kings and rulers to plead the cause of Christ. Learn hence, That though the truth of Christ may be opposed, yet the defenders of it should never be ashamed: for rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Holy Spirit, and suggest such arguments to them as all their enemies shall not be able to gainsay. Observe, farther, How our Saviour describes the enmity of the world against the preachers of the gospel, to be such as would overcome and extinguish even the natural affection of the dearest relations one towards another: "The brother shall betray the brother to death." Grace teaches us to lay down our lives for the brethren; but corruption in general, and enmity to the gospel in particular, teaches brother to take away the life of a brother: "The brother shall betray the brother to death." Observe, lastly, How our Saviour comforts his disciples, that there would be an end of these their sharp and bitter sufferings: assuring them that if their faith and patience did hold out *unto the end*, they should be saved. This is our comfort, our sufferings for Christ must be sharp, but they shall be short: if our sufferings for Christ end not in our life time, they will end with our lives.

14 ¶ But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the

prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand)—

The sense is, "As soon as ye shall see the Roman army, which is an abomination upon you, and an occasion of great desolation wherever it goes: when you shall see that abominable desolating army, begirting the city of Jerusalem, in order to her ruin and being laid waste, then call to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which primarily respected Antiochus, but secondarily Titus the Roman emperor, and shall now be fully completed; for the siege shall not be raised till both city and temple be razed to the ground." From whence learn, 1. That God has instruments ready at his call to lay waste the strongest cities; and to ruin the most flourishing kingdoms, which do reject his Son, and refuse the tenders of his grace. 2. That God can, and sometimes doth, make use of those very persons whom sinners must abhor, to be the instruments of their punishment, and the occasions of their destruction. The Roman army, which was an abomination to the Jews, did God destroy them by.

—Then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains:

15 And let him that is on the house-top not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment

17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days!

18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

The meaning is, "As soon as ye shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem, let every one that values his own safety fly, as far and as fast as he can, as Lot fled from the flames of Sodom; and be glad if by flight he can save his life, though he lose goods and clothes, and all things beside." Whence learn, That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is both lawful, and a necessary duty, by flight, to endeavour to shelter and secure ourselves from the approaching calamity and desolation; when ye see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, flee to the mountains. 2 That in case of flight before an enraged enemy, and bloody army, if we lose all that we have, and our lives be given us for a prey, we fare well, and the Lord deals very graciously and mercifully with us. Next, Our Saviour declares the doleful distress of those that could not flee from the Roman army encompassing Jerusalem, as women great with child, and others giving suck, who by that means are like to lose their lives; and adds farther, That it would increase the calamity, if their flight should happen to be in the winter; St. Matthew adds, on the sabbath-day, Matt. xxiv. 20. Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day. Flight in the winter is sad, because we can then fly neither fast nor far; and on the sabbath-day it is very sorrowful, that being the day of our spiritual labour, and of our bodily rest.

Learn hence, That it is a great addition to the trouble and disquiet of a good man's spirit, when the day of his spiritual rest is interrupted; and instead of enjoying communion with God in his house, he is driven from house and home.

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation; which God created, unto this time, neither shall be.

20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

The dreadful calamities which were coming upon the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, are here foretold by our blessed Saviour, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditions and factions of the zealots within; who committed such outrages and slaughters that there were no less than an hundred thousand Jews slain, and ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, were now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Nor did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Yet observe, Christ promises, that those days of vengeance should be shortened for the elect's sake: God had a remnant which he designed should survive that destruction, to be an holy seed; and accordingly the providence of God so ordered it, that the city was taken in six months, and the whole country depopulated in eighteen. From whence observe, How the Lord intermixes some mercy with the extremest misery that doth befall a people for their sin on this side hell. No sinners can say, in this life, that they feel the strikes of justice to the utmost, or that they have judgment without mercy.

21 And then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

22 For false christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Jews had all along cherished in themselves a vain expectation, that the promised Messiah should be a temporal deliverer; and set them at liberty from the power and slavery of the Romans; and accordingly, our Saviour declares to his disciples here, That immediately before Jerusalem's destruction, several persons, taking the advantage of this expectation, would make themselves heads of parties; and pretend that they were the true Messiah, who should save and deliver them from their enemies, if they would follow them. Hereupon our Saviour cautions his disciples against such false christs, and false prophets, and bids them not believe them, though they did ever so many great signs

and wonders, and promise them ever such glorious deliverances. From hence note, 1. That the church's great danger is from seducers, that come in Christ's name and presence to work signs and wonders by his authority. Note, 2. That such is the power of seduction and delusion, that many, in all ages of the church, have been carried away with seducers and false teachers. 3. That the elect themselves, if left to themselves, might be seduced; but being guarded by divine power against seduction and delusion, they shall be preserved from that fatal mischief; "They shall seduce, if possible, even the elect."

24 ¶ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light;

25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26 And then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven.

Our Saviour goes on in figurative expressions, to set forth the calamities that should befall the Jewish nation immediately after Jerusalem's destruction. *The Sun shall be darkened*; that is, all their glory and excellency shall be eclipsed, all their wealth and prosperity shall be laid waste, their whole government, civil and ecclesiastical, destroyed; and such marks of misery found upon them, as never were seen upon a people. Those that apply this to the general judgment, understand the words literally, that the sun and moon will then have their influences suspended; that the holy angels will be sent forth "to gather the elect from all quarters of the world, with the sound of a trumpet," says St. Matthew. Probably, as there was an audible sound of a trumpet at the giving of the law, so there shall be the like sound of a trumpet, when Christ shall summon the world to judgment, for transgressing of that law. A joyful sound will this be to the friends of Christ, a doleful, dreadful sound in the ears of his enemies.

28 Now, learn a parable of the fig-tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

29 So ye, in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, That this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.

31 Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

32 But of that day, and *that* hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Here our blessed Saviour declares two things with reference to his coming. 1. The certainty of the thing itself. 2. The uncertainty of the time. The certainty of his coming he sets forth by the similitude of the fig-tree, whose beginning to bud declares the summer at hand. Thus our Saviour tells them, that when they should see the forementioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be nigh at hand; and accordingly, some then living did see these predictions fulfilled. Observe, 2. The uncertainty as to the precise time when this judgment should come; no angel in heaven, nor creature upon earth, could determine the time; only the glorious persons in the godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Learn hence, That all things are not revealed to the angels themselves; but such things only as it concerns them to know, and the wisdom of God thinks fit to reveal. 2. That the precise time of the day of judgment is kept by God as a secret to himself; we are not to know the hour, to the intent we may be upon our watch every hour: Christ himself did not know it as a man, but as God only. The knowledge and revelation of this, was no part of Christ's prophetic office; it being one of those times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power, Acts i. 7. Consider Christ as God, or the second person in the Trinity, and to affirm that there is any thing which he does not know is blasphemy; but consider him as the Messiah, and to say there were some things which Christ as such did not know, is no blasphemy. For though Christ as God was equal with the Father, yet as Messiah, or God-man, he was inferior to the Father, his servant or messenger, and could do nothing of himself, and did not know all things.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

Our blessed Saviour takes occasion, from the foregoing doctrine of the certainty and suddenness of his coming to

judgment, to enforce the duty of diligent and industrious watchfulness upon his disciples and followers; that is, to be upon their guard against all sin, and to be in an actual readiness for his appearance and approach. Learn hence, That it is the indispensable duty, and ought to be the indefatigable endeavour of every Christian, to stand upon his guard in a prepared readiness for Christ's appearance, both for his coming to them, and for their going to him. There is a twofold readiness for Christ's coming; namely, habitual and actual; an habitual readiness is a readiness of the state and condition; actual readiness is the readiness of the person: when we are furnished with all the graces and virtues of a good life, when our lamps are burning, and our loins girded, our souls furnished with all the graces of God's Holy Spirit, our lives fruitful in good works: "Blessed is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found thus watching."

CHAP. XIV.

AFTER two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the Chief Priests and the Scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

2 But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

This chapter gives us a sad and sorrowful account of the high priest's conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour; in which we have observable, The persons that made this conspiracy, the manner of the conspiracy, and the time when this conspiracy was made. 1. The persons conspiring are the chief priests, scribes, and elders: that is, the whole Jewish sanhedrim, or general council; they lay their malicious heads together, to contrive the destruction of the innocent Jesus. Thence learn, That general councils have erred and may err fundamentally in matters of doctrine: so did this general council at Jerusalem, consisting of chief priests, doctors, and elders, with the high priest their president, in not believing Jesus to be the Messiah, after all the miracles wrought before their eyes. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against our Saviour's life, it was clandestine, secret, and subtle; "they consult how they might take him by craft, and put him to death." Thence note, That Satan makes use of the subtlety of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power, for his own purposes and designs; the devil sends no fools of his errands. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time when this conspiracy was managed, at the feast of the passover; it being a custom among the Jews to execute malefactors at their solemn feasts, as at the feast of the passover, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles; at which times all the Jews came up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, and then they put malefactors to death, that all Israel might see and hear, and not do so wickedly. Accordingly, this feast of the passover was waited for by the Jews, as a fit opportunity to put our Saviour to death. The only objection was, That it might occasion a tumult

amongst the people, there being such a mighty concourse at that time in Jerusalem. But Judas making them a proffer, they readily complied with the motion, and resolve to take the first opportunity to put our Saviour to death.

3 ¶ And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman, having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious: and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

6 And Jesus said, Let her alone: why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good; but me ye have not always.

8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9 Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Several particulars are observable in this piece of history: as, first, the action which this holy woman performed; she pours a box of precious ointment upon our Saviour's head as he sat at meat, according to the custom of the eastern countries at their feasts. Murmuring Judas valued this ointment at three hundred pence, which makes, of our money, nine pounds seven shillings and sixpence, reckoning the Roman penny at sevenpence halfpenny. I do not find that any of the apostles were at this much cost and charge to put honour upon our Saviour, as this poor woman was. Learn hence, That where strong love prevails in the heart towards Christ, nothing is adjudged too dear for him; neither will it suffer itself to be outshined by any examples; the weakest woman that strongly loves her Saviour, will piously strive with the greatest apostle to express the fervour of her affection towards him. Observe, 2. How this action was resented and reflected upon by Judas, and some other disciples whom he influenced; "They had indignation within themselves, and said, To what purpose is this waste?" O! how doth a covetous

heart think every thing too good for Christ! Happy was it for this poor woman, that she had a more righteous Judge to pass sentence upon her actions than murmuring Judas. Observe, 3. How readily our holy Lord vindicates this good woman; she says nothing for herself, nor need she, having so good an advocate. First he rebukes Judas. *Let her alone, why trouble ye the woman?* Next he justifies the action, *She hath wrought a good work*, because it flowed from a principle of love to Christ. And lastly, he gives the reason of her action, *She did it for my burial*. As kings and great persons were wont in those eastern countries, at their funerals, to be embalmed with odours and sweet perfumes, so, says our Saviour, this woman, to declare her faith in me as her king and Lord, both with this box of ointment, as it were before-hand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith puts honour upon a crucified, as well as a glorified, Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honour in his death, believing it would be a sweet smelling sacrifice unto God, and the saviour of life unto his people. Observe, 4. Our Saviour doth not only justify and defend the action of this poor woman, but magnifies and extols it; declaring that she should be rewarded for it with an honourable memorial in all ages of the church: "Whosoever this gospel is preached, this shall be spoken of as a memorial of her." Note hence, The care which Christ takes to have the good deeds of his children not buried in the dust with them, but had in everlasting remembrance. Though sin causes men to rot above the ground, and stink alive, and when they are dead, leaves an ignominy upon their graves; yet will the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

10 ¶ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chiefs, to betray him unto them.

11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Redeemer: Judas, Judas a professor; Judas, a preacher; Judas, an apostle; and one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of all the world to be his dearest friends, his family and household; shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly or unfaithful to us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own family! Observe, 2. The heinous nature of Judas' sin, *he betrayed Jesus*; Jesus his Maker, Jesus his Master. It is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons, as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the occasion that led Judas to the commission of this sin: It was his inordinate love of money. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice, spite, or ill-will, against our Saviour, but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed him, and this made him sell his Master. Covetousness is the root-sin. An eager and insatiable thirst after the world, is a parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins; for which reason our Saviour doubles his caution, Luke xii. 15. *Take heed, and*

beware of covetousness. It shews us both the danger of the sin, and the great care we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it.

12 ¶ And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the passover.

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The master saith, Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples to Jerusalem to prepare things necessary in order thereunto. And here we have observable, 1. An eminent proof of Christ's divine nature, in telling them all the particulars which they should meet with in the city, as *A man bearing a pitcher of water*, &c. 2. How readily the heart of this householder was disposed to receive our Saviour and his disciples, and to accommodate them with all things needful upon this occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and peradventure no money wherewith to buy one, yet he finds as excellent accommodations in this poor man's house, as if he had dwelt in Ahab's ivory palace, and had the provision of Solomon's table. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will dispose the heart to a free reception of himself. The room which Christ will enter into, must be a *large room*, an *upper room*, furnished and prepared; a *large room*, is an enlarged heart, enlarged with love and thankfulness; an *upper room*, is an heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly-mindedness; a *room furnished*, is a soul adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit; into such an heart, and only such, will Christ enter.

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18 And as they sat, and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

19 And they began to be sorrowful, and say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

20 And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish.*

21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Observe here, 1. The unexampled boldness of this impudent traitor Judas; he presumed, as soon as he had sold his Master, to sit down at the table with him, and did eat the passover with the disciples: had the presence of Judas polluted this ordinance to any but himself, doubtless our Saviour would never have suffered him to approach unto it. But hence we learn, 1. That nothing is more ordinary than for unholy persons to press in unto the holy ordinances of God, which they have no right, while such, to partake of. 2. That the presence of such persons doth pollute the ordinance only to themselves; holy persons are not polluted by their sins, therefore ought not to be discouraged from coming by their presence there. Observe, 2. What a surprising and astonishing word it was which dropt from our Saviour's mouth amongst his disciples; *One shall betray me; yea, one of you shall betray me.* Can any church upon earth expect purity in all its members, when Christ's own family of twelve had a traitor and devil in it? Yet though it was very sad to hear of one, it was matter of joy to understand that there was but one. One hypocrite in a congregation is too much, but there is cause of rejoicing if there be no more. Observe, 3. Christ did not name Judas, and say, "Thou, O perfidious Judas! art the traitor, but *one of you shall betray me.*" Doubtless it was to draw him to repentance, and to prevent the giving him any provocation. Lord! how sad is it for any of thy family, who pretend friendship to thee, to conspire with thine enemies against thee! for any "that eat of thy bread to lift up their heel against thee!" Observe, 4. The disciples' sorrow upon these words of Christ, and the effect of that sorrow. Their sorrow was (as well it might be) exceeding great; well might innocent disciples be overwhelmed with sorrow, to hear that their Master should die, that he should die by treason, that the traitor should be one of themselves. But though their sorrow was great, yet was the effect of their sorrow very good, it wrought in them an holy suspicion of themselves, and caused every one to search himself, and say, *Master, Is it I?* Learn hence, That it is possible for such sacred wickedness to lodge in the heart as we never suspected, till time and temptation draw it forth. None of the disciples suspected, nay, Judas himself never apprehended that depth of iniquity and hypocrisy which was found lodging in him. Yet note, That though the disciples were jealous and suspicious, yet was it of themselves, not of one another; nay, not of Judas himself; every one said, *Master, Is it I?* Not, *Master, Is it Judas?* True sincerity and Christian charity will make us more suspi-

cious of ourselves than of any other: it hopes the best of others, and fears the worst of ourselves. Observe, 5. That though Judas sees himself pointed at by our Saviour, and hears the dreadful threatenings denounced against him, *that it had been better for him that he had never been born*, yet he is no more blanked than innocence itself. Resolute sinners run on desperately in their evil courses; and with open eyes see and meet their own destruction, without being either dismayed at it, or concerned about it. This shameless man had the impudence to say to our blessed Saviour, *Master, Is it I?* Our blessed Saviour gives him a direct answer, *Thou sayest it.* Did not Judas, think we, blush extremely, cast down his guilty eyes, and let fall his drooping head, at so galling an intimation? Nothing less, we read of nothing like it. Lord! how does obduracy in sin steel the brow, and make it incapable of all relenting impressions! Observe, lastly, How our Saviour prefers non-entity before damnation; *It had been better for that man he had never been born.* A temporal, miserable being, is not worse than no being; but eternal misery is much worse than non-entity; better to have no being, than not to have a being in Christ. It had been better for Judas that he had never been born, than to lie under everlasting wrath.

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

23 And he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

24 And he said unto them, this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.

25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Immediately after the celebration of the passover, our Lord institutes his holy supper; in which institution, we have observable the author, the time, the elements, and ministerial actions. Observe here, 1. The author of this new sacrament: *Jesus took bread.* Note thence, That to institute a sacrament is the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ. The church has no power to make new sacraments: it is only her duty to celebrate those which our Saviour has made. Observe, 2. The time of the institution, the night before his passion; *The night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread.* Learn thence, That it is very necessary when sufferings are approaching, to have recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is a restorative to our faith.

Observe, 3. The sacramental elements, *bread and wine*; bread representing the body, and wine the blood, of our dear Redeemer. Observe, 4. The ministerial actions, *The breaking of the bread, and the blessing of the cup*. As to the bread, *Jesus took it*; that is, set it apart from common use, and separated it for holy ends and purposes. He *blessed it*; that is, prayed for a blessing upon it, and *broke it*; thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross; and he *gave it to his disciples, saying, This broken bread signifies my body, suddenly to be broken upon the cross, for the redemption and salvation of a lost world; Do this in remembrance of my death*. As to the cup, Christ having set it apart by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples *to drink all of it*; and accordingly they *all drank of it*, says this evangelist; and our Saviour gives his reason for it, ver. 24. "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins;" that is, the wine in this cup represents the shedding of my blood, by which this new covenant between God and man is ratified and confirmed. Whence we gather, That every communicant hath as undoubted a right to the cup as to the bread, in the Lord's supper; *Drink ye all of this*, says Christ; therefore to deny the cup to the common people, is sacrilege, and directly contrary to our Saviour's institution. And Christ calling the cup *the fruit of the vine*, affords a strong argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation; thus, "That which after consecration remains the fruit of the vine, is not substantially changed into the blood of Christ." But Christ called the wine in the cup the fruit of the vine after consecration; therefore that which Christ gave the apostles to drink, was not substantially changed into his blood. Wine is metaphorically called the blood of the grape; why may it not, by a like metaphor, be styled the blood of Christ? After the celebration was over, our Saviour and his disciples sung an hymn, as the Jews were wont to do at the passover, the six eucharistical psalms, from the 113th to the 119th psalm. From Christ's example, we may gather, how suitable it is to sing a psalm after the celebration of the Lord's supper; how fit it is that God be glorified in his church, by singing of psalms; and in particular when the Lord's supper is celebrated: "When they had sung an hymn, they went into the mount of Olives."

27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I.

30 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31 But he spake the more vehemently,

If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Observe here, 1. The warning that our Saviour gives his disciples of their forsaking of him in the time of his sufferings; *All ye shall be offended because of me this night*. Learn, That Christ's dearest friends forsook and left him alone, in the midst of his greatest distress and danger. Observe, 2. What was the cause of their flight; it was their fear, the weakness of their faith, and the prevalency of their fear. O! how sad and dangerous is it for the best of men to be left under the power of their own fears in the day of temptation! Observe, 3. Notwithstanding our Saviour's prediction, St Peter's presumption of his own strength and standing; *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*. Learn thence, That self-confidence, and presumptuous opinion of their own strength, is a sin very incident to the holiest and best of men. This good man resolved honestly, no doubt; but too, too much in his own strength. Little did he think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once left to the power and prevalency of his own fears. None are so near falling, as those who are the most confident of their own standing; if ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.

34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.

37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?

38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy: neither wist they what to answer him.

41 And he cometh a third time, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, the hour is come: behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise up, let us go: lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Our blessed Saviour being now come with his disciples into the garden, he falls there into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful ferrency and importunity to his heavenly Father; his sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, That prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under, the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to the prayer of our Saviour in the garden, many things are very observable; as first, The place where he prayed, *the garden*. But why went Christ thither? Not, with our first parents, to hide himself there amongst the trees of the garden, from the notice and observation of his enemies: but as a garden was the place where our misery began, as the first scene of human sin and misery was acted in a garden, so does our Lord choose a garden as the place for his agony and satisfactory pains to begin in. Again, this garden was a place of privacy and retirement, where our Lord might best attend the offices of devotion preparatory to his passion: St. John xviii. 2, tells us, *That Jesus oft-times resorted to this garden with his disciples, and that Judas well knew the place*. It is evident then that Christ went not into the garden to shun his sufferings, but to prepare himself by prayer to meet his enemies. Observe, 2. The time when he entered into the garden for prayer, it was in the evening before he suffered; here he spent some hours in pouring forth his soul to God; for about midnight Judas with his black guard came and apprehended him in a praying posture. Our Lord teaching us by his example, That when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestlings with him. Observe, 3. The matter of our Lord's prayer: *That if possible the cup might pass from him*; and he might be kept from the hour of suffering, that his soul might escape that dreadful wrath at which he was so sore amazed. "But what! did Christ then begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? Did he shrink and give back when it came to the pinch?" No, nothing less; but as he had two natures, being God and man, so he had two distinct wills: as man, he feared, and shunned death! as God-man, he willingly submitted to it. The divine nature and the human spirit of Christ, did now assault each other with disagreeing interests. Again, this prayer was not absolute, but conditional. *If it be possible, Father; if it may*

be; if thou art willing, if it please thee, let this cup pass; if not, I will drink it. The cup of sufferings we see is a very bitter and distasteful cup; a cup which human nature abhors, and cannot desire, but pray against; yet God doth put this cup of affliction into the hands oft-times of those whom he doth sincerely love, and when he doth so, it is their duty to drink it with silence and submission, as here their Lord did before them; *Father, let the cup pass; yet not my will but thine be done*. Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's prayer in the garden; and here we may remark, 1. It was a solitary prayer; he went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best and dearest friends is not always seasonable; there is a time to be solitary as well as to be sociable; there are times and cases when a Christian would not be willing that the most intimate friend he has in the world should be with him, to hear what passes in secret between him and his God. 2. It was an humble prayer, that is evident by the postures into which he cast himself, sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate upon his face: he lies in the very dust, and lower he cannot lie; and his heart was as low as his body. 3. It was a vehement, fervent, and most importunate prayer; such was the fervour of our Lord's spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. Q let us blush to think how unlike we are to Christ in prayer, as to our praying frame of spirit. Lord! What deadness and drowsiness, what stupidity and formality, what dulness and laziness, is found in our prayers! How often do our lips move, when our hearts stand still! 4. It was a reiterated and repeated prayer; he prayed the first, second, and third time, *for the passing of the cup from him*; he returns upon God over and over again, resolving to take no denial. Let us not be discouraged, though we have sought God often for a particular mercy, and yet no answer has been given in unto us. A prayer put up in faith, according to the will of God, though it may be delayed, it shall not be lost. Our Saviour prayed the first, second, and third time for the passing of the cup; and although he was not heard as to exemption from suffering, yet he was heard as to support under suffering. Observe, 5. The posture the disciples were found in when our Saviour was in this agony, praying to his Father, *They were fast asleep*. Good God! Could they possibly sleep at such a time as that was, when Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful! Could their eyes be thus heavy! Learn thence, That the best of Christ's disciples may be, and oft-times are; overtaken with infirmities, with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing; *He cometh to his disciples, and finds them sleeping*. Observe, 6. The mild and gentle reproof which he gives his disciples for their sleeping; *Could ye not watch with me one hour?* Could ye not watch when your master was in such danger? Could ye not watch with me when I am going to deliver up my life for you? What! not one hour? And that the parting hour too? After this reprehension, he subjoins an exhortation, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*; and superadds a forcible reason, *for though the spirit be willing yet the flesh is weak*. Thence learn, That the holiest and best-resolved Christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard of the weakness of the flesh, or frailty of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptation; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: for though the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak*.

43 ¶ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.

44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

45 And, as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

47 And one of them that stood by, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high-priest, and cut off his ear.

48 And Jesus answered, and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and *with staves*, to take me?

49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: But the scriptures must be fulfilled.

50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

The hour is now almost come, even that hour of sorrow which Christ had so often spoken of, *Yet a little while, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners; for while he yet spake, cometh Judas with a band of soldiers* to apprehend him; it was the lot and portion of our dear Redeemer, to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend. Here we have observable, 1. The traitor. 2. The treason. 3. The manner how. 4. The time when this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The traitor, Judas. All the evangelists carefully describe him by his name, Judas; by his surname, Judas Iscariot; lest he should be mistaken for Jude, the brother of James. Almighty God takes great care to preserve the names of his upright-hearted servants. He is further described by his office, *one of the twelve*. The eminency of his place and station, was an high aggravation of his transgression. Learn hence, That the greatest professors had need be very jealous of themselves, and suspicious of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their profession; for a profession begun in hypocrisy, will certainly end in apostacy. Learn farther, That persons are never in such imminent danger, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master-lusts. Covetousness was Judas' master sin; the love of the world made him a slave to Satan, and the devil lays a temptation before him exactly suited to his temper and inclination, and it instantly overcomes him. O! pray we, that we may be suited to a strong and suitable temptation; a temptation suited to our inclination and predominant lust and corrup-

tion. Observe, 2. The treason of this traitor Judas; he led on an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him by, and bids them lay hands upon him, and hold him fast. Some conjecture, that when Judas bade them hold Christ fast, he thought they could not do it: but that as Christ had at other times conveyed himself from the multitude, when they attempted to kill or stone him, so he would have done now: but his hour was now come, and accordingly he suffers himself to be delivered by the treachery of Judas into his enemies' hands. And this his treason is attended with these hellish aggravations; he had been a witness to the miracles which our Saviour had wrought by his divine power, and therefore could not sin out of ignorance; what he did was not at the solicitation of others, but he was a volunteer in this service: the high priest did not send to him, but he went to them, offering his assistance; no doubt it was a matter of surprize to the chief priests, to find one of Christ's own disciples at the head of a conspiracy against him. Lord! how dangerous is it to allow ourselves in any one secret or open sin! None can say, how far that one sin may in time lead us. Should any have told Judas, that his love of money would at last make him sell his Saviour, he would have said with *Hazael*, *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?* That soul can never be safe that harbours one sin within its breast. Observe, 3. The manner how this hellish plot was executed; partly by force, and partly by fraud: by force, in that Judas came with a multitude armed with *swords and staves*; and by fraud, *giving a kiss*, and saying, *Hail, Master!* Here was honey in the lips, but poison in the heart. Observe, 4. The time when, the place where, and the work which our Saviour was about, when this treasonable design was executed; he was in the garden with his disciples, exhorting them to prayer and watchfulness, dropping heavenly advice and comfort upon them. While he yet spake, *Lo! Judas came*. Our Saviour was found in the most heavenly and excellent employment, when his enemies came to apprehend him. Lord! how happy is it when our sufferings find us in God's way, engaged in his work, and engaging his assistance by fervent supplication: Thus did our Lord's sufferings meet him: may our's in like manner meet us. Observe, 5. The endeavours used by the disciples for their Master's rescue; *One of them* (St. Matthew says it was Peter) *draws his sword, and cuts off the ear of Malchus*, who probably was one of the forwardest to lay hands on Christ. But why did not St. Peter draw upon Judas rather than Malchus? Because though Judas was more faulty, yet Malchus was more forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. How doth a pious breast swell with indignation at the sight of an open affront offered to its Saviour! Yet though St. Peter's heart was sincere, his hand was rash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions: and accordingly Christ, who accepted the affection, reproves the action: *Put up thy sword; for they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword*; Christ will thank no man to fight for him without a warrant and commission from him. To resist a lawful magistrate in Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel. Observe, lastly, The effect which our Saviour's apprehension had upon the disciples; *They all forsook him and fled*. They that said to Christ a little before, *Though we should die with thee, yet we will not deny thee*, do all here desert and cowardly forsake him when it came to the trial. Learn hence, That the best and holiest of men know not their own hearts, when

great temptations and trials are before them, until such time as they come to grapple with them. No man knows his own strength, till temptation puts it to the proof.

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body: and the young man laid hold on him.

52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes.

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55 And the chief priests, and all the council, sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none:

56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

57 And there arose certain, and bear false witness against him, saying,

58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?

61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

62 A Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: And the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Here we have the history of our Saviour's examination before the high priest and council, who sat up all night to arraign and try the holy and innocent Jesus; for lest his death should look like a downright murder, they allow him a mock trial, and abuse the law, by perverting it to injustice and bloodshed. Accordingly, false witnesses are suborned, who depose that they heard him say, *He would destroy their temple, and build it again in three days.* It is not in the power of the greatest innocence to protect the most innocent and holy person from slander and false accusation; yea, no person is so innocent and good, whom false witnesses may not condemn. Observe, 2. Our Lord's meekness and patience, his silence under all these wicked suggestions and false accusations; *Jesus held his peace and answered nothing, ver. 16.* Guilt is naturally clamorous and impatient, but innocence is silent, and careless of misreports. Learn hence, That to bear the revilings, and contradictions, and false accusations of men, with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Our Lord stood before his unjust judge, and false accusers, even as a sheep before the shearer, dumb, and not opening his mouth; even then when a trial for his life was managed most maliciously and illegally against him: *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.* May the same humble mind and forgiving spirit be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus! Observe, 3. That although our Saviour was silent, and made no reply to the false witnesses; yet now, when the question was solemnly put by the high priest, *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* He answered, *I am.* Thence learn, That although we are not obliged by every ensnaring question to make answer, yet are we bound faithfully to own, and freely to confess the truth, when solemnly called thereunto; when our silence will be interpreted a denial of the truth, a dishonour to God, a reproach and scandal to our brethren, it will be a great sin to hold our peace; and we must not be silent, though our confession of the truth hazards our liberty, yea, our life. Christ knew that his answer would cost him his life, yet he durst not but give it; *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* Jesus said, *I am.* Observe, 4. The crime which the high priest pronounces our Saviour to be guilty of, is blasphemy. *He hath spoken blasphemy.* Hereupon the high priest rent his clothes; it being usual with the Jews so to do, both to shew their sorrow for it, and great detestation of it, and indignation against it. Observe, 5. The vile affronts and horrid abuses which the enemies of our Saviour put upon him; they spit in his face, they blindfold him, they smite him with their hands, and in contempt and mockery bid him prophecy who it was that smote him. Verily there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline, or stick at, for Christ's

sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting upon our account. Observe, 6. The high priest rends his clothes at Christ's telling him, ver. 62. "He shall see the Son of man sitting on God's right hand, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And well might his clothes and his heart rend also. It was as if our Lord had said, "I that am now your prisoner, shall shortly be your judge. I now stand at your bar; and, ere long, you must stand at my tribunal. Those eyes of yours, that now see me in the form of a servant, shall behold me in the clouds, at the right hand of your God, and my Father."

66 ¶ And, as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest;

67 And, when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou, also, wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68 But he denied, saying, I know him not, neither understand I what thou sayest: And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him: Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice: And when he thought thereon, he wept.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of the fall and rising of Peter; of his sin in denying Christ, and of his recovery by repentance. Both are considered distinctly in the notes on St. Matt. xxvi. 69. That which is here farther to be taken notice of, is as followeth. Observe, 1. That amongst all the apostles and disciples of Christ, we meet not with any so extraordinary, either for faith or obedience, as Peter. He was an early professor, St. Matt. iv. 18, and a glorious confessor, St. Matt. xvi. 16. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Which confession of his faith, like a rock, was to be the foundation of the gospel-church in all ages; and Christ was pleased to put that

honour upon Peter, as to use his ministry, in first laying the foundation of a Christian church among the Jews and Gentiles, he being the first preacher to them of that faith he did here confess. To the Jews, Acts ii. where we read of three thousand souls converted and baptized; and to the Gentiles, Acts x. in the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, whom God directed to send, not to Jerusalem for James, nor to Damascus for Paul, but to Joppa for Peter, whom Christ had appointed for that work, that he might tell him words by which he and his household should be saved. Observe, 2. The great and mighty courage which was found in St. Peter. 1. At the command of Christ, he adventures to walk on the waves of the sea, Matt. xvi. 28, being firmly persuaded, that whatsoever Christ commanded his disciples to do, he would give them strength and ability to perform. And, 2. It was a noble courage which enabled him to say, *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* No doubt the good man really resolved to do as he said, little suspecting that he should with horrid oaths and bitter imprecations, deny and abjure his dying Master. "Lord! how prone are we to think our hearts better than they are! our grace stronger than it is! Not all the instances we have of human frailty in ourselves, or all the scars, marks, and wounds upon some of the best and holiest of men, by reason of their sad and shameful fall, will sufficiently convince us of our wretched impotency, and how unable we are to do good, or resist evil, by our own shattered and impaired strength." 3. An undaunted courage, and heroic greatness of mind, appeared in this apostle, when he told the Jews to their faces that they were guilty of murder, and must never expect salvation any other way, than by faith in that Jesus whom they had ignominiously crucified, and unjustly slain. Nor did St. Peter say this in a corner, or behind the curtain, but in the sanhedrim, that open court of judicature, which had so lately sentenced and condemned his Lord and Master. Observe, 3. St. Peter's profound humility and lowliness of mind: it was a mighty honour that Christ put upon him in making use of his ministry, for laying the foundation of a Christian church, both among Jews and Gentiles. And accordingly Cornelius, Acts x. would have entertained him with more than ordinary honour and veneration, falling down at his feet, and ready to adore him; but this humble apostle was so far from complying with it, that he plainly told him that he was no other than such a man as himself. And when our Lord, by a stupendous act of condescension, stooped so low as to wash his disciples' feet, St. Peter could by no means be persuaded to admit of it, neither could he be induced personally to accept it, till Christ was in a sort forced to threaten him into obedience, and a compliance with it, St. John xiii. 8. Observe, How admirable was his love unto, and burning his zeal for, his Lord and Master, insomuch that he could and did appeal to his omnipotency, for the truth and sincerity of it; *Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.* It was love that caused him to draw his sword in his Master's defence, against a band of soldiers, and an armed multitude. It was love that caused him to adventure on the greatest difficulties, and to expose his life to the greatest hazards. It was love that caused him to engage so deep, as to suffer and die, rather than deny him. These were his exemplary virtues; his failings were these: first, Too great a confidence of his own strength, notwithstanding Christ had particularly told him, that Satan had desired to winnow him as wheat. None

are so likely to be overcome by temptation, as those who are the least afraid of it; none so ready to fall, as those that think it impossible to fall. It is a dangerous thing to believe, that, because we have so long kept our innocence, we can never lose it; and to conclude, because we have been once or twice victorious over temptations, we must be ever conquerors, 1. Cor. x. 12. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*; that is, let him keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of his nature, and with a believing eye look up to the power and promise of God, that he may be preserved from falling, and be presented faultless in the day of Christ. Secondly, His fears overcame his faith. The insolent affronts offered to his injured Master, caused him to forget his former resolutions, and instead of being a valiant confessor, he turns a shameful renegade, renouncing him for whom a little before he resolved to die. Learn hence, That slavish fear is a most tumultuous and ungovernable passion; its powerful assaults not only vanquish the strongest reason, but sometimes overcome the strongest faith. It is a weapon which the tempter uses, to the discomfort of some, and destruction of others, and therefore ought to be guarded against by those who set any value on the peace and comfort of their souls. Thirdly, One sin drew on another: his sinful equivocation in saying, *I know not the man*, prepared him for a downright denial, and that for an abjuration of him, with an imprecation and an anathema, swearing that he knew not the man. "Ah! Peter, is this thy owning thy Lord? Is this thy not being offended, though all should be offended? Is this thy dying with him, rather than deny him? What! hast thou forgot all thy promises and engagements to him, and all the dear and sweet pledges of love, so lately shown to thee? Surely I have learned from thy example, that it is as dangerous to trust a heart of flesh, as to rely upon an arm of flesh; for had not thy denied and forsaken Master prayed for thee, and timely succoured thee, Satan would not only have winnowed thee like wheat, but ground thee to powder." Fourthly, Observe how many complicated sins were included in this sin of Peter's: the highest ingratitude to his Master; unpardonable rashness, in venturing into such company, tarrying there so long, and without a call; making bold with temptation; and for a time there was impenitence and hardness of heart.

It is holy and safe to resist the beginnings of sin; if we yield to Satan in one temptation, he will certainly assault us with more, and stronger. Peter proceeded here from a denial to a lye, from a lye to an oath, and from an oath to a curse. Let us resist sin at first, for then have we most power, and sin has least. "And the Lord looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and went out, and wept bitterly." Observe, If Christ had not looked towards Peter, Peter would never more have looked after Christ; nor was it barely the turn of Christ's bodily eye that brought this disciple to a sorrowful remembrance of his sin; had not this outward look been accompanied with the inward and secret influences of the Spirit, it had certainly proved ineffectual. Christ looked on Judas after his treason, aye, and reproved him too; but neither that look nor that reproof did break his heart. As the sun with the same beams softens wax and hardens clay, so a look from the same Christ leaves Judas hard and impenitent, and melts down Peter into tears. Though none can say, that tears are always a sign of true repentance, yet certainly when they flow from a heart duly sensible of sin, and deeply affected with sorrow, it adminis-

ters matters of hope, that there is sincere repentance. Peter, after he had wept bitterly for sin, never more returned to the after commission of sin: but he that was before timorous as an hare, became afterwards bold as a lion. He that once so shamefully denied, nay, abjured his Master, afterwards openly confessed him, and sealed that confession joyfully with his blood. It is usually observed, that a broken bone once well set, never more breaks again in the same place; a returning backslider, when once restored, contracts such an hatred of former sins, as never, never more to run into the commission of them. Let St. Peter's fall then, be a warning to all professors, against presumptuous confidence, and his restoration be an encouragement to all backsliders to renew their faith and repentance. Amen.

CHAP. XV.

AND, straightway in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of Judas' treason, in delivering our Saviour into the hands of the chief priests. In this chapter we find our Lord brought by the chief priests unto Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, in order to his condemnation. Whence observe, That it has been the old policy of corrupt church-governors, to abuse the power of the civil magistrate, in executing their cruel and unjust censures and sentences upon holy and innocent persons. The chief priests and elders do not kill our Saviour themselves, for it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, being themselves under the power of the Roman government; accordingly they deliver Christ over to the secular power, and desire Pilate, the civil magistrate, to sentence and condemn him.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he, answering, said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing.

4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold, how many things they witness against thee.

5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

It is very observable, how readily our Saviour answers before Pilate; Pilate said, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest it*; or, it is as thou sayest. But to all the accusations of the chief priests, and to all

that they falsely laid to his charge before Pilate, our Saviour answered never a word. He answered Pilate, but would not answer the chief priests a word before Pilate; probably for these reasons, because his innocency was such as needed no apology; because their calumnies and accusations were so notoriously false, that they needed no confutations to shew his contempt of death, and teach us, by his example, to despise the false accusations of malicious men, and to learn us patience and submission, when for his sake we are slandered and traduced; for these reasons our Saviour was as a deaf man, not answering the calumnies of the chief priests: but when Pilate asks him a question, which our Saviour knew that a direct answer to would cost him his life, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* He replies, *I am.* Hence says the apostle, 1. Tim. vi. 13. that *Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.* Teaching us, That although we may, and sometimes ought to hold our peace, when our own reputation is concerned, yet must we never be silent when the honour of God and his truth may effectually be promoted by a full confession: "For says Christ, whosoever denies me before man, him will I deny in the presence of my Father, and before all his holy angels."

6 Now at *that feast* he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was *one*, named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire *him to do as he had ever done* unto them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10 (For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.)

11 But the chief priests moved the people, to desire that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate answered, and said again unto them, What will ye then that I should do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 ¶ And so Pilate, willing to content

the people released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Now at *that feast*, that is, at the feast of the passover, which by way of eminency is called *the feast*, the governor used to release a prisoner; possibly by way of memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt; accordingly Pilate makes a motion that Christ may be the prisoner set at liberty in honour of their feast; for he was sensible that what they did was out of envy and malice. Observe here, 1. What were the sins which immediately occasioned the death of Christ; they were covetousness and envy. Covetousness caused Judas to sell him to the chief priests, and envy caused the chief priests to deliver him up to Pilate to crucify him. Envy is a killing and murdering passion; *Envy slayeth the silly one*, Job v. 2. That is, it slayeth the silly person who harbours this pestilent lust in his breast and bosom; being like a fire in his bones, continually preying upon his spirits; and it is also the occasion of slaying many an holy and innocent person; for who can stand before envy? The person envying wishes the envied out of his way, yea, out of the world; and if need be, will not only wish it, but lend a lift upon occasion toward it also. Witness the chief priests here, whose envy was so conspicuous and barefaced, that Pilate himself takes notice of it; he knew that the Chief Priests had delivered him for envy. Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death. One while he expostulates with the chief priests, saying, *What evil hath he done?* Another while he bids them, *Take him, and judge him according to their law.* Nay, St. Luke says, that Pilate came forth three several times, professing, *That he found no fault in him.* Luke xxviii. From hence note, That hypocrites within the visible church may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of infidels and pagans without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, lastly, How Pilate suffers himself to be overcome with the Jews' importunity, and, contrary to the light of his own reason and judgment, delivers the holy and innocent Jesus, first to be scourged, and then crucified. It is a vain apology for sin, when persons pretend that it was not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others; such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that one can make him either wicked or miserable without his own consent. Pilate willing to content the people, *When he had scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.* Here observe, That as the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans first to whip their malefactors and then crucify them. Now the manner of the Romans' scourging is said to be thus: "They stripped the condemned person, and bound him to a post; two strong men first scourged him with rods of thorns, then two others scourged him with whips of thorns full of knots, and last of all two more with whips of wire, and therewith tore off the very flesh and skin from the malefactor's back and sides." That our blessed Saviour was thus cruelly scourged by Pilate's command, seems to some not improba-

ble, from that of the psalmist, Psal. cxxix. 3. *The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows: which if spoken prophetically of Christ, was literally fulfilled in the day of his scourging. But why was the precious and tender body of our holy Lord thus galled, rent, and torn with scourging? Doubtless to fulfil that prophecy, Isaiah l. 6. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that pluck off the hair; that by his stripes we might be healed;" and from his example, learn, Not to think it strange, if we find ourselves scourged with the tongue, with the hands, or with both, when we see our dear Redeemer bleeding by stripes and scourges before our eyes.*

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshipped him.

20 And, when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

The next part of our Saviour's sufferings, consisted of cruel mockings: he had owned himself to be the king of the Jews; that is, a spiritual King in and over his church; but the Jews expecting that the Messiah should have appeared in the pomp of an earthly prince, and finding themselves disappointed of their expectation in our Saviour, they look upon him as a deceiver and impostor; and accordingly treat him as a mock-king, with all the marks of derision and scorn; for first they put a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and cruel one, *a crown of thorns*; they place a sceptre in his hand, but that of a reed; *a robe of scarlet or purple* upon his body, and then bowed their knees before him, as they were wont to do before their princes, crying, *Hail, King*. Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable put upon our dear Redeemer; yet what they did in jest God permitted to be in earnest. For all these things were signs and marks of sovereignty; and Almighty God caused the regal dignity of his Son to shine forth, even in the midst of his greatest abasement; whence was all his jeering and sport, but to flout majesty? And why did Christ undergo all this ignominy, disgrace, and shame, but to shew what was due unto us for our sins? as also to give us an example to bear all the scorn, reproach, and shame imaginable for his sake: "who for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame, as well as endured the cross."

21 And they compel one Simon, a

Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a scull.

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 ¶ And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said, among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

33 And, when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36 And one ran, and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can with dry eyes, behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's bloody execution? Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gate, bearing that cross which was soon after to bear him; with his cross on his shoulder, he marches towards Golgotha; and when they see he can go no faster, they force Simon the Cyrenian, not out of compassion but indignation, to be the porter of his cross. This Cyrenian being a Gentile, not a Jew, that bare our Saviour's cross, thereby might be signified that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ, as well as the Jews, and be sharers with them in the benefits of the cross. At length our holy Lord comes to Golgotha, the place of his bitter and bloody execution; here, in a public place, with infamous company, betwixt two thieves, is he crucified; that is fastened to a great cross of wood, his hands stretched forth abroad, and his feet closed together, and both hands and feet fastened with nails; his naked body was lifted up in the air, hanging betwixt heaven and earth; signifying thereby, that the crucified person deserved to live in neither. This shameful, painful, and accursed death, did the holy and innocent Jesus suffer and undergo, for shameless sinners. Some observe all the dimensions of length, breadth, depth, and height, in our Saviour's sufferings; for length, his passion was several hours long, from twelve to three, exposed all that time both to hunger and cold. The thieves that were crucified with him, endured only personal pains, but he underwent the miseries of all mankind. As to its breadth, his passion extended over all the powers and parts of his soul and body; no part free but his tongue, which was at liberty to pray for his enemies. His sight was tormented with the scornful gestures of those who passed by, wagging their heads; his hearing grieved with taunts and jeers of the priests and people; his smelling offended with noisome savours in the place of sculls; his taste with the gall and vinegar given him to drink; his feeling was wonderfully affected by the nails which pierced his tender nerves with a multiplicity of wounds; and for the depth of his passion, it was as deep as hell itself; enduring torture in his soul, as well as torments in his body; groaning under the burden of desertion, and crying out, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Lastly, for the height of his passion, his sufferings were as high as heaven, his person being infinite as well as innocent, no less than the son of God, which adds infinite worth and value to his sufferings, Lord, "Let us be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the

breadth and length, depth and height, of our Saviour's love," in suffering for us, "and let us know that love of his which passeth knowledge." Observe next, The inscription wrote by Pilate over our suffering Saviour, *This is Jesus the King of the Jews*; it was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters, placed over the head of the person. Now it is observable, How wonderfully the wisdom of God over-ruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw his title, which was truly honourable, and fix it to his cross; Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him *King of the Jews*. Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in a time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches; Pilate, without his own knowledge, did our Saviour an eminent piece of service; he did that for Christ which none of his own disciples durst do: not that he did it designedly, but from the special overruling providence of God: no thanks to Pilate for all this, because the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly, shall neither be accepted nor rewarded by God. Observe farther, The several aggravations of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross. 1. From the company, he suffered with *two thieves*: it had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Saviour to have been sorted with the best of men; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity, as confounds our thoughts. This was designed by the Jews to dishonour and disgrace our Saviour the more, and persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders; but God over-ruled this also, for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messiah, Isa. liii. last verse: "And he was numbered with the transgressors." 2. Another aggravation of our Lord's suffering upon the cross, was the scorn and mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments, both from the common people, from the chief priests, and from the thieves that suffered with him. The common people *reviled him, wagging their heads*: the chief priests, though men of age and gravity, yet barbarously mocked him in his misery; and not only so, but they atheistically scoff and jeer at his faith and affiance in God, saying, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him if he would have him."

Where note, That persecutors are generally atheistical scoffers; the chief priests and elders, though knowing men, yet they blaspheme God; they mock at his power, and deride his providence, which is as bad as to deny his being; so that from hence we may gather, That those who administer to God in holy things, by way of office, if they be not the best, they are the worst of men. No such bitter enemies to the power of godliness, as the ministers of religion, who were never acquainted with the efficacy and power of it upon their own hearts and lives. Nothing on this side hell is worse than a wicked priest, a minister of God devoted to the service of the devil. A third aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross, was this, that the thieves that suffered with him, reviled him with the rest: that is, one of them, as St. Luke has it, or perhaps both of them might do it at first: which, if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the penitent thief's reviling Christ, we learn, That neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner, but even then, when he is in the suburbs of hell, will he blaspheme: *They*

that were crucified with him reviled him. But the most aggravating circumstance of all the rest in our Lord's sufferings, was this, That he was forsaken of his father; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Thence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ, when suffering for our sins, was really deserted and forsaken by his Father, and left destitute of all sensible consolation! *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Learn farther, That under this desertion Christ despaired not, but still retained a firm persuasion of God's love unto him, and experienced necessary supports from him: *My God, my God*, these are words of affiance and faith. Christ was thus forsaken for us, that we might never be forsaken by God; yet by God's forsaking of Christ, we are not to understand any abatement of divine love, but only a withdrawing from the human nature the sense of his love, and a letting out upon his soul, a deep, afflicting sense of his displeasure against sin. There is a twofold desertion; the one total, final, and eternal, by which God utterly forsakes a person, both as to grace and glory, being for sin wholly cast out of God's presence, and adjudged to eternal torments. This Christ was not capable of, nor could the dignity of his person admit it. The other is a partial temporary desertion; when God for a little moment hides his face from his children. Now this was most agreeable to Christ's nature, and also suitable to his office, who was to satisfy the justice of God for our forsaking of him, and to bring us back again to God, that we might be received for ever. Observe, lastly, What a miraculous evidence Christ gave of his Godhead; instantly before he gave up the ghost, *he cried with a loud voice*. This shews he did not die according to the ordinary course of nature, gradually drawing on, as we express it; but his life was whole in him to the last, and nature as strong as it was at first. Other men die by degrees, and towards their end their sense of pain is much blunted: but Christ stood under the pains of death in his full strength, and his life was whole and entire in him to the very last moment. This was evident by the mighty outcry he made when he gave up the ghost, contrary to the sense and experience of all persons. Now he that could cry with such a loud voice as he did (*in articulo mortis*) could have kept himself from dying, if he would. Hence we learn, That when Christ died, he rather conquered death, than was conquered by it, he most voluntarily and freely laid down his life, before death could come at him. Thus died Christ, the captain of our salvation; and, like Sampson, became more victorious by his death, than he was in his life.

38 And the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

40 There were also women looking on afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome;

41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Three circumstances are here observable; 1. A stupendous prodigy happening, upon the death of our Saviour, *The vail of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom*: the vail was a hanging which parted the most holy place from the holy sanctuary. By the reading of which, God testified that he was now about to forsake his temple; that the ceremonial law was now abolished by the death of Christ, and that by the blood of Jesus we have access unto God, and may enter into the holy of holies. See the note on Matt. xxvii. 51. Observe, 2. What influence the manner and circumstances of our Saviour's death had upon the mind of the centurion, and the soldiers with him; they cry, *Verily this was the Son of God*. Where, observe, That the heathen soldiers were sooner convinced of the divinity of our Saviour than the unbelieving Jewish doctors. Obstinacy and unbelief filled their minds with an invincible prejudice against Christ, so that neither the miracles wrought by him in his life, or at his death, could convince them that Christ was any thing better than an impostor or deceiver. None are so blind as those who through malicious obstinacy and inveterate prejudice will not see. Observe, 3. Who of Christ's friends were witnesses of his death; they are *the women that followed him, and ministered unto him*; not one of his dear disciples came near him, except John, who stood by the virgin Mary. O what a shame was this, for the apostles to be absent from a spectacle upon which the salvation of the world did depend! And what an honour was this to the female sex in general, and to these holy women in particular, that they had the courage to follow Christ to his cross, when all his disciples forsook him and fled! God can make timorous and fearful women bold and courageous confessors of his truth, and fortify them against the fears of suffering, contrary to the natural timorousness of their temper: These women wait upon Christ's cross when his apostles fly, and durst not come nigh it.

42 ¶ And now, when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath;

43 Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45 And, when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of Joses, beheld where he was laid.

The circumstances of our Lord's funeral, and honourable interment in the grave, are here recorded by the evangelist; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried; the dead bodies of malefactors benign in the power; and at the disposal of the judge. Pilate grants it, and accordingly the dead body is taken down, wrapped in fine linen, and prepared for the sepulchre. Observe, 2. The person that bestows this honourable burial upon our Saviour, Joseph of Arimathea; a disciple no doubt, though he did not make a public and open profession; a worthy, though a close disciple. Grace doth not always make a public and open shew where it is; as there is much secret riches in the bowels of the earth, which no eye ever saw, so there is much grace in the hearts of some Christians, that the eye of the world takes little notice of. Some gracious persons cannot put forward, and discover themselves, in discourse as others; and yet such weak Christians, as the world count them, perhaps shall stand their ground when stronger run away. We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral; fear had chased them away; but Joseph of Arimathea appears boldly; if God strengthens the weak, and leaves the strong to the prevalency of their own fears, *The weak shall be as David, the strong as tow.* Observe, 3. The mourners that followed our Saviour's hearse, namely, the women which came out of Galilee, particularly the two Marys; a very poor train of mourners; the apostles were all scattered, and afraid to own their Lord and Master, either dying or dead. And as our Lord affected no pomp or gallantry in his life, so funeral pomp had been no way suitable, either to the end or manner of his death. Humiliation was designed in his death, and his burial was the lowest degree of humiliation, therefore might not be pompous. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre where our Lord was buried: it was in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock; in a new sepulchre: in a new sepulchre in a garden. 1. Our Lord was buried in a garden: as by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise; so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. 2. It was in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock; that so his enemies might have no occasion to cavil, and say, that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, or unseen passages under ground. 3. It was in a new sepulchre, in which never man was laid; lest his adversaries should say, it was some other that was risen, who was buried there before him; or that he arose from the dead by touching some other corpse. Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral; it was hasty, open, and decent; it was performed in haste, by reason of the straits of time;

the sabbath was approaching, and they lay all business aside to prepare for that. Learn hence, How much it is our duty to dispatch our worldly business, as early as we can, towards the end of the week, that we may be the better prepared to sanctify the Lord's day, if we live to enjoy it. Hence it is that we are called upon to remember that day before it comes, and to sanctify it when it is come. Again, The Lord was buried openly, as well as hastily; all persons had liberty to be spectators, lest any should object that there was deceit and fraud used in or about our Saviour's burial: yet was he also interred decently, his holy body being wrapped in fine linen, and perfumed with spices, according to the Jewish custom. Observe, 6. The reasons why our Lord was buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls: and had his body remained a thousand years unburied, it would have seen no corruption, having never been tainted with sin. Sin is the cause of the body's corruption; it is sin that makes our bodies stink worse than carrion when they are dead. A funeral then was not necessary for Christ's body upon the same account as it was necessary for ours. But, 1. Our Lord was buried to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection; and for this reason did God's providence order it, that he should be embalmed, to cut off all pretensions; for in this kind of embalming, his mouth, his ears, and his nostrils, were all filled with odours and spices, that there could be no latent principle of life in him; his being thus buried then, did demonstrate him to be certainly dead. 2. Christ was buried, to fulfil the types and prophecies that went before concerning him. "Jonas' being three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of Christ's being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;" yea, the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 9, declared our Lord's funeral, and the manner of it, long before he was born; "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;" pointing by that expression at this tomb of Joseph's who was a rich man, and laid him in a tomb designed for himself. 3. He was buried to complete his humiliation. "They have brought me to the dust of death," says David, a type of Christ. This was the lowest step he could possibly descend in his abased state; lower he could not be laid, and so low his blessed head must be laid, else he had not been humble to the lowest degree of humiliation. 4. Christ went into the grave, that he might conquer death in his own territories and dominions. His victory over the grave causes his saints to triumph and sing, *O grave where is thy destruction!* Our dear Redeemer has perfumed the bed of the grave by his own lying in it, so that a pillow of down is not so soft to a believer's head as a pillow of dust. Observe lastly, Of what use the doctrine of the Lord's burial may be unto us his disciples and followers; 1. For instruction. Here we see the amazing depths of our Lord's humiliation; from what, and to what, his love brought him; even from the bosom of his Father, to the bosom of the grave. O how doth the depth of humiliation shew us the sufficiency of his satisfaction, and therein the heinousness of our transgression! 2. For consolation against the fears of death and the grave; the grave received Christ, but could not retain him; death swallowed him up, as the fish did Jonas, but quickly vomited him up again: and so shall it fare with Christ mystical, as it did with Christ

personal. As it was done to the head, so it shall be done to the members: the grave could not long keep him, it shall not always keep us: as his body rested in hope so shall ours also; and although we see corruption, yet shall we not always lie under the power of corruption. In short, Christ's lying in the grave has changed and altered the nature of the grave; it was a prison before, a bed of rest now; a loathsome grave before, a perfumed bed now; he whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave; "Awake, and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust," for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ. 3. For our imitation: let us study and endeavour to be buried with Christ; in respect of our sins, I mean, Rom. vi. 4. *Buried with him into death.* Our sins should be as a dead body in several respects. Are dead bodies removed out of the society of men? So should our sins be removed far from us. Do dead bodies in the grave spend and consume by degrees? So should our sins daily. Will dead bodies grow every day more and more loathsome to others? So should our sins be to ourselves. Do dead bodies wax out of memory, and are quite forgotten? So should our sins also, in respect of any delight that we take in remembering of them: we should always remember our sins to our humiliation, but never speak of them with the least delight or satisfaction; for this, in God's account, is a new commission of them, and lays us under an aggravated guilt and condemnation.

CHAP. XVI.

This last chapter of St. Mark's gospel contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives us an account of what he did upon earth, between the time of his triumphant resurrection, and his glorious ascension.

AND, when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

The Lord of life was buried on the Friday, in the evening of that day on which he was crucified, and his holy body rested in the silent grave all the next day, and some part of the day following. Thus arose he again the third day, neither sooner nor later: not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned, that he did not die at all; and not later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. Accordingly when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene

getting the other women together, she and they set out before day to visit the holy sepulchre; and about sun-rising they get to it, intending with their spices and odours farther to embalm their Lord's body. Here observe, 1. That although the hearts of these holy women did burn with an ardent zeal and affection to their crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they keep close, and silently spend that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope. A good pattern of sabbath-sanctification, and worthy of our Christian imitation. Observe, 2. These holy women go, but not empty-handed; she that bestowed a costly alabaster box of ointment upon Christ whilst alive, has prepared no less precious odours for him now dead: thereby paying their last homage to our Saviour's corpse. But what need of odours to perfume a body which could not see corruption: True, his holy body did not want them, but the love and affection of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, 3. How great a tribute of respect and honour is due and payable to the memory of these holy women, for their great magnanimity and courage; they followed Christ when his cowardly disciples left him; they accompanied him to the cross, they followed his bier to the grave, when his disciples durst not appear; and now, very early in the morning, they go to visit his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen. Learn hence, That courage is the special gift of God, and if he gives it to the feebler sex, even to timorous and fearful women, it is not in the power of men to make them afraid.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is risen: he is not here; behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre: for they trembled, and were amazed; and neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Observe here, 1. With what pomp and triumph doth our Lord arise; an angel is sent from heaven to roll away the stone. But could not Christ have risen without the angel's help? yes, doubtless; he that raised himself, could surely have rolled away the stone; but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave, and by setting our surety at liberty, proclaims our debt to the divine justice fully satisfied. Besides, it was fit that the angels who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Observe, 2. Our Lord's resurrection declared, *He is risen, he is not here*. Almighty God never intended that the darling of his soul should be left in an obscure sepulchre; *He is not here*, said the angel, where they laid him, where you left him. Death has lost its prey, and the grave has lost its prisoner. Observe, 3. It is not said, he is not here, for he is raised, but, *He is risen*. The word imports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickening principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead, Acts i. 3. *He shewed himself alive after his passion*. Hence learn, That it was the divine nature, or godhead, of Christ, which raised the human nature from death to life: others were raised from the grave by Christ's power; but he raised himself by his own power. Observe, 4. The testimony or witness given of our Lord's resurrection; that of an angel in human shape. *A young man clothed in a long white garment*. But why is an angel the first publisher of our Saviour's resurrection? Surely the dignity of our Lord's person, and the excellency of his resurrection require that it should be thus published. How very serviceable and officious the holy angels were in attending upon our Saviour in the days of his flesh, see in the note on Matt. xxviii. 6, 7. Observe, 5. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first declared and made known; to women, to the two Marys. But why to women? And why to these women? Why to women? Because God will make use of weak means for producing great effects; knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, God intermixes divine power with human weakness. Thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost, but his mother was a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse; so the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves. But the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, the graves opening, shewed a mixture of divine power. Thus here God will honour what instruments he pleases for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these women, the two Marys, is the first discovery made of our Saviour's resurrection? Possibly it was a reward for their magnanimity and masculine courage; these women cleaved to Christ when the apostles forsook him; they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they waited at his sepulchre; these women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes them apostles to the apostles, this was a tacit rebuke, a secret check given to the apostles, that they should be out-done by women; these holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles come after them in their rewards and comforts. Observe, 6. The evidence which the angel offers to the women, to evince and prove the verity and certainty of our Saviour's resurrection, namely, by

an appeal to their senses; "Behold the place where they laid him:" the senses, when rightly disposed, are the proper judges of all sensible objects, and accordingly Christ himself did appeal to his disciples' senses concerning the truth of his own resurrection: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." And, indeed, if we must not believe our senses, we shall want the best external evidence for the proof of the certainty and truth of the Christian religion; namely, the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles: for what assurance can we have of the reality of those miracles, but from our senses? Therefore, says our Saviour, "If you believe not me, yet believe the works that I do:" that is, the miracles which I have wrought before your eyes. Now as my senses tell me that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure me that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false. From the whole, note, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotent power of his godhead, revived and rose again from the dead the third day, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable joy and consolation of believers. Observe, lastly, The quick dispatch made of the joyful news of our Lord's resurrection to the sorrowful disciples: *Go tell the disciples*, says the angel; *Go tell my brethren*, says Christ, Matt. xxviii. 10. Christ might have said, "Go tell those apostate apostles, that cowardly left me in my danger, that durst not own me in the high priest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, nor within sight of my sepulchre;" not a word of this, by way of upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice, but all words of kindness; *Go tell my brethren*. Where note, That Christ calls them brethren after his resurrection and exaltation; whereby shewing that the change in his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples; but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his abasement, are still so after his exaltation and advancement; *Go tell my brethren*, says Christ; *Go tell his disciples and Peter*, says the angel. Where note, That St. Peter is here particularly named, not because of his primacy and superiority over the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome would have it, but because he had denied Christ, and for that denial was swallowed up with sorrow, and stood most in need of comfort; therefore, says Christ by an angel, speak particularly to Peter, be sure that his sad heart be comforted with this joyful news, that he may know that I am friends with him, notwithstanding his late cowardice; "Tell the disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee." But why into Galilee? because Jerusalem was now a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction; but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry was more acceptable. Such places shall be most honoured with Christ's presence, where his gospel is most accepted.

9. ¶ Now, when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept,

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12 After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country.

13 And they went and told it unto the residue : neither believed they them.

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

An account is here given of a threefold appearance of Christ after his resurrection. 1. To Mary Magdalene, not to the virgin Mary; and it is observable, That our blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, first appeared to Mary Magdalene, a grievous sinner, for the comfort of all true penitents. Mary goes immediately to his disciples, whom she finds weeping and mourning, and tells them, *She had seen the Lord ; but they believed her not.* The second appearance was to the two disciples going into the country, that is, into the village of Emmaus; as they were in the way, Jesus joined himself to their company, *but their eyes were holden by the power of God, that they did not discern him in his own proper shape, but apprehended him to be another person whom they conversed with.* His third appearance was to the eleven as they sat at meat, whom he upbraids with their unbelief; and to convince them effectually that he was risen from the dead, *he eats with them a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.* Not that he needed it, seeing he was now become immortal, but to assure them that he had still the same body. From the whole note, How industriously our Lord endeavours to confirm his disciples' faith in the doctrine of his resurrection: so slack and backward were they to believe that the Messiah was risen from the dead, that all the predictions of scripture, all the assurances they had received from our Saviour's mouth, yea, all the appearances of our Saviour to them, after he was actually risen from the dead, were little enough to confirm and establish them in the certain belief that he was risen from the dead.

15 ¶ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

Here our Saviour gives commission to his disciples to congregate and gather a Christian church out of all nations, *to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature ;* that is, to all reasonable creatures that are capable of it; not to the Jews

only, but to the Gentiles also, without any distinction of country, age, or sex whatsoever. Learn thence, That the apostles and first planters of the gospel had a commission from Christ to go amongst the Pagan Gentiles, without limitation or distinction, to instruct them in the saving mysteries of the gospel. The second branch of their commission was, to baptize. Where observe the encouraging promise made by Christ, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ;* that is, he that receiveth and embraceth the gospel preached by you, and thereupon becomes a proselyte and disciple of Christ, and receives baptism, the seal of the new covenant, shall for all his former sins receive pardon, and upon his perseverance obtain eternal life; but he that stands out obstinately and impenitently shall certainly be damned. The two damning sins under the gospel, are infidelity and hypocrisy; not receiving Christ for their Lord and Saviour by some, or doing this feignedly by others. Happy are they in whom the preaching of the gospel produceth such a faith as is the parent and principle of obedience; *He that so believeth and is baptized, shall be saved :* Accordingly, some paraphrase the words thus: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; that is, he shall, by virtue of the faith in baptism, be put into a state of salvation; so that if they continue in that faith, and do not wilfully recede from his baptismal covenant, he shall actually be saved." Note farther, That they who hence conclude, that infants are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe, must also hence conclude, that they cannot be saved, because they cannot believe; for faith is more expressly required to salvation, than to baptism. Note lastly, that though it be said, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ;* it is not said, *He that is not baptized, shall be damned ;* because it is not the want, but the contempt of baptism that damns, otherwise infants might be damned for their parents' neglects.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues:

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Here we have a gracious promise of Christ, that in order to the spreading and propagating the gospel, as far as may be, the Spirit should be poured forth abundantly from on high upon the apostles, and thereby they should be enabled to work miracles, to cast out devils, to speak strange languages, which we read they did, Acts ii. And this power of working miracles, continued in the church an hundred years after Christ's ascension, until Christianity had taken root in the hearts of men. Iræneus lib. ii. ch. 58, says, that many believers, besides the apostles, had this power of working miracles; as new-set plants are watered at first, till they have taken fast rooting, so, that the Christian faith might grow the faster, God watered it with miracles at his first plantation, Yet observe, That all the miracles which they had power to work, were

healing and beneficent; not terrifying judgments, but acts of kindness and mercy. It was our Saviour's design to bring over persons to Christianity by lenity, mildness, and gentleness, not to affright them into a compliance with astonishing judgment, which might affect their fear, but little influence their faith; for the will and consent of persons to the principles of any religion, especially the Christian, is like a royal fort which must not be stormed by violence, but taken by surrender.

19 ¶ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Here we have that grand article of our Christian faith asserted, namely, our Saviour's ascension into heaven, together with his exaltation there, expressed by his sitting at God's right hand; he ascended now to heaven in his human nature, for in his divine nature he was there already; and it was necessary that he should thus ascend, in order to his own personal exaltation and glorification. When he was on earth, his humility, patience, and self-denial, were exercised by undergoing God's wrath, the devil's rage, and man's cruelty; now he goes to heaven, that they may be rewarded; he that is a patient sufferer upon earth, shall be a triumphant conqueror in heaven; also with respect to his church on earth, it was necessary that our Lord should ascend up into heaven, namely, to send down the Holy Spirit upon his apostles, which he did at the feast of Pentecost. "If I go not away, (says Christ,) the comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you;" and likewise to be a powerful advocate and intercessor with his Father in heaven; on the behalf of his church and children here upon earth. Heb. ix. 24. "Christ is entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us." Finally, Christ ascended into heaven, to give us an assurance, that in due time we should ascend after him, John xiv. 2. "I go to prepare a place for you." Hence the apostle calls our Saviour, our forerunner, Heb. vi. 19. Now if Christ in his ascension, was a forerunner, then there are some to follow after. To the same purpose is that expression of the apostle, Eph. ii. 6. "He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ;" that is, we are already sat down in him, and, ere long, shall sit down by him as his members. The only way to this, namely, to ascend unto, and sit down with Christ in heaven, is to live like him, and to live unto him, here on earth; "If any man love me he will follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be," St. John xii. 26.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Observe here, first, the general publication of the gospel by the apostles; they went and preached every where. Secondly, the reason of the efficacy and success of it; namely, that divine and miraculous power which accompanied the preaching of it; "The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following." Observe, 1. The general publication of the gospel by the apostles: "they went forth and preached every where." The industry of the holy apostles was incredibly great, yet was their success greater than their industry; even beyond all human expectation; which will evidently appear, if we consider, 1. The vast spreading of the gospel so far in so short a space of time; for in thirty years' time after Christ's death, it was spread through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and reached as far as Parthia and India. 3. The wonderful power and efficacy which the gospel had upon the lives and manners of men; the generality of those that entertained the gospel were obedient to it, both in word and deed; because christianity being an hated and persecuted profession, no man could have any inducement to embrace it, that did not resolve to practice it, and live up to it. 3. The weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in propagating the gospel, shews the success of it to be very great and strange, a company of plain and illiterate men, most of them destitute of the advantages of education, and unassisted by the countenance of any authority whatsoever; yet did they in a short space, draw the world after them. The powerful opposition which was raised against the gospel, namely, the prejudices of education, the power of in-dwelling lusts, and also the powers of the world then in being, did strongly combine against it: yet did Christianity bear up against all this opposition, and made its way through all the resistance that the lusts and prejudices of men, armed with the power and authority of the whole world, could make against it. 4. The great discouragements that men were then under to embrace the gospel and the Christian profession; all the evils of this world threatened them, mockings and scourgings, banishments and imprisonments, reproach and ruin; death in all its fearful shapes, was presented to them, to deter them from embracing this religion. Observe therefore, 2. The reason of this wonderful success, "The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following." "The Lord wrought with them;" This points at the inward operation of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of men. O! it is sweet and prosperous working in fellowship with Christ and his Holy Spirit; he directs his ministers, he assists them, he guides their lips, influences their minds, quickens their affections, sets home their instructions, and crowns all their endeavours with his blessing. "And confirmed the word with signs:" that is, confirmed their doctrine with miracles, such as healing diseases, raising the dead, casting out devils, inflicting corporal diseases on scandalous persons, and sometimes death itself. From the whole, we gather the truth and divinity of the Christian religion; that it was, and is certainly, of God; and therefore never could, never can, be overthrown.

THE END OF ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.



THE

Holy Gospel according to St. Luke.

CHAP. I.

FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word ;

3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

This gospel, together with the Acts of the Apostles, were written by St. Luke, the beloved physician and companion of St. Paul, who wrote, as did the rest of the evangelists, by the special direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost : where we may profitably remark the wonderful wisdom of God, who, in order to the confirming of our faith in the truth of the gospel, raised up a sufficient number of witnesses to testify the verity and infallible certainty of all that the gospel delivers unto us. Now this evangelist, St. Luke, dedicates this gospel, together with all Acts of the Apostles, to Theophilus, who was, as some think, an honourable senator ; or a renowned and eminent person in the church, as

others suppose ; but many take the word Theophilus, not for a proper name, but common name, signifying every one that loveth God ; to whom St. Luke addresses his discourse. The first four verses of this chapter are a preface to the following history, and acquaints us with the reasons which induced St. Luke to write, namely, because divers persons in that age had imprudently and inconsiderately set upon writing gospels, without direction from the Spirit of God, whose errors and mistakes were to be corrected by a true narrative. This St. Luke declares he was able to make, having had perfect understanding and knowledge of the truth of those things he was about to relate : partly by his familiarity with St. Paul, and partly by his conversation with the other apostles, who, constantly attending our Saviour, were eye and ear witnesses of those things that are the subject matter of the ensuing history. Hence learn, 1. That there were some apocryphal writings (or writings which were not of divine authority) relating to the New Testament, as well as to the Old ; as the books of Asher, Gad, and Iddo, are recited in the Old Testament, but were never received into the canon of the scripture ; so were there some gospels, or historical relations of our Saviour's life and actions, wrote by persons which the church never received, as not having the impress of God's ordination. Note, 2. That the gospels which St. Luke and the other evangelists wrote have nothing of fallibility or uncertainty in them ; they wrote nothing but what they either heard, or saw themselves, or else received from those that were eye and ear witnesses of matter of fact. " It seemed good to me to write, having had perfect knowledge of all things from the very first."

5 **THERE** was, in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia ; and his

wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth.

In this and the following verses, the Holy Ghost gives us a description of John the Baptist, who was the harbinger and forerunner of our Saviour Christ; he is described first by his parentage, being the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. This Zachary was a priest, who had a course in the temple, or a right to officiate there when it came to his turn; for we read in 1 Chron. xxiv. 10 That "David appointed the priests, the sons of Aaron to minister by turns, and divided them into four and twenty courses," every one ministering in the temple by their weeks. Here note, That Zacharias, a priest, and attending the service of the temple, was a married person, having one of the daughters of Aaron to wife, according to the command of God, Levit. xxi. 14, where the priest is required to marry one of his own people. Learn hence, That neither the priests under the law did, nor the ministers of Christ under the Gospel ought to abhor the marriage-bed; nor to judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The doctrine of the church of Rome, "which forbids to marry," St. Paul calls "a doctrine of devils."

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Observe here, 1. The sweet harmony of this religious couple in the ways of God, "They both walked in the commandments of God." It is a happy match when husband and wife are one, not only in themselves, but in the Lord. Observe, 2. The universality of their holiness and obedience: "They walked" not in some, but "in all, the ordinances and commandments of the Lord." Such as will approve themselves to be sincerely religious, must make conscience of every known duty, and endeavour to obey every precept and command of God. Observe, 3. The high commendation which the Holy Spirit of God gives of this their religious course of holiness and obedience; they are pronounced *blameless*. He that liveth without gross sin, in the gospel sense, liveth blameless, and without sin. To live without gross sin, is our holiness upon earth; to live without any sin, will be our happiness in heaven. Many sins may be in him that has true grace; but he that has truth of grace, cannot allow himself in any sin. Such are the condescensions of the covenant of grace, that sincere obedience is called perfection. Truth of grace is our perfection on earth, but in heaven we shall have perfection as well as truth. Observe lastly, A pattern for their imitation who wait at God's altar, and are employed in and about holy things; such ought all the ministers of the gospel and their wives to be, what Zacharias and Elizabeth are here said to be, namely, *blameless*; that is, very innocent and inoffensive in their daily conversation.

7 And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

Observe here, 1. This holy pair, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were fruitful in holy obedience, but barren in children; a fruitful soul and a barren womb are consistent, and do oft-times meet together. This religious couple made no less progress in virtue than in age, and yet their virtue could not make their age fruitful. Observe, 2. Elizabeth was barren in the flower of her age, but much more so in old age. Here was a double obstacle, and consequently a double instance of the divine power in the birth of John the Baptist, shewing him to be a prophet very extraordinary, and miraculously sent by God. Observe, 3. That when Almighty God in old time did long delay to give the blessing of children to holy women, he rewarded their expectation with the birth of some eminent and extraordinary person; thus Sarah after long barrenness, brought forth an Isaac; Rebecca, a Jacob; Rachael, a Joseph; Hannah, a Samuel; and Elizabeth, St. John the Baptist. When God makes his people wait long for a particular mercy, he gives it in at last with a double reward for their expectation.

8 And it came to pass, that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

Here note, 1. That none but a son of Aaron might offer incense to God in the temple; and not every son of Aaron neither: nay, not any of them at all seasons. God is a God of order, and hates confusion no less than irreligion. And, as under the law of old, so under the gospel of this day, "No man ought to take this honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Observe, 2. That there were courses of ministration in the legal services, in which the priests did relieve one another weekly. God never purposed to burthen any of his servants with devotion, nor is he pleased when his service is made burthensome, either to or by his ministers. Many of the sons of Aaron served together in the temple, according to the variety of their employments, which were assigned them by lot: and accordingly, it fell out this time, that Zachary was chosen by lot to burn incense. Observe, 3. That morning and evening, twice a day, the priests offered up their incense to God, that both parts of the day might be consecrated to him, who was the Maker and Giver of their time. This incense offered under the law, represents our prayers offered to God, under the gospel. These Almighty God expects that we should, all his church over, send up to him morning and evening. The ejaculatory elevations of our hearts should be perpetual; but if twice a day we do not present God with our solemn invocation, we make the gospel less officious than the law; and can we reasonably think that Almighty God will accept of less now, than would content him then?

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

Observe here, 1. While the incense was burning, the people were praying; while the priest sends up his incense in the temple within, the people send up their prayers in the court without. The incense of the priest and the prayers of the people meet, and go up to heaven together. Hence learn, That it is a blessed thing when both ministers and people jointly offer up their prayers for each other at the same throne of grace, and mutually strive together in their supplications one with, and one for another. Observe, 2. How both priest and people keep their place and station; the priest burns incense in the holy place, and the people offer up their prayers in the outward court. The people might no more go into the holy place to offer up their prayers, than Zachary might go into the holy of holies to burn incense. Whilst the partition which stood betwixt Jew and Gentile, there was also a partition betwixt the Jews themselves. But now, under the gospel, every man is a priest to God, and may enter the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus. But, Lord! what are we the better for this great and gracious freedom of access to thee, if we want hearts to prize and improve our privilege from thee?

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Whilst Zachary was praying to God, an angel appears to Zachary. When we are nearest God, the good angels are highest us; they are most with us when we are most with him. The presence of angels with us is no novelty, but their apparition to us is so. They are always with us, but rarely seen by us. Let our faith see them, whom our senses cannot discern: their assumed shapes do not make them more present, but only more visible. Observe, 2. The place as well as the time where the angel appeared, in the temple and at the altar, and "on the right side of the altar of incense." As the holy angels are always present with us in our devotions, so especially in religious assemblies; as in all places, so most of all in God's house; they rejoice to be with us whilst we are with God, but they turn their faces from us when we go about our sins.

12 And when Zacharias saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

It was partly the suddenness, partly the unexpectedness, and partly the glory of the apparition, that affrighted this good man. Glorious and sudden apparitions do affright even the holiest and best of men. We cannot bear the sight and presence of an angel without consternation and fear in this our frail and sinful state. O happy, happy hour! when mortality and sin being taken out of our natures, we shall not only behold the glorified angels without fear, but the glorious God with delight and love. Lord! let me now see thee by faith, hereafter by sight. *Sit in alio seculo, non in hoc! visio tua, merces mea.* Gerson.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard;

and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Observe here, 1. How apprehensive this good angel was of Zachary's surprising fear, and encourages him against it. The holy angels, though they did not express it in words, yet they pity our frailties, and suggest comfort to us. The evil angels if they might, would kill us with terror; the good angels labour altogether for our tranquillity and cheerfulness. "The angel said unto him, Fear not." Observe, 2. The comfortable words spoken unto Zacharias: "Thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son." No doubt Zachary and Elizabeth had often prayed for a child, and now God sends them one when they least expected it. Learn hence, That sometimes God gives in a mercy to us, when we least expect it; yea, when we have given over looking for it. No doubt it was the case here, "Zachary and Elizabeth being both well stricken in age." Observe, 3. The name which the angel directed Zachary to give his son: "Thou shalt call his name John," which signifies *gracious*: because he was to open the kingdom of grace, and to preach the grace of the gospel through Jesus Christ. The giving of significant names to children has been an ancient and pious practice; names which either carried a remembrance of duty or of mercy in them.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Here the angel declared to Zachary, what kind of son should be born unto him, even one of eminent endowments, and designed for extraordinary services. The proof of children makes them either the blessings or crosses of their parents. What greater comfort could Zachary desire in a child, than is here promised to him? 1. He hears of a son that should bring joy to himself, and many others; even to all that did expect the coming of the Messiah, whose forerunner the Baptist was. 2. "That he should be great in the sight of the Lord:" that is, a person of great eminency, and great usefulness in the church. A person of great riches and reputation is great in the sight of men; but the man of great ability and usefulness, the man of great integrity and serviceableness, he is truly "great in the sight of the Lord." They are *little*

men in the sight of the Lord, that live in the world to little purposes; who do little service to God, and bring little honour and glory to him. But the man that does all the possible service he can for God, and the utmost good he is capable of doing to all mankind; he is the person *great in the sight of the Lord*; and such was the holy Baptist. 3. It is foretold, that he should *neither drink wine nor strong drink*; that is, that he should be a very temperate and abstemious person, living after the manner of the Nazarites, though he was not separated by any vow of his own or his parents, but by the special designation and appointment of God only; it was forbidden the priests, under the law, to drink either wine or strong drink, upon pain of death, during the time of their ministration, Lev. x. 9. And the ministers of Christ under the gospel are forbidden to be lovers of wine. 1 Tim. iii. 3. 4. *He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb*; that is, he shall be furnished abundantly with the extraordinary gifts and sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit, which shall very early appear to be in him, and upon him. 5. His high and honourable office is declared, that he shall go before the Messias, as his harbinger and fore-runner, with the same spirit of zeal and courage against sin, which was found in the old prophet Elias, whom he did so nearly resemble. 6. The great success of his ministry is foretold, namely, "That he should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" that is, the hearts of the Jews to the Gentiles, say some; that he should bring men, say others, even the most disobedient and rebellious pharisees and sadducees, publicans and sinners, unto repentance, unto the minding of justice and righteousness, and all moral duties; and thus *he made ready a people for the Lord*, by fitting men to receive Christ upon his own terms and conditions; namely, faith and repentance. From the whole, note, That those whom Almighty God designs for eminent usefulness in his church, he furnishes with endowments suitable to their employment; and when he calls to extraordinary service, comes in with more than ordinary assistance. Here was the Holy Baptist extraordinarily called, and as extraordinarily furnished, for his office and ministry.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias,

and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out he could not speak unto them: And they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

Observe here, Zachary being slow to believe so strange a message, asks the angel, by what sign he should know that this thing, so far above the usual course of nature, should come to pass? The angel answers, that he was dispatched by God as a messenger extraordinary, to declare this good news to him. And seeing he was so hard to believe it, and required a sign, he should have it, but such a one as should be a punishment for his unbelief, as well as a sign to confirm his faith; namely, he should from thence forward to the birth of the child, be dumb and deaf, as the original word signifies; because he had not hearkened to the angel's speech, he was struck deaf; and because he had gain-said it, he was made dumb. Learn hence, That the word of God in the mouth of his messengers is God's own word, and as such to be received and believed. 2. That not believing their word, is a sin which God will severely punish; it is all one not to believe God, and not to believe the messengers of God speaking from him. Some expositors will have this dumbness of Zachary to be prefigurative. The priest, at the dismissal of the people, when the service of the temple was finished, was to pronounce the blessing, recorded, Numb. vi. 24, 25, which when Zachary was about to do, he was struck dumb and could not perform it; signifying thereby, that the silencing of the Levitical priesthood was now at hand; that they must expect another kind of worship, and that he who was able to bless indeed, namely, the Messias, was near at hand. Observe lastly, That though Zachary ceased to speak, yet he did not cease to minister; he takes not his dumbness for a dismissal, but stays out the eight days of his course, knowing that the service of his heart and hand would be accepted of that God which had bereaved him of his tongue. The powers which we have we must make use of in the public service of God, who will accept us according to what we have; pardoning our infirmity and rewarding our sincerity.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

The priests, during the time of their administration, had their lodgings in buildings appertaining to the tem-

ple. Zachary having ended his administration, leaves his lodgings, and returns to his house, where his wife Elizabeth conceiving, *she hides herself*; that is, retires from company, partly to prevent the discourse of people, until it was out of all doubt that she had conceived; and partly to give herself opportunity of returning her thankful acknowledgments unto God, who had given her this miraculous mercy: and had thereby taken away the reproach of barrenness, which was so heavy and insupportable among the Jews. Note here, two things, 1. How piously Elizabeth ascribes this mercy to the power of God: *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me*. It is God that keeps the key of the womb in his own hand, and makes the fruit of it his reward, and therefore children are to be owned as his special gift. Note, 2. How great a reproach bodily barrenness is in the sight of man, but not so great as spiritual barrenness in the sight of God; for this is at once a reproach to God, a reproach to religion, a reproach to professors, and to ourselves.

26 ¶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art highly favoured*, the Lord is with thee; *blessed art thou among women*.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

In this history of our Saviour's miraculous and immaculate conception, we have several things observable, as, 1. The messenger sent from heaven to publish the news of the conception of the son of God, an *angel*; an evil angel was the first author of our ruin; a good angel could not be the author of our restoration, but is the joyful reporter of it.

Observe, 2. The angel's name, Gabriel, which signifieth the power of God; the same angel who had many hundred years before declared to the prophet Daniel the coming of the Messiah. Observe, 3. The place which the angel is sent unto, Nazareth, an obscure place, little taken notice of; yea, a city in Galilee, out of which arises no prophet; even there doth the God of prophets condescend to be conceived. No blind corner of Nazareth can hide the blessed virgin from the angel. The favours of God will find out his children wherever they are withdrawn. Observe, 4. The person whom the angel is sent unto, *To a virgin espoused, whose name was Mary*; for the honour of virginity, Christ chose a virgin for his mother: for the honour of marriage, a virgin espoused to an husband. Observe, 5. The message itself, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women*. Where note, That the angel salutes the virgin as a *saint*, he doth not pray to her as a *goddess*. The church of Rome idolatrously uses these words as a prayer to the holy virgin (saying ten *Ave-Maries* for one *Pater-Noster*) whereas they are only a salutation; declaring that she, above all women, had the honour freely conferred by God upon her to be the mother of the Messiah. The original words signify, *not full of grace, but freely beloved*. Compare Mary with other renowned women, and what had she, besides this favour, more than they? Had she the spirit of prophecy? so had they. Had she the spirit of sanctification? so had they: and she had no more immunity and freedom from sin and death than they. Accordingly, says the angel, *Blessed art thou among women*; he doth not say, *Blessed art thou above women*. Let the church of Rome be as copious as they will in the commendation of the mother, so they do not derogate from the glory of the Son. But how senseless are they, 1. In turning a salutation into a prayer! 2. In making use of these words upon every occasion, which were spoken by an angel upon a special occasion! 3. In applying these words to her now in heaven, which suited with her only when she was here on earth, saying, *Full of grace*, to her who is full of glory; and, *The Lord is with thee*, to her that is *with the Lord*! Observe, 6. The effect which the sight and salutation of the angel had upon the holy virgin: she was afraid. If Zachary before her was amazed at the sight of the angel, much more the virgin, her sex subjecting her to fear. All passions, but particularly the passion of fear, disquiets the heart, and makes it unfit to receive the messages of God. Therefore the angel instantly says unto her, *Fear not*; let joy enter into thy heart, out of whose womb shall come salvation. Thus the fears of holy persons do end in comfort: joy was the errand which the angel came upon, and not terror. What little cause she had to fear the presence of an angel, who was so highly favoured of him, at whose presence the angels tremble! But we see the holiest person on earth cannot bear the presence of an *holy angel*, much less the presence of an *holy God*; nor stand before the manifestations of his favours: Lord! how unable then will the wicked be at the great day to stand before the manifestation of thy fury! If the sight of an *holy angel* now makes the best of saints to quake and tremble, what will the sight of an infinitely holy and just God then do, when the wicked shall be slain by the brightness of his presence? Observe lastly, the character

which the angel gives of the person that should be born of the Blessed Virgin, *He shall be great, and called the Son of the Highest. Great, in respect of his person : Great, in respect of his offices : Great, in respect of his kingdom ;* for God would settle upon him a spiritual kingdom, of which David's earthly one was a type which shall never be abolished ; though the administration of it by the word and sacraments shall cease at the day of judgment, when he shall deliver up the kingdom, in that respect, to his Father. All other kingdoms have had, or shall have, their periods, but the gospel-church, which is Christ's kingdom, shall continue till his kingdom of glory be revealed.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man ?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age : and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Observe here, 1. The virgin's question, *How shall this be ?* This question did not import her denial of the possibility of the thing, but her wonder at the strangeness of the thing ; it proceeded rather from a desire of information, than from a doubt of infidelity. Therefore she doth not say, This cannot be, nor, How can this be ? but, *How shall this be ?* She doth not distrust, but demand, how her virginity shall become fruitful, and how she, being a virgin, could bring forth a son ? Observe, 2. The angel's reply to the virgin's question, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* Where note, The angel declares the author who, but not the manner how : the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, but in what way, and after what manner, is not declared : no mother knows the manner of her natural conception, what presumption had it then been, for the mother of the Messiah, to have enquired how the Son of God could take flesh and blood of his creature ! It is for none but the Almighty to know those works which do immediately concern himself. Observe, 3. The holy and immaculate conception of our blessed Redeemer : "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee ; wherefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God ;" that is, the Holy

Ghost shall prepare and sanctify so much of thy flesh, blood, or seed, as shall constitute the body of Christ. For though it was a work of the whole Trinity, yet it is ascribed particularly to the Holy Ghost, sanctification being his peculiar work. And the title and epithet of *that holy thing*, sheweth the purity and immaculateness of Christ's human nature, and that none was ever born thus holy and immaculate but Christ only ; because none had ever such a way and means of conception, but only he : *Therefore that holy thing shall be called the Son of God ;* not constituted and made, but evidenced and declared. Christ was God before he assumed flesh, even from eternity ; but his taking flesh in this manner, evidences him to be the Son of God. Observe, 4. The argument used by the angel to confirm Mary in the belief of what he had told her, namely, The wonderful conception of her cousin Elizabeth, *in her old age, who was now six months gone with child.* Where observe, 1. What an exact knowledge God has, and what a particular notice he takes of all the children of men ; he knoweth not only ourselves, but our relations also, *Behold thy cousin Elizabeth :* the knowledge which God has of every person, and every action, is a clear and distinct knowledge. Note, 2. How the angel strengthens her faith by a consideration drawn from the almighty power of God ; *With God nothing shall be impossible, be it ever so strange and difficult.* There is no such way to overcome difficulties, as by strengthening our faith in the almighty power of God. Faith will enable us to assent to truths, though seemingly incredible, and to believe the possibility of things, though appearing impossible. Observe lastly, How the virgin expresses her faith and obedience, her submission and entire resignation, to the divine pleasure, to be disposed of by God as he thought fit : *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.* We hear of no more objections or interrogations, but an humble and submissive silence. Learn hence, That a gracious heart, when once it understands the pleasure of God, argues no farther, but quietly-rests in a believing expectation of what God will do. All disputations with God, after his will is made known and understood, arise from infidelity and unbelief. The virgin having thus consented, instantly conceived by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost.

39 ¶ And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda.

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth.

41 And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb : and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

45 And blessed is she that believed ; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The visit made by the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. The holy virgin had understood by the angel, that Elizabeth was no less akin to her in condition than in relation, being both fruitful in conception ; she hastens into the hill country to visit that holy matron ; the two wonders of the world were now met under one roof, to congratulate their mutual happiness ; only the meeting of the saints in heaven, can parallel the meeting of these two saints on earth. Observe, 2. The design and intention of this visit, which was partly to communicate their joys to each other, and partly to strengthen the faith of each other : such a soul as has Christ spiritually conceived in it, is restless, and cannot be quiet till it has imparted its joy. Observe, 3. The effect of the virgin's salutation ; she had no sooner saluted Elizabeth, *but the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy*, doing homage, and paying adoration, to his Lord, who was then in presence. If Elizabeth and her holy babe thus rejoiced, when Christ came under their roof, how should our hearts leap within us, when the Son of God vouchsafes to come into the secret of our souls, not to visit us for an hour, but to dwell with us, yea, to dwell in us, and that for ever. Observe, 4. How Elizabeth, by an extraordinary spirit of prophecy, confirms what the angel before had told the holy virgin : " Blessed, *says she*, art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb ; and what an honour is this, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me ! " Where note, How Elizabeth acknowledged the incarnation of Christ, and the union of the divine and human nature in the person of the Mediator. She acknowledges Christ to be her Lord, and Mary to be the mother of the Son of God. Observe lastly, How the virgin is pronounced blessed, not so much for carrying Christ in her womb by sense, as for bearing him in her heart by faith ; *Blessed is she that believed*. Mary was not so blessed in the bringing forth Christ, as believing in him : yet the believing here mentioned, I take to be, her firm assent to the message brought her by the angel ; as if Elizabeth had said, " Dumbness was inflicted on my husband, for his unbelief of what the angel said, but, " Blessed art thou that didst believe the angel." My husband, a man, an aged man, a learned and eminent man, a priest of the most high God ; and the message to him of more appearing possibility ; yet he disbelieved ; but thou a woman, a mean, unlearned woman, of a private condition, and the message brought most incredible both to nature and reason, and yet it is believed by thee ! *Blessed, therefore, is she that believed*, and know, that as a reward for thy faith, *all things shall certainly be performed that were foretold thee from the Lord*. Learn hence, 1. That it is the property of God to do great and wonderful things. Our faith must be great, and our expectation great ; great expectations from God, honour the greatness of God. 2. That if our faith be great, God's performances will be gracious and full. " Bles-

sed is she that believed ; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

46 ¶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden ; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

This is the first canticle, or song of praise, recorded in the New Testament, composed by the blessed virgin with unspeakable joy, for designing her to be the instrument of the conception and birth of the Saviour of the world : where observe, 1. The manner of her praise ; her soul and spirit bear their part in the work of thanksgiving, *My soul doth magnify, my spirit hath rejoiced*. As the sweetest music is made in the belly of the instrument, so the most delightful praise arises from the bottom of the heart. Observe, 2. The object of her praise ; she does not magnify herself, but the Lord ; yea, she doth not rejoice so much in her son, as in her Saviour. Where note, 1. That she doth implicitly own and confess herself a sinner ; for none need a Saviour but a sinner : and, 2. By rejoicing in Christ as her Saviour, she declares how she values herself, rather by her spiritual relation to Christ as his member, than by her natural relation to him as his mother ; according to that of St. Austin. *Beatior fruit Maria percipiendo Christi fidem, quam concipiendo carnem* ; she might have been miserable, notwithstanding she bore him as her son, had she not believed in him as her Saviour : therefore she sings, *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*. Observe, 3. How she admires and magnifies God's peculiar favour towards herself, in casting an eye upon her poverty and low condition ; that she, a poor, obscure maid, unknown to the world, should be looked upon with an eye of regard by him that dwells in the

highest heavens. Where note, That as God magnified her, she magnified him, ascribing all honour and glory to him that had thus dignified and exalted her. "He that is mighty hath done for me great things, and glorified be his name."

Observe, 4. She thankfully takes notice, that it was not only an high honour, but a lasting honour, which was conferred upon her. "All generations shall call me blessed." She beholds an infinite, a lasting honour prepared for her, as being the mother of an universal and everlasting blessing, which all former ages had desired, and all succeeding ages should rejoice in, and proclaim her happy, for being the instrument of.

5. How the holy virgin passes from the consideration of her personal privileges, to the universal goodness of God; shewing us, that the mercies and favours of God, were not confined and limited to herself, "But his mercy is on all them that fear him, throughout all generations." She declares the general providence of God towards all persons, his mercy to the pious, "his mercy is on all them that fear him:" his justice on the proud, "he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts;" his bounty to the poor, "he fills the hungry with good things." Learn hence, The excellency and advantageous usefulness of the grace of humility; how good it is to be meek and lowly in heart. This will render us lovely in God's eye, and though the world may trample upon us, he will exalt us to the admiration of ourselves, and the envy of our despisers.

Observe lastly, How she magnifies the special grace of God in our redemption; "He hath holpen his servant Israel;" that is, blessed them with a Saviour, who lived in the faith, hope, and expectation, of the promised Messiah, and this blessing, she declares, was, 1. The result of great mercy, "He remembering his mercy, hath holpen his servant Israel."

2. The effect of his truth and faithfulness in his promises, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever." Learn hence, That the appearance of the promised Messiah, in the fulness of time, in order to the redemption and salvation of a lost world, it was the fruit of God's tender love, and the effect of his faithfulness in the promises made of old, to his church and children: "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our forefathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

57 ¶ Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

Two things are here observable, 1. The civil courtesy of the Virgin Mary, towards her cousin Elizabeth. She stays with her three months, probably till she was delivered and brought to bed, not leaving her just at the time of travail:

for the angel told Mary, v. 36, That it was then the *sixth month* with Elizabeth, after which Mary stays with her *three months*, which made up the full time. To visit and accompany our friends in the time of their distress, is not only an act of civil courtesy, but of religious piety; not a matter of indifference, but of duty, James i. 27. "Pure religion, and undefiled is this, to visit in affliction;" that is, this is an eminent act and exercise of religion, the evidence and fruit of sincere religion; and the virgin's doing this was an act and instance of her piety, as well as of her civil courtesy. Observe, 2. The religious joy, and spiritual rejoicing which the neighbours and kindred expressed at the lying-in of Elizabeth: they did not meet together upon that great occasion, only to eat and drink and make merry; "but they rejoiced that the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her." Oh! how rarely is this example followed in our age! At the delivery of the mother, and at the birth of the child, how little is God taken notice of! How little is his power magnified, and his goodness celebrated, in opening the womb, in giving strength to bring forth! And how rarely is this the subject of discourse at the woman's labour! Verily, if the mercy of a child, and the safe delivery of the mother, be not the first and principal things taken notice of at such rejoicing meetings, they look more like Pagan than Christian rejoicings.

59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child: and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea.

66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

"Observe here, 1. The circumcision of the child at eight days' old, according to the commandment, Gen. xvi. Where note, first, The act, *circumcising*. Secondly, The time, *at eight days' old*. God commanded every male child to be circumcised; because the males by the foreskin, propagate sin, and convey original impurity. By this ordinance, God gave his people to understand the exceeding filthiness of sin, and that man brings something into the world with him, which ought presently to be cut off. Note also, the time of circumcising the child, *at eight days' old*; not before, lest the child should be too weak to bear the pain; and it must not be deferred longer, lest God interpret the delay to be a contempt of the ordinance. Hence by the way we may learn, That God did not tie salvation to the outward sacrament; for if the child had perished that died uncircumcised, it had been a hard thing to defer circumcision eight hours. 'Tis not the want, but the contempt and neglect, of the sacrament that damns. "It came to pass on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child." We find in scripture, the ordinance appointed, and the time limited, but neither the person nor the place declared: Moses' wife "circumcised the child, and that in an inn." Exod. iv. A duty is sometimes positively enjoined in the scriptures, when the circumstances belonging to the duty are undetermined. Thus the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is appointed by Christ; but the time, the place, the gesture, are not positively commanded, but to be prudentially determined. Observe, 2. The name is given, or at least declared, at the time of the child's circumcising, and that by his parents; "His mother said, he shall be called John." But how did his mother know *that*, when her husband was dumb? *Ans.* 'Tis likely her husband Zachary had, by a writing, informed his wife concerning the whole vision, and what name was imposed upon him by the angel; therefore she says, "He shall be called John," and Zachary ratifies it, "His name is John." The nomination was originally from the angel, the imposition of the name is now at circumcision from the parents. Observe, 3. How ancient a custom it has been to give names to children, according to the names of their fathers or kindred: "There is none of thy kindred of his name," say they: the Jews made it a part of religion, to give suitable names to their children, and significant names. Accordingly they either gave them names to put them in remembrance of God's mercy to them, or of their duty to him. Thus Zachary signifies the *remembrance of God*; which name points at God's mercy in remembering him, and his duty in remembering God. Well then, it is usual and useful for parents to give significant names to their children; then let the children have an holy ambition to make good the signification of their names. Thus John signifies the "grace of God;" but how will that gracious name be raised up in judgment against that child that is graceless! Observe, 4. How Zachary's speech is immediately restored to him upon the naming of his child. The angel, v. 20. told him "he should be dumb till the things he had told him should be performed;" and now that they were performed, "his tongue is loosed, and he praised God, in a most thankful manner." Observe, 5. The effect which all this had upon the neighbourhood; "Fear came upon all them that dwelt round about them;" that is, an awful and religious fear of God occasioned by these miraculous operations; and they "laid up these sayings in their hearts;" that is, considered of them,

and pondered upon them. It argues a very vain spirit and temper of mind, when we pass over the observation of God's wonderful acts with a slight regard. The true reason why we do so little admire the wonderful works of God, is, because we consider so little of them. Observe, 6. The special favour vouchsafed by God to this child John: "The hand of the Lord was with him;" that is, God was in a special manner present with him, to direct and assist him, to protect and prosper him. The hand of God, in scripture, signifies the help of God, the strength and assistance of God. The hand of man is a weak and impotent hand, a short and ineffectual hand: but the hand of God is a strong hand, an almighty hand, able to assist and help, able to protect and preserve: "The hand of the Lord was with him;" that is, the heart of God and the help of God, the love and favour of God to support him, the power and providence of God to protect and preserve him. Lord, let our hearts be with thee, and then thy heart and thy helping hand will be with us.

67 ¶ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began;

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant:

73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear.

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called The Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways:

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Here observe, 1. That no sooner was Zachary recovered and restored to his speech, but he sings the praises of his Redeemer, and offers up a thanksgiving to God; the best return we can make to God for the use of our tongues, for the giving or restoring of our speech, is to publish our Creator's praises, to plead his cause, and vindicate his honour. Observe, 2. What it is that Zachary makes the subject-matter of his song: what is the particular and special mercy which he praises and blesses God for. It is not for his own particular and private mercy; namely, the recovery of his speech, though undoubtedly he was very thankful to God for that mercy; but he blesses and praises God for catholic and universal mercies bestowed upon his church and people: He doth not say, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that hath visited me in mercy, that hath once more loosed my tongue, and restored my speech: but, "Blessed be the Lord that hath visited and redeemed his people." Whence learn, That it is both the duty and disposition of a gracious soul to abound in praise and thankfulness to God, more for catholic and universal mercies towards the church of God, than for any particular and private mercies, how great soever towards himself: "Blessed be God for visiting and redeeming his people." Observe, 3. In this evangelical hymn there is a prophetic prediction, both concerning Christ, and concerning John. Concerning Christ, he declares that God the Father had sent him of his free mercy and rich grace, yet in performance of his truth and faithfulness; and according to his promise and oath which he had made to Abraham, and the fathers of the old Testament. Where note, 1. He blesses God for the comprehensive blessing of the Messiah; "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited his people;" namely, in his Son's incarnation. The Lord Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, made such a visit to this sinful world, as men and angels admired at, and will admire to all eternity. Note, 2. The special fruit and benefit of this gracious and merciful visitation, and that was the redemption of a lost world, he hath visited and "redeemed his people." This implies that miserable thralldom and bondage, which we were under to sin and Satan, and expresses the stupendous love of Christ, in buying our lives with his dearest blood; and both by price and power rescuing us out of the hands of our spiritual enemies. Note, 3. The character given of this Saviour and Redeemer; he is an horn of salvation; that is, a royal and glorious, a strong and a powerful Saviour to his church and people. The horn, in scripture, signifies glory and dignity, strength and power; as the beauty, so the strength of the beast lies in its horn; now Christ being styled an horn of salvation, intimates, that he himself is a royal and princely Saviour, and that the salvation which he brings, is great and plentiful, glorious and powerful; "God hath raised up

an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." Note, 4. The nature and quality of that salvation and deliverance, which the Son of God came to accomplish for us; not a temporal deliverance, as the Jews expected, from the power of the Romans; but spiritual from the hands of sin and Satan, death and hell: his design was to purchase a spiritual freedom and liberty for us, "that we might be enabled to serve him without fear;" that is, without the servile and offending fear of a slave, but with the dutiful and ingenuous fear of a child: and this in "holiness and righteousness;" that is, in the duties of the first and second table, "all the days of our life." Learn hence, That believers, who were slaves of Satan, are by Christ made God's free men. Secondly, That as such they owe God a service, a willing, cheerful, and delightful service, without fear; and a constant persevering service all the days of their life, that "we being delivered out of the hands, &c." Note, 5. The source and fountain from whence this glorious Saviour and gracious salvation did arise and spring: namely, from the mercy and faithfulness of God: "To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, was graciously promised, and faithfully performed, by God to his church and people. Christ was a free and full mercy; a suitable, a seasonable, and a satisfying mercy; an incomparable, unsearchable, and everlasting mercy; which God graciously promised in the beginning of time, and faithfully performed in the fulness of time. Thus far this hymn of Zachary respects the Messiah. Observe, 4. How he next turns himself to his child, and prophesies concerning him: "And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, &c." Where note, 1. The nature of his office, "thou shalt be a prophet;" not a common and ordinary one, but a prophet of the highest rank; the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. A prophet thou shalt be, and more than a prophet. Note, 2. As the nature of his office, so the quality of his work: "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way:" thou shalt be an herald and harbinger to the Most High; thou shalt go before the race of the Messiah, and by thy severe reproofs, and powerful exhortations, shalt prepare his way before him, and make men fit and ready to receive this mighty Saviour. Thou, child, shalt be as the morning star to foretel the glorious arising of this Sun of Righteousness. Learn hence, 1. That it is the highest honour and dignity to serve Christ in the quality and relation of a prophet. 2. That it is the office and duty of the prophets of Christ to prepare and make fit the hearts of men, to receive and embrace him. Observe, 5. That Zachary having spoken a few words concerning his son, he returns instantly to celebrate the praises of our Saviour, comparing him to the rising sun, which shined forth in the brightness of his gospel, to enlighten the dark corners of the world: "Through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness." Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is that true Son of Righteousness, which in the fulness of time did spring from on high, to visit a lost and undone world. 2. That the great errand of Christ's coming into the world, and the particular end of his appearing in the flesh, was "to give light to them that sit in darkness." 3. That it was nothing less than infinite mercy, and bowels of compassion in God

and Christ, which inclined him to come in from on high, to visit them that sit in darkness: "Through the tender bowels of mercy in our God, whereby his own and only Son sprung from on high to visit us here below, who sat in darkness and the shadow of death; and to guide our feet unto the way that leads to everlasting peace."

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

Here we have a short account of John's private life before he entered upon his public ministry, which was at thirty years of age; *He grew*, that is, in bodily stature, "and waxed strong in spirit;" that is, in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which increased with his age, and shewed themselves in him every day more and more. "And he was in the deserts;" that is, in the mountainous country of Judea, where he was born, till the time of his preaching to and amongst the Jews; not that he lived like an hermit, recluse from all society with men, but contented himself to continue in an obscure privacy, till called forth to promulge and preach the gospel; and when that time was come, John leaves the hill-country, and enters with resolution and unwearied diligence upon his public ministry; teaching us by his example, That when we are fit and ripe for public service, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation. John abode "in the deserts till his shewing unto Israel:" that is, till the time of his setting forth to execute his office among the Jews.

CHAP. II.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Beth-lehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 ¶ And so it was, that while they were

there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The conclusion of the former chapter acquainted us with the birth of John the Baptist; the beginning of this chapter relates the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the remarkable circumstances which did attend it. And here we have observable, 1. The place where he was born, not at Nazareth, but at Bethlehem, according to the prediction of the prophet Micah, chap. v. 2 "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." We may suppose, that the blessed virgin little thought of changing her place, but to have been delivered of her holy burden at Nazareth, where it was conceived. Her house at Nazareth was honoured by the presence of the angel; yea, by the over-shadowing of the Holy Ghost; that house therefore, we may suppose, was most satisfactory to the virgin's desire. But he that made choice of the womb where his son should be conceived, it was fit he should also choose the place, where his son should be born. And this place many hundred years before the nativity, was foretold should be Bethlehem. Observe, 2. How remarkable the providence of God was in bringing the virgin up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, that Christ, as it was prophesied of him, might be born there, Augustus, the Roman emperor, to whom the nation of the Jews was now become tributary, puts forth a decree, that all the Roman empire should have their names and families enrolled, in order to their being taxed. This edict required, that every family should repair to that city to which they did belong, to be enrolled and taxed there. Accordingly, Joseph and Mary, being of the house and lineage of David, have recourse to Bethlehem, the city of David, where, according to the prophecy, the Messiah was to be born. Here note, How the wisdom of God over-rules the actions of men, for higher or nobler ends than what they aimed at. The emperor's aim was by this edict to fill his coffers. God's end was to fulfil his prophecies. Observe, 3. How readily Joseph and Mary yielded obedience to the edict and decree of this heathen emperor. It was no less than four days' journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: how just an excuse might the virgin have pleaded for her absence! What woman ever undertook so hazardous a journey, that was so near her delivery? And Joseph, no doubt, was sufficiently unwilling to draw her forth into so manifest an hazard. But as the emperor's command was peremptory, so their obedience was exemplary. We must not plead difficulty for withdrawing our obedience to supreme commands. How did our blessed Saviour, even in the womb of his mother, yield homage to civil rulers and governors! The first lesson which Christ's example taught the world, was loyalty and obedience to the supreme magistrate. Observe, 4. After many weary steps, the holy virgin comes to

Bethlehem, where every house is taken up by reason of the great confluence of people that came to be taxed; and there is no room for Christ but in a stable: the stable is our Lord's palace, the manger is his cradle. Oh, how can we be abased low enough for him that thus neglected himself for us! What an early indication was this, that our Lord's kingdom was not of this world! Yet some observe a mystery in all this; an inn is *domus publici juris*, not a private house, but open and free for all passengers, and a stable is the commonest place in the inn; to mind us, that he who was born there, would be a common Saviour to high and low, noble and base, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile; called therefore so often the Son of man; the design of his birth being the benefit of mankind.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

Here we have the promulgation and first publishing of our Saviour's birth to the world: *The angel said unto the shepherds, I bring you glad tidings, a Saviour is born.* Where observe, 1. The messenger employed by God to publish the joyful news of a Saviour's birth; the holy angels, heavenly messengers employed about an heavenly work: it is worth our notice, how serviceable the angels were to Christ upon all occasions, when he was here upon earth; an angel declares his conception; an host of angels publish his birth; in his temptation, an angel strengthens him; in his agony, an angel comforts him; at his resurrection, an angel rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; at his ascension, the angels attend him up to heaven; and at his second coming to judge the world, he shall be *revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.* And great reason there is, that the angels should be thus officious in their attendances upon Christ, who is an head of confirmation to them, as he was an head of redemption to fallen man. Observe, 2. The persons to whom this joyful message of a Saviour's birth is first brought, and they are the shepherds: *The angel said unto the shepherds, Fear not.* 1. Because Christ, the great shepherd of his church, was come into

the world. 2. Because he was of old promised unto shepherds, the old patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who by their occupations were shepherds. Observe, 3. The time when these shepherds had the honour of this revelation; it was not when they were asleep on their beds of idleness and sloth, but when they were lying abroad, and watching their flocks. The blessings of heaven usually meet us in the way of an honest and industrious diligence; whereas the idle are fit for nothing but temptation to work upon. If these shepherds had been snoring in their beds, they had no more seen angels, nor yet heard the news of a Saviour than their neighbours. Observe, 4. The nature and quality of the message which the angel brought; it was a message of joy, a message of great joy, a message of great joy unto all people. For here was born a Son, that Son a Prince, that Prince a Saviour, that Saviour not a particular Saviour of the Jews only, but an universal Saviour, whose salvation is to the ends of the earth. Well might the angel call it a message, or glad tidings of great joy unto all people! Observe, 5. The ground and occasion of this joy, the foundation of all this good news, which was proclaimed in the ears of a lost world; and that was, the birth of a Saviour: *Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Hence learn, 1. That the incarnation and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his manifestation in our flesh and nature, was and is matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing unto all people. 2. That the great end and design of our Lord's incarnation and coming into the world, was to be the Saviour of lost sinners; *Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

13 And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

Although the birth of our blessed Saviour was published by one angel, yet is it celebrated by an host of angels; a whole choir of angels chaunt forth the praises of Almighty God, upon this great and joyful occasion. Here observe, 1. The singers. 2. The song itself. The singers of this heavenly anthem are the holy angels; called an host, partly for their number, and partly for their order. Where learn, 1. The goodness and sweet disposition of these blessed spirits, in whose bosom that cankered passion of envy has no place; if it had, there was never such an occasion to stir it up as now: but heaven admits of no such passion; envy is a native of hell, it is the smoke of the bottomless pit, the character and temper of the apostate spirits; these grieve at the happiness of man, as much as the angels rejoice. O ye blessed angels! what did these tidings concern you, that ruined mankind should be taken again into favour; whereas those of your own host, which fell likewise, remained still in that gulph of perdition, into which their sin had plunged them, without either hope of mercy, or possibility of recovery! The less we repine at the good, and the more we rejoice at the happiness of others, the more like we are to the holy angels; yea, the more we resemble God himself. Learn, 2. Did the angels thus

joy and rejoice for us? Then what joy ought we to express for ourselves? Had we the tongue of angels, we could not sufficiently chaunt forth the praises of our Redeemer. Eternity itself would be too short to spend in the rapturous contemplation of redeeming mercy. Observe, 3. The anthem or song itself, which begins with a doxology, *Glory be to God in the highest*; that is, let God in the highest heavens be glorified by the angels that dwell on high. The angelical choir excite themselves, and all the hosts of angels, to give glory to God for these wonderful tidings; as if they had said, "Let the power, the wisdom, the goodness and mercy of God, be acknowledged and revered by all the host of heaven for ever and ever." Next to the doxology, follows a gratulation: *glory be to God in the highest, for there is peace on earth, and good will towards men.* The birth of Christ has brought a peace of reconciliation betwixt God and man upon earth; and also a peace of amity and concord betwixt man and man, and is therefore to be celebrated with acclamations of joy.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Several particulars are here observable: as, 1. That the shepherds no sooner heard the news of a Saviour, but they ran to Bethlehem to seek him; and though it was at midnight, yet they delayed not to go. Those that left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks to inquire after their Saviour. Learn thence, That a gracious soul no sooner hears where Christ is, but instantly makes out after him, and judges no earthly comfort too dear to be left and forsaken for him. These shepherds shew, that they preferred their Saviour before their sheep. Observe, 2. These shepherds having found Christ themselves, do make him known to others, verse 17. *When they had seen it, they*

made known abroad the saying, which was told them concerning this child. Learn, That such as have found Christ to their comfort, and tasted that the Lord is gracious to themselves, cannot but recommend him to the love and admiration of others. Observe, 3. What effect this relation had upon the generality of people that heard it; it wrought in them amazement and astonishment, but not faith: *The people wondered, but believed not.* 'Tis not the hearing of Christ with the hearing of the ear, nor the seeing of Christ with the sight of the outward eye; neither the hearing of his doctrine, nor the sight of his miracles, will work divine faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit; the one may make us marvel, but the other makes us believe. *All that heard it wondered at these things.* Lastly, note, The effect which these things had upon Mary, quite differed from what they had upon the common people; *they wondered, she pondered*; the things that affected their heads, influenced her heart; *She kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*

21 ¶ And when eight days were accomplished, for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb:

Two things are here observable, 1. Our Saviour's circumcision, and the name given him at his circumcision. There was no impurity in the Son of God, and yet is he circumcised, and baptized also, though he had neither filth nor foreskin, which wanted either the circumcising knife or the baptismal water, yet he condescends to be both circumcised and baptized; thereby shewing, that as he was made of a woman, so he would be made under the law, which he punctually observed to a tittle. And accordingly he was not only circumcised, but circumcised the eighth day, as the ceremonial law required: and thus our Lord fulfilled all righteousness, Matt. iii. 15. Observe, 2. The name given at our Saviour's circumcision. *His name was called Jesus*; that is, a Saviour; *he being to save his people from their sins*, Matt. i. 21. The great end of Christ's coming into the world was to save persons from the punishment and power of their sins. Had he not saved us from our sins, we must have died in our sins, and died for our sins, and that eternally. Never let us then sit down desponding, either under the guilt, or under the power of our sins; and conclude, that they are either so great, that they cannot be forgiven, or so strong, that they can never be overcome.

22 And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord,

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord).

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to

that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

A twofold act of obedience doth the holy virgin here perform to two ceremonial laws, the one concerning the purification of women after child birth, the other concerning the presenting the male child before the Lord. The law concerning the purification of women we have recorded, Levit. xii. Where the time mentioned for the women's purification is set down, namely, after a male child, *forty days*, after a female *four score days*: after which time she was to bring a *lamb of a year old* for a burnt-offering, in case she was a person of ability; or a *pair of turtle doves*, or *two young pigeons* in case of extreme poverty. Now as to the virgin's purification, observe, 1. That no sooner was she able and allowed to walk, but she travels to the temple. Where note, That she visited God's house at Jerusalem, before her own house at Nazareth. Learn thence, That such women, whom God has blessed with safety of deliverance, if they make not their first visit to the temple of God to offer up their praises and thanksgivings there, they are strangers to the virgin's piety and devotion. Observe, 2. Another act of Mary's obedience to the ceremonial law as she presented her child at Jerusalem to the Lord. But how durst the blessed virgin carry her holy babe to Jerusalem, into Herod's mouth? It was but a little before that Herod sought the young child's life to destroy it; yet the virgin sticks not in obedience to the commands of God, to carry him to Jerusalem. Learn hence, That no apprehension of dangers, either imminent or approaching, either at hand or afar off, ought to hinder us from performing our duty to Almighty God: we ought not to neglect a certain duty, to escape an uncertain danger. Observe farther, As the obedience, so the humility of the holy virgin, in submitting to the law for purifying of uncleanness; for thus she might have pleaded, "What need have I of purging, who did not conceive in sin? Other births are from men, but mine is from the Holy Ghost, who is purity itself. Other women's children are under the law, mine is above the law." But like the mother of him whom it behoved to fulfil all righteousness, she dutifully fulfils the law of God without quarrelling or disputing. Observe, lastly, as the exemplary humility, so the great poverty of the holy virgin: she has not a lamb, but comes with her two doves to God. Her offering declares her penury. The best are sometimes the poorest, seldom the wealthiest: yet none are so poor, but God expects an offering from them: he looks for somewhat from every one, not from every one alike. The providence of God it is that makes difference in persons abilities, but his pleasure will make no difference in the acceptance. "Where there is a willing mind, it shall be accepted according to what a person hath." 2. Cor. viii. 12.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost *was* upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

No sooner was our Saviour brought into the temple, and presented to the Lord by his holy parents, but in springs old Simeon, a pious and devout man, who had a revelation from God, that he should not die, until he had with his bodily eyes, seen the promised Messiah. Accordingly *he takes up the child Jesus in his arms*, but hugs him faster by his faith than by his feeble arms, and with ravishment of heart praises God for the sight of his Saviour, whom he calls *the Consolation of Israel*; that is the Messiah, whom the Israel of God had long looked and waited for, and now took comfort and consolation in. Note here, 1. How God always performs his promises to his children with wonderful advantage. Simeon had a revelation, that he should not die until he had seen Christ; now he not only sees him, but feels him too: he not only has him in his eye, but holds him in his hands. Though God stays long before he fulfils his promises, he certainly comes at last with a double reward for our double expectation. Note, 2. That the coming of the Messiah in the fulness of time, and his appearing in our flesh and nature, was and is matter of unspeakable consolation to the Israel of God. And now that he is come, let us live by faith in him, as the foundation of all comfort and consolation both in life and death. Alas! what are all other consolations beside this, and without this? They are impotent and insufficient consolations, they are dying and perishing consolations; nay, they are sometimes afflictive and distressing consolations. The bitterness accompanying them, is sometimes more than the sweetness that is tasted in them; but in Christ, who is, *the Consolation of Israel*, there is light without darkness, joy without sorrow, all consolation without any mixture of discomfort.

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvel-

led at those things which were spoken of him.

These words are a sweet canticle, or swan-like song of old Simeon ; a little before his dissolution. He had seen the Messias before by faith, now by sight, and wishes to have his eyes closed, that he might see nothing after this desirable sight. It is said of some Turks, that after they have seen Mahomet's tomb, they put out their eyes, that they may never defile them after they have seen so glorious an object : thus old Simeon desires to see no more of the world, after he had seen Christ the Saviour of the world : but sues for his dismissal, *Lord, let thy servant depart.* Note, here, 1. That a good man having served his generation, and God in his generation faithfully, is weary of the world, and willing to be dismissed from it. 2. That the death of a good man is nothing else but a quiet and peaceable departure : it is a departure in peace to the God of peace. 3. That it is only a spiritual sight of Christ by faith that can welcome the approach of death, and render it an object desirable to the Christian's choice ; he only that can say, *My eyes have seen thy salvation*, will be able to say, *Lord, let thy servant depart.* Observe farther, Holy Simeon having declared the faithfulness of God to himself in the gift of Christ, next he celebrates the mercy of God, in bestowing this invaluable gift of a Saviour upon the whole world. The world consists of Jews and Gentiles ; Christ is a light to the one, and the glory of the other. A light to the blind and dark Gentiles, and the glory of the renowned church of the Jews ; the Messias being promised to them, born and bred up with them, living amongst them, preaching his doctrine to them, and working his miracles before them ; and thus was Christ, the glory of his people Israel.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against :

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Two things are here observed, Simeon's blessing, and Simeon's prediction ; *He blessed them* ; that is, the parents and the child Jesus ; not authoritatively, but prophetically, declaring how God would bless them ; his prediction is twofold. 1. Concerning Christ, 2. Concerning his mother. Concerning Christ, Simeon declares, that he should be *for the rise of many in Israel* ; namely, all such as should embrace and obey his doctrine ; and imitate and follow his example ; and *for the fall of others*, that is, shall bring punishment and ruin upon all obdurate and impenitent sinners ; and a *sign to be spoken against* ; that is, he shall be as a mark for obstinate sinners to set themselves against. Christ himself when here in the world, was a *stone of stumbling*, and a *rock of offence* to the men of the

world, enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, both the virulence of their tongues, and the violence of their hands. Doubtless God's first design in sending his Son into the world was, *That through him the world might be saved*, John iii. 16. But to such persons whose minds had no relish for spiritual things, he became accidentally a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Secondly, Concerning the mother of Christ, Simeon declares, that the sight of her Son's bitter sufferings, would, like a sword, pierce her heart ; for though he might be born, yet should he not die without the pains of his mother ; as if she throws suffered by other women at the birth, were reserved for her to endure at the death of her Son. The sufferings of the holy Jesus, on the cross, were as a sword or dagger at the heart of the holy virgin, and she suffered with him both as a tender mother, and as a sympathizing member of his body : yea, suffered martyrdom after him, saith Epiphanius.

36 And there was one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser ; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity :

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years : which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Simeon is seconded by Anna, a prophetess ; she also declares, that the child Jesus was the promised and expected Messias ; and thus Christ was proclaimed in the temple by two heralds of different sexes. Concerning this aged woman Anna, it is said, that she departed not from the temple night nor day ; not that she lived and lodged there, but by her never departing from, understand her daily repairing to the temple. That which is often done, is said in scripture to be always done : we are said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably ; thus we pray continually, when we pray as often as duty requires us to pray. Learn hence, That such duties as a Christian performs out of conscience, he will perform with constancy and perseverance ; nature will have her good moods, but grace is steady. The devotions of a pious soul, like Anna's, are as constant, but more frequent, than the returns of day and night.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong

in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon him.

Here we see the truth and reality of Christ's human nature, he grew as we do, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth and manhood. To his divine nature no accession or addition could be made, for that which is infinite cannot increase. The Deity was infinite in Christ, so was not the humanity, but capable of additions ; and accordingly, as Christ grew up in the stature of his body, the faculties of his mind increased, through the grace and power of God's spirit upon him.

41 ¶ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

Observe here, The persons making this yearly journey to Jerusalem, our Saviour's parents and himself ; 1. Joseph, who is called Christ's father, not that he was his natural father, for Christ had no father upon earth ; but Joseph was his reputed and supposed father, his nursing father, who by the appointment of God, took a fatherly care of him : and his father-in-law, being husband to Mary. 2. Mary, the mother of Christ, went up to Jerusalem with her husband and her Son : God commanded only the males to go up to Jerusalem, the weaker sex were excused ; but the holy virgin, well-knowing the spiritual profit of that long journey, would not stay at home. Such as will go no farther than they are dragged in religious services, are strangers to the virgin's piety and devotion. But 3. *The child Jesus* in his minority goes up with his parents to this holy solemnity, thereby, no doubt, intending our instruction, when we are young to give God an early possession of our souls, to consecrate the virgin operation of our minds to him, and in our youth to keep close to the worship and service of God, when we are so importunately courted by the world. Observe farther, This holy family came not to look at the feast and begone, but they duly stayed out all the appointed time. Joseph's calling the virgin's household business, could neither keep them at home, nor hasten them home before the public duties in the temple were dispatched and ended. All worldly business must give place to divine offices, and we must attend God's service to the end, except we depart unblest. Observe lastly, The constant returns of their devotion, *They went up to Jerusalem every year*. No difficulties, no discouragements, could hinder their attendance. Though it is no certain evidence of the truth of grace to frequent public assemblies, yet it is an infallible sign of the want of grace customarily to neglect them.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey ; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

The service of the temple being ended, they return home to Nazareth. Religious duties are not to be attended to the prejudice and neglect of our particular callings. God calls us, as well from his house, as to his house. They are much mistaken who think God is pleased with nothing but devotion ; he that says, *Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord* ; says also, *Be not slothful in business*. Piety and industry must keep pace with one another ; God is as well pleased with our return to Nazareth, as with our going up to Jerusalem. Observe farther, Though Joseph and Mary returned home, the child Jesus, unknown to them, stays behind. Their back was no sooner turned upon the temple, but his face was towards it : Christ had business in that place which his parents knew not of. They missing him, *seek him in the company*, concluding him with their *kinsfolk and acquaintance* ; from whence we may gather, That the parents of Christ knew him to be of a sweet and social, of a free and conversative, not of a sullen and morose disposition. They did not suspect him to be wandering in the fields or deserts ; but, when they missed him, sought him among their kinsfolk : had he not wanted to converse formerly with them, he had not now been sought amongst them. Our blessed Saviour, when on earth, did not take pleasure in a wild reticeness, in a forward austerity, but in a mild affability and amiable conversation ; and herein also his example is very instructive to us.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him, were astonished at his understanding and answers.

Observe here, 1. The place where the child Jesus is found ; *in the temple* : where could there be a more likely place to find the Son of God, than in the house of his Father ? No wonder that his parents found him there ; but that they went not first to seek him there. Observe, 2. At twelve years old, our Saviour disputes in the temple with the doctors of the law : never had those great rabbies heard the voice of such a tutor. Thus, in our Saviour's nonage, he gives a proof of his proficiency ; even as the spring shews us what we may hope for of the tree in summer. Our Saviour discovered his accomplishments by degrees ; had his perfections appeared all at once, they had rather dazzled than delighted the eyes of the beholders ; even as the sun would confound all eyes, should it appear at its first rising

in its full strength. Christ could now have taught all those great rabbies the deep mysteries of God : but being not yet called by his Father to be a public teacher, he contents himself to hear with diligence, and to ask with modesty. Learn hence, That parts and abilities for the ministerial function, are not sufficient to warrant our undertaking of it without a regular call. Christ himself would not run, no not on his heavenly Father's errand, before he was sent ; much less should we.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed : and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

Without doubt, it was impossible to express the sorrow of the holy virgin's soul, when all the search of three days could bring them no tidings of their holy child. How did she blame her eyes for once looking off this object of her love, and spend both days and nights in a passionate bemoaning of her loss ! O blessed Saviour ! who can miss thee, and not mourn for thee ? Never any soul conceived thee by faith, but was apprehensive of thy worth, and sensible of thy want : what comforts are we capable of, while we want thee ? And what relish can we taste in any earthly delight, without thee ?

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me ? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?

Observe here, That Christ blames not his parents for their solicitous care of him, but shews them how able he was to live without any dependency upon them and their care ; and also to let them understand, that higher respects had called him away ; that as he had meat to eat, so had he work to do, which they knew not of : for, says he, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?* As if he had said, " Although I owe respect to you as my natural parents, yet my duty to my heavenly Father must be preferred. I am about his work, promoting his glory, and propagating his truth." We have also a Father in heaven. O ! how good it is to steal away from our earthly distractions, that we may employ ourselves immediately in his service ; that when the world makes enquiry after us, we may say, as our Saviour did before us, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?*

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them ; but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

The most material passage of our Saviour's life for the first twelve years is here recorded : namely, his disputing with the doctors in the temple : how he spent the next eighteen years ; namely, till he was thirty, the scripture doth not mention. It is here said, that he lived with, and was subject to his parents, obeying their commands, and, as it is believed, following their employment, working upon the trade of a carpenter, as was observed, Mark vi. 3. Doubtless he did not live an idle life ; and why should he that did not abhor the virgin's womb, a stable, and a manger, be supposed to abhor the works of an honest vocation ? Observe farther, What a singular pattern is here for children to imitate and follow, in their subjection to their parents : if the greatest and highest of mortals think themselves above their parents' commands, our Saviour did not so ; he paid homage to the womb that bare him, and to his supposed father that provided for him. Let a person be ever so high above others, he is still below and inferior to his parents. Jesus dwelt with his parents, and was subject to them. Observe lastly, A further evidence of our Saviour's humanity, with respect to his human nature, which consisted of body and soul : he did grow and improve, his body in stature, his soul in wisdom ; and he became every day a more eminent and illustrious person in the eyes of all, being highly in favour both with God and man. Vain then is the conclusions of the Socinians from this text, that Christ could not be God : because God cannot wax strong in spirit, or increase in wisdom, as Christ is here said to do ; for God's perfections are infinite and will admit of no increase. Whereas it is plain that this increase, here attributed to Christ in age and stature, respects his humanity ; the wisdom and endowments of his human mind were capable of increase, though his divine perfections were absolutely perfect. So glad are these men of the least shadow of a text, that may cloud the divinity of the Son of God.

CHAP. III.

NOW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene.

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

The two foregoing chapters gave us an account of the birth of our Saviour Christ and of John the Baptist. The evangelist now leaving the history of our blessed Saviour for eighteen years, namely, till he was thirty years old (the Holy Ghost having thought fit to conceal that part of our Saviour's private life from our knowledge) he begins this chapter with a relation of the Baptist's ministry, acquainting us with the time when, and place where,

and the doctrine which the Baptist taught. Observe, 1. The time described when St. John began his public ministry, namely, when Tiberius was emperor, and Annas and Caiaphas high priests. Observe, 2. In the fifteenth year of Tiberius, when the Jews were entirely under the power of the Romans, who set four governors over them, called tetrarchs, so named from their ruling over a fourth part of the kingdom. From hence the Jews might have observed, had not prejudice blinded their eyes, that the sceptre being thus departed from Judah, according to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. *Shilo*, or the Messiah, was now come. Again, the time when St. John began his ministry was, when Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Under the law there were three sorts of ministers that attended the service of the temple, namely, Priests, Levites, and Nethinims; over these the high priests was chief, who, by God's command, was to be the first-born of Aaron's family. But how came two high priests here, seeing God never appointed but one at a time? In answer to this, say some, the power and covetousness of the Romans put in high priests at pleasure to officiate for gain. Say others, The high priest was allowed his assistant or deputy, who, in case of his pollution or sickness, did officiate in his place. But that which we may profitably observe from hence, is this, the exactness and faithfulness of this historian St. Luke, in relating the circumstances of our Saviour's nativity, and the Baptist's ministry. That the truth might evidently appear, he is exact in recording the time.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough way shall be made smooth;

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Observe here, 1. The place where the Baptist exercised his ministry, in the wilderness of Judea, where were some cities and villages, though thinly inhabited. Note here, The great humility of the Baptist, in the preaching in an obscure place, to a small handful of people. Jerusalem some might think, was a fitter place for so celebrated a preacher; but God called him to preach in the wilderness, and there he opens his commission. Learn hence, That the most eminent of God's ministers must be content to execute their office, and exercise their ministry where God calls them, be the place ever so mean and obscure, and

the people ever so rude and barbarous. In the place where God by his providence fixes us, we must abide, till he that called us thither, remove us thence. And this was the Baptist's case here. He leaves the wilderness at God's command, and comes to the more inhabited places; *he came into the country about Jordan, preaching.* It is not only lawful, but a necessary duty, for the ministers of God to remove from one place and people to another, provided their call be clear, their way plain, the good of souls their motive, and the glory of God their end. Observe, 2. The doctrine which the Baptist preached, namely, *The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*: That is, the doctrine of baptism, which sealeth remission of sins to the party baptized. Learn hence, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is the indispensable duty of every gospel minister; John the Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: *They went out every where preaching that men should repent.* Till we are in a state of sinless perfection, the doctrine of repentance must be preached unto us, and practised by us. Observe, 3. The motive and inducement which prompted the Baptist to his duty, which was to fulfil the prophecies which went before him, "as it is written in the book of the prophecies, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; every valley shall be filled, &c." Where note, 1. The title given to John the Baptist, a *voice*, a crying voice. This implies both his vehemency and earnestness, and also his freedom and boldness in delivering of his message; when a minister's own heart is warmly affected with what he preaches, he may hope to affect the hearts of others. Note, 2. The sum and substance of what he cried, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, &c.* that is, make yourselves ready to receive the Messiah, to embrace and entertain his doctrine. As loyal subjects, when their prince is coming near their city, remove every thing out of the way that may hinder his progress; all annoyances and all impediments; in like manner the preparatory work of the gospel upon the hearts of sinners, lies in pulling down mountains, and filling up valleys: that is, in humbling the proud hearts of sinners, puffed up, as the pharisees were, with a conceit of their own righteousness, who would be their own saviours, and not beholden to Christ, and his free grace, for salvation. Learn hence, 1. That man's heart is naturally very unfit to receive and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy doctrine: we have naturally no fitness, no inclination, nor disposition to believe in him, or submit unto him. 2. That if ever we design to entertain Christ in our hearts, we must first prepare and make ready our hearts for the receiving and embracing of him. For though the *Preparation of the heart be from the Lord*, yet he requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours; he prepares our hearts, by enabling us to prepare our own hearts, by getting a sight of the evil of sin, and a sense of our misery without Christ; an hungering desire after him, and a lively faith in him. God does not work upon man, as masons' work upon stone; what he doth in us and for us, he doth it by us, he works by setting us to work; therefore, says the Baptist, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make, &c.* The act of endeavour is ours, and the aid and assistance is God's. Observe lastly, the encouragement the Baptist

gives to persons to prepare the way of the Lord; for, says he, *all flesh shall see the salvation of our God*; that is, now is the time that all persons, Jews and Gentiles, may see the author of salvation, whom God has promised to the world; and may by faith be made partakers of that salvation which the Messiah shall purchase for them, and in his gospel tender to them. The great end of Christ's coming into the world, was to purchase salvation for all flesh, willing to be saved by him.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

St. Matthew, chap. iii. 7, 8, says, that the baptist spake these words to the pharisees and sadducees, whom he gives, first, a quick and cutting compellation, *O generation of vipers*; then a sharp and severe reprehension, *who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* and, last of all, a seasonable exhortation; *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*. As if he had said, "O, ye pharisees, and worst of men! I perceive, by your coming hither, somebody hath alarmed you with the notice of that dreadful vengeance that is coming upon this generation; to prevent which, you pretend repentance of your sins; but let me see, by your actions, that you are not only demure, but sincere penitents; let me see the fruits of your repentance, in the daily course of your conversation." Learn here, 1. That the condition of proud pharisees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though very dangerous, yet is not hopeless and desperate; and their salvation, though the worst of men, must not be despaired of. St. John reproves them for their sins, but yet encourages their repentance. 2. That sincere repentance is not a barren thing, but does constantly bring forth fruits answerable to its nature; as faith, without works, so repentance without fruits is dead also. The genuine fruits of repentance, are humility of heart, and holiness of life. Observe lastly, The cautionary direction which he gives to these hypocrites, not to rest in their external privileges; *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father*; glory not in this, that you are the only visible church that God has upon earth, for God can out of the obdurate Gentile world, raise up a people to himself, take them into covenant with himself, and cast you out. Learn hence, 1. That men are exceeding apt to boast of, and glory in, their external privileges, and to place religion in those things wherein God places it least. How did the Jews glory in their fleshly descent from Abraham, as if God were tied to Abraham's line, and could have no people, if he had not them for his people? 2. That it is a vain

thing to expect exemption from the judgments of God, because of outward privileges enjoyed by us. If we be not born again of the Spirit, it will avail us nothing to be born of Abraham's flesh; if Abraham's faith be not found in our hearts, it will be no advantage to us, that Abraham's blood is running in our veins; *Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father*.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

St. John having preached the doctrine of repentance in the foregoing verses, he backs it with a powerful argument in this verse, drawn from the certainty and severity of that judgment which should come upon them, if they continued in their sins; *Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree*. Learn, 1. That it is not unsuitable for gospel-preachers to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers, from arguments of terror; John does it here, and Christ elsewhere. 2. That those whose hearts are not pierced with the sword of God's word, shall certainly be cut down and destroyed by the axe of his judgments. Observe farther, That forasmuch as the sin here specified is a sin of omission, *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit*, as well as that which bringeth forth evil fruit, *is hewn down and cast into the fire*; we learn, That sins of omission are certainly damning, as well as sins of commission. The neglects of duty are as dangerous and damnable as the acts of sin. Such trees as stand in God's orchard, the church, and bring forth no good fruit, are marked out as fuel for the devil's fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

The Baptist having pressed his hearers to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, here they enquire of him, what fruits they should bring forth? He tells them, first, The fruits of charity and mercy; *He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none*. This is not to be understood strictly, as if the command required us to give the clothes off our back to every one that wanted them; but it directs those that have the things of this life in abundance, to distribute and communicate to those that are in want. Learn hence, That an extensive liberality, and a diffusive charity, in distributing such things as we can well spare towards the relief of others' necessities, is an excellent fruit of repentance, a good proof and evidence of the truth and sincerity of it; *Let him that hath two coats, impart to him that hath none*. Note, That the Baptist here doth not make it unlawful for a man to have two coats; but means only, that he that has one coat, which his brother wants, and he at present doth not, should rather give it him, than suffer him to be in want

of it. Teaching us, That it is not lawful to abound in those things, which our brother wants, when we have sufficient both to relieve his and our necessities.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

The publicans were persons employed by the Romans to gather the tax of tribute among the Jews, who were now tributaries to the Romans, and paid them a public revenue. These publicans were great oppressors, exacting more than was the emperor's due, therefore we find the publicans and sinners so often joined together in the gospel. These men, inquiring what fruits of repentance they should bring forth, St. John directs them to acts of justice: *Exact not.* Where note, 1. The acts of justice and righteousness, as well as of charity and mercy, are real fruits of sincere repentance. Observe, 2. John doth not condemn the office, but cautions the officer. If magistrates may impose taxes, they may doubtless appoint officers to collect those taxes: Christian charity then must always teach us to distinguish betwixt the calling and the crime. We must not censure any office, either in church or state, for the sake of their mal-administration, who are employed in that office.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.

Observe here, What a general resort there was of all sorts of persons to John's ministry: pharisees, sadducees, publicans, soldiers: these last here inquire of him, What they should do to gain acceptance with God? He answers, *Do no violence, defraud no man of his own* by false accusation, but be content with the allowance assigned for your maintenance. Where it is, 1. Strongly supposed, that soldiers are insolent oppressors, making no conscience of injustice, false accusation, and violent oppression; yet, 2. The office and employment of a soldier is not condemned, but regulated; he does not bid them cast away their arms, abandon war, appear no more as military men in the field; but manage their employment inoffensively. Whence we learn, That in some cases, and under some circumstances, for Christians to make war, is both lawful and necessary. To make a war lawful, there is required a lawful authority, a righteous cause, an honourable aim and intention, and a just and righteous manner of prosecution, without vanity and ostentation, without cruelty and oppression. Courage and compassion on the one hand, and cowardice and cruelty on the other hand, do frequently accompany one another.

15 ¶ And as the people were in expect-

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tation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not?

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water: but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;

17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Observe here, 1. How the extraordinariness of John the Baptist's person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, and the exemplariness of his conversation, drew all persons to an admiration of him: inasmuch that they began to think within themselves, whether he were not the Messiah himself. He plainly tells them he was not, but only his servant, his harbinger and forerunner. Observe, 2. The high opinion which John had of Christ, *He is mightier than I*; that is, a person of greater authority, dignity, and excellency, than myself. From whence may be gathered, That though Christ was man, he was more than man, even very God equal with the Father: for John himself was the greatest of them that were born of women, Matt. xi. 11, yet says St. John, Christ is mightier than I. How so? In regard of the dignity of his person, being both God and man: *He that cometh after me, is mightier than I.* Observe, 3. The humble and low estimation that the holy Baptist had of himself, *his shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose*; a proverbial speech, implying, that he was unworthy to do the lowest offices, and meanest services, for Christ. Lord, how well does humility of mind, an humble apprehension, and a low opinion of themselves, become the messengers and ministers of Christ? John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoes. Observe, 4. John does not only declare the dignity of Christ's person, but the excellency of his office; *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*: As if he had said, "I only wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit, which is as fire in the effects of it, purifying the hearts of his people from sin, and consuming their lust and corruptions; yet at the same time having fiery indignation, and flaming judgments to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like dry stubble. Observable it is in scripture, that Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror to his enemies; he is fire unto both. He sits in the hearts of his people as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire; a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by. Observe lastly, How the holy Baptist compares our Saviour to an husbandman, and the Jewish church to a barn-floor, the office of an

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husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow his corn, separating it from the chaff, preserving the one and consuming the other. Observe, 1. That the church is Christ's floor. 2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly. 3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor. The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church. In a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there has been, there is, and ever will be, a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians; but this floor Christ will purge, purge it, but not break it up: purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and existence; and the fan in Christ's hand, with which he will purge his floor, is his holy word, accompanied with the wing of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wind dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both, the floor is purged; "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge, &c."

18 And many other things, in *his* exhortation, preached he unto the people.

19 ¶ But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and for all the evils which Herod had done,

20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

Observe here, 1. In John the Baptist, the character of a zealous and faithful minister of the gospel, he is one that deals plainly, and durst tell the greatest persons of their faults. Herod, though a king, is reproved by him for his adultery and incest. The crown and sceptre of Herod could not daunt the faithful messenger of God. There ought to meet in the ministers of Christ both courage and impartiality; courage in fearing no faces, and impartiality in sparing no sins. Observe, 2. Who it was that imprisoned and beheaded the Holy Baptist; Herod a king. How sad is it, when kings, who should be nursing fathers to the Church, do prove the bloody butchers of the prophets of God. Many of the severest persecutions which the ministers of God have fallen under, have been occasioned by their telling great men of their crimes: men in power are impatient of reproof, and imagine that their authority gives them a license to transgress. Observe, 3. The heinous aggravations of this sin in Herod, "he added this to all his other sins, that he shut up John in prison." This evidenced him incorrigible and unreclaimable. John had preached before Herod, and Herod had heard John with some delight; but he had a darling lust, which occasioned his destruction. Learn hence, That hypocrites may hear the word with some pleasure, and do many things with some delight, but they have always some beloved lust that must be spared, they will neither part with it nor bear reproof for it: Herod sticks not to cut off that head whose tongue was so bold to reprove him for his lusts.

21 ¶ Now, when all the people were

baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.

Observe, 1. The great condescension of Christ in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John. Christ, though John's lord and master, yet yields to be baptized of his servant and messenger. Observe, 2. The reasons why Christ would be baptized. 1. That by this rite he might enter himself into the society of Christians, as he had before by circumcision entered into the society of the Jews. 2. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto us. 3. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, before they entered upon their office, as appears, *Exod. xxix.* 4. Observe, 4. How the duty of prayer accompanied the ordinance of baptism: *Jesus being baptized, and praying*: Teaching us by his example to sanctify every ordinance, and every action with prayer. Christ, when he was baptized, he prayed; when he was tempted, he prayed; when he brake bread, he prayed; when he wrought miracles, he prayed; in his agony in the garden, he prayed; when he suffered on the cross, he prayed. What was the subject matter of our Lord's prayer at this time is not expressed, but by what followed, namely, the heavens opening, and the Holy Ghost descending, it is probably conjectured, that he prayed for some testimony to be given from heaven concerning himself, for it immediately follows:

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

Observe here, The solemn investing of Christ into his office, as Mediator, is attended with a threefold miracle, namely, the opening of the heavens, the descending of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice concerning his Son. *The heavens were opened*; to shew, that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us: next, *The Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour*: Here we have a proof and evidence of the blessed Trinity: the Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends after the manner of a dove, hovering and overshadowing him. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ? First, for the designation of his person, to shew that he was the person set apart for the work and office of a Mediator. Secondly, for the unction and sanctification of his person, for the performance of that office: now was he anointed to be the king, priest, and prophet of his church. Lastly, We have here *the voice of God the Father, pronouncing*, 1. The nearness of Christ's relation: *This is my Son.* 2. The endearedness of his person: *This is my beloved Son.* 3. The fruit and benefit of this near relation unto us: *In thee I am well pleased.* Learn hence, 1. That there is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ: neither our persons, nor our performances, can find acceptance with God, but only in and through him, and for his sake. 2.

That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ground and cause of all that love, and good will, which God the Father sheweth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us as a reconciled father, out of him a consuming fire. "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

23 ¶ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

At thirty years of age, the priests under the law entered upon their public office; accordingly Christ stays the full time prescribed by the law, before he undertakes his public ministry, and he gives the reason for it, Matt. iii. 15. *That he might fulfil all righteousness*; that is, the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required persons to be of that age, before they entered upon that office; and also enjoined them to be baptized or washed in water, when they undertook their office. See Exod. xxix. 4. Learn hence, That whatever the law required in order to perfect righteousness, that Christ fulfilled in the most absolute perfection, both in his own person, and also in the name of all believers. Observe farther, The title given to Joseph here, he is called the supposed father of Christ. Joseph was not his natural father, though supposed so by the Jews; but he was his legal father, being married to the virgin when our Saviour was born; and he was his nursing father that took care of him, and provided for him, though Christ sometimes shewed both his parents, that, if he pleased, he could live without any dependence of their care. See Luke ii. 49.

24 Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,

25 Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge,

26 Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda,

27 Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,

28 Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29 Which was the son of Jose, which

was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,

30 Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,

31 Which was the son of Mela, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,

32 Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson,

33 Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda,

34 Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor,

35 Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragan, which was the son of Phalee, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala,

36 Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech,

37 Which was the son of Methusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan,

38 Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

We find the genealogy of our blessed Saviour recorded by two evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke. His pedigree is set forth by St. Matthew from his father Joseph, by St. Luke from his mother Mary: the design of both is to prove him lineally descended from Abraham and David, and consequently the true and promised Messiah. St. Matthew, intending his history primarily for the Jews, proves him to be the son of Abraham and David, for their comfort,

St. Luke designing the information and comfort of the Gentiles, derives our Lord's pedigree from Adam the common parent of mankind: to assure the Gentiles of their possibility of an interest in Christ, they being sons of Adam. Neither of these evangelists are strict and accurate in enumerating every individual person; which should teach us not to be over curious in scanning the parts of this genealogy, much less captiously to object against it, because of some seeming contradictions in it. For if the evangelists were not nice and critical in composing this genealogy, why should we be so in examining of it? Let us rather attend the design of the Holy Ghost in writing of it, which was twofold. 1. For the honour of our Saviour as man, shewing who were his noble and royal progenitors, according to the flesh. 2. For the confirmation of our faith, touching the reality of our Saviour's incarnation. The scripture making mention of all his progenitors from the first man Adam to his reputed father Joseph, we cannot reasonably doubt either of the truth of his human nature, or of the certainty of his being the promised Messiah. Hence we may learn, That the wisdom of God has taken all necessary care, and used all needful means for satisfying the minds of all unprejudiced persons, touching the reality of Christ's human nature, and the certainty of his being the promised Messiah; for both these ends is our Saviour's genealogy, descent and pedigree, recorded in holy scripture.

CHAP. IV.

AND Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness.

At the twenty-second verse of the foregoing chapter, we find the Holy Ghost descending in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon our Saviour; in this verse we find the extraordinary effects and fruits of the Holy Ghost's descent upon our Saviour; he was filled with all the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit, to fit and furnish him for that ministerial service which he was now entering upon. But observable it is, That before our Saviour undertook the ministerial office, *He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness*, and there furiously assaulted with Satan's temptations. Temptation, meditation, and prayer, says Luther, make a minister: great temptations from Satan, do fit us for greater services for God. And whereas it is said, that Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, *to be tempted of the devil*: by the Spirit we must understand the Holy Spirit of God: for the devil, I think, is never called the Spirit, but has always a brand of reproach annexed, as the evil spirit, the unclean spirit and the like. By his being led by the Spirit (St. Mark says, he was *drove by the Spirit*) we may either understand a potent and efficacious persuasion, without any violent motion; or else, as the learned Dr. Lightfoot thinks, Christ was bodily caught up by the Holy Spirit into the air, and carried from Jordan, where he was baptized, into the wilderness where he was tempted. God had put great honour upon Christ at his baptism, declaring him to be his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased; and the next news we hear, is the devil assaulting him with his temptations. Learn thence, that the more they are beloved of God, and dignified with more eminent

testimonies of his favour, so much the more is the devil enraged, and maliciously set against them.

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

Observe here, 1. How the divine power upheld Christ's human nature without food: what Moses did at the giving of the law, Christ doth at the beginning of the gospel, namely, *fasted forty days and forty nights*. Christ hereby intended our admiration rather than our imitation; or if our imitation of the action only, not of the time. From this example of Christ we learn, That it is our duty by fasting and prayer, to prepare ourselves for a conflict with our spiritual enemies. As Christ prepared himself by fasting, to grapple with the tempter, so should we.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

Observe here, 1. The occasion of the temptation. And 2. The temptation itself: the occasion of the temptation was our Saviour's hunger and want of bread. Learn thence, That when God suffers any of his children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, Satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon to tempt and assault them. Observe, 3. What sin it is he tempts our Saviour to? it is the sin of distrust, to call in question his sonship, *If thou be the Son of God*; and then to distrust God's providence and care, *Command that these stones be made bread*: It is the grand policy of Satan, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption: next to distrust God's fatherly care and provision; and last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves. Thus Satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with Christians; for to work a miracle at Satan's direction was not a lawful mean of providing food for himself.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Note first, That though the devil abused scripture, yet Christ uses it. Good things are never the worse for being abused by Satan and his instruments. Note, secondly, The weapon which our Saviour made use of to vanquish Satan, it was the word of God; *It is written*; says Christ. Learn thence, That the scripture, or the written word of God, is the sure weapon wherewith to vanquish Satan, and to beat back all his fiery temptations. The scripture is God's armoury; out of which all our weapons of war must be taken, for managing our conflict with sin and Satan.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it.

7 If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Observe, 1. The next sin which Satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. O thou impudent and foul spirit, to desire thy Creator to worship thee, an apostate creature! Doubtless there is no sin so black and foul, so horrid and monstrous, but the Christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter, even the devil himself. St. Matthew reads it, *If thou wilt worship me*; St. Luke, *If thou wilt worship before me*. From hence we may gather, that if to worship before the devil, be to worship the devil, then to worship before an image, is to worship the image: Dr. Lightfoot. Observe, 2. The bait which Satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry, representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world, in a most inviting manner, and that in a moment of time, that so he might affect him the more, and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, That the pomp and grandeur of the world is made use of by Satan, as a dangerous snare to draw men into a compliance with him, in his temptations unto sin; *He shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*. Observe, 3. What an impudent liar and proud boaster the devil is: he was a liar from the beginning; *All this will I give thee, for it is delivered unto me*. An impudent untruth, for the dominion over the things of the world was never given to the angels, neither has the devil any power over the creatures, but by permission from God. The devil is a most impudent liar, he told the first lye, and by long practice has become a perfect master in the art of lying. Observe also, the devil's boasting as well as lying. *All this will I give thee*; and when he had not one foot of ground to dispose of. Great boasters are for the most part great liars, and such boasters and liars are like the devil. Observe, 4. How our Saviour declares the true and only object of religious worship: namely, God himself. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*. Religious worship is to be given to none of the creatures, neither to angels nor men, how excellent soever, but to God alone. We read but of two creatures that ever desired in scripture to be worshipped with divine worship, namely, the devil and antichrist; but the command is peremptory, *Thou shalt worship the Lord, and him only*.

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11 And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season.

Observe here, 1. The power which Satan, by God's permission, had over the body of our blessed Saviour, he took him up, and carried his body through the air, from the wilderness to Jerusalem, and there set him upon one of the pinnacles of the temple. Learn hence, 1. That Satan, by God's permission, may have power over the bodies of men, yea, over the bodies of the best of men. 2. That this exercise of Satan's power over the bodies of men, is no argument that such persons do not belong to God. Our Saviour himself who was dear to God, is yet left for a time in Satan's hands. But though Satan had a power to set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, yet he had no power to cast him down; though Satan's malice be infinite, his power is limited and bounded, he cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can. Observe, 2. The sin which Satan tempts Christ to, the sin of self-murder. *Cast thyself down*. Learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of children may be, solicited and tempted to; yet though Satan solicited Christ to the sin, he could not compel him to comply with the temptation. Thence note, That how much earnestness and importunity soever Satan uses in pressing his temptation, he can only persuade, he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce. Observe, 3. The argument which Satan uses to persuade Christ to the sin of self-murder: it is a scripture argument: he quotes a promise; *He shall give his angels charge over thee*: What a wonder is here, to see the devil with a bible under his arm, and with a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alledged scripture before to Satan; here Satan retorts scripture back again to Christ. *It is written*, says Christ, *It is written*, says Satan. Learn, That Satan knows how to abuse the most excellent and comfortable scriptures to the most horrid and pernicious ends and purposes; he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hands, sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scriptures with his tongue. Observe, 4. The text of scripture which Satan makes use of, Psal. xci. 11, 12, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee;" where the doctrine is good, but the application is bad. The doctrine is true, that God is pleased to employ his angels for the good of his servants, and particularly for their preservation in times of danger: and how falsely the devil perverts, misapplies, and wrests that sacred scripture. When God promises that his angels shall keep us, it is in *all his ways*, not in our own crooked paths. Learn, That although the children of God have the promise of the guardian-

ship of his holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when walking in the way of their duty. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Observe lastly, The issue of the combat, Satan is vanquished, and departs from our Saviour. St. Matthew says, "The devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him:" Satan is conquered and quits the field. Teaching us, That nothing like a vigorous resistance of temptation, causes the tempter to flee from us. Satan is both a cowardly enemy, and a conquered enemy; resist him, and he will run.

14 ¶ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 ¶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down: And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Our blessed Saviour being thus fitted and prepared by his baptism and temptations for the execution of his ministerial office, he now enters upon the great work of preaching the gospel, and St. Luke here declares the first place he preached at, namely, Nazareth; and the first text he preached upon, Isa. xli. I. Observe, 1. The place where our Savi-

our preached at; he bestowed his first sermon upon Nazareth, the place of his conception and education; for though Christ was born at Bethlehem, yet he was bred and brought up at Nazareth; there he had his poor but painful education, working on his father's trade, that of a carpenter. This prejudiced the Jews against him, who looked for a sceptre, not an axe in the hand of him *that was born king of the Jews*. Our Saviour's short and secret abode at Bethlehem, and his long and public living at Nazareth, occasioned him to be called *Jesus of Nazareth*; yet some conceive it was a nick name, fastened by the devil upon our Saviour, that he might disguise the place of Christ's nativity, and leave the Jews at a greater loss concerning their Messiah. Sure it is, that this name, *Jesus of Nazareth*, stuck upon our Saviour all his life; and at his death was fixed by Pilate on his cross. Yea, after his ascension, such as believed on him, were called, *The sect of the Nazarenes, or the followers of Jesus of Nazareth*. Observe, 2. The text which our Saviour preached upon at Nazareth: he takes it out of the prophet Esaias, chap. xli. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;" that is, God the Father hath poured forth his Holy Spirit without measure upon me, in all the gifts and graces of it, to fit and furnish me for the work of a Mediator; and particularly, *to preach the gospel to the poor in spirit, and to such as are poor in outward condition also, if meekened and humbled with the sight and sense of their sins. To bind up the broken hearted: that is, to comfort them with the glad tidings of the gospel. To preach deliverance to the captives; to let such sinners know who were slaves to sin and Satan, that a deliverer is come, if they be willing to be delivered by him. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord: or to proclaim a spiritual jubilee, in which God proffers pardon of sin and reconciliation with himself upon the terms of the gospel.* Learn hence, 1. That God stirreth up none to take upon them the office of the ministry, whom he hath not fitted and furnished with gifts for the regular discharge of it. 2. That Christ himself did not undertake the office of a Mediator, but by the ordination of God the Holy Spirit; *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he hath sent me to preach the gospel.* 3. That no creature, angel or man, could perform the office of a Mediator, but only Christ, who was consecrated to that office by an anointing from the Holy Spirit without measure; *The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me.* 4. The preaching of the holy gospel is the great ordinance which Christ himself made use of, and recommended to his apostles and ministers, for enlightening blind sinners, for comforting broken hearts, and delivering captive souls from the slavery and dominion of sin and Satan: "He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to publish deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." What enemies then are they to the souls of men who have low and mean thoughts of this high and honourable ordinance of God, the preaching of the everlasting gospel which is the power of God unto salvation? Observe, 3. The behaviour of our Saviour's auditors, the men of Nazareth, under his preaching; the eyes were fixed, and their minds intent upon him, and upon what was spoken by him: *The eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him; not closed with sleep, nor gazing about upon others; but fixed upon Christ the preacher.* Fixing of the eye is a great help to the attention of the ear, and the intention of the mind;

a fastened eye is a mean to help us to a fixed heart; as a wandering eye is both a sign and a cause of a wandering heart. O that our hearers would imitate our Saviour's hearers under the word! They fastened their eyes upon him, as if they meant to hear him with their eyes as well as with their ears, and yet we have cause to suspect, that curiosity rather than piety caused this their attention; seeing, as you will find, ver. 29, that these very persons, who out of novelty were ready to eat his words; soon after out of cruelty were ready to devour the speaker; "For they thrust him out of the city, led him to the brow of the hill, and would have cast him down headlong." O blessed Saviour! What wonder is it, that the persons of thy ministers are despised, and their doctrine neglected, when thou thyself, the first of preachers of the gospel, and for thy first reason at Nazareth, wert thus ignominiously treated! Observe lastly, How Christ conforms to the ceremonies of the Jewish doctrine, who, in honour of the law and the prophets, *stood up* when they read them, and according to custom, *sat down* when they explained them. And although the synagogical worship was then loaded with rules and ceremonies of human invention, and also the lives and manners both of the priests and people were much corrupted; yet both our Saviour and his disciples went to the synagogue as members of the church of Nazareth, every sabbath-day, joining with them in the public worship. From whence we may seasonably infer, that such Christians as do quietly and peaceably comply with the practice of the church in whose communion they live, in the observation of such indifferent rites as are used by her, act most agreeably to our Saviour's practice and example.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he saith unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

Observe here, 1. The effect of our Saviour's ministry at Nazareth, it created wonder, but did not produce faith; they marvelled, but not believed; they admired the wisdom of his discourses, but will not own him to be the promised Messiah, because of the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition: *Is not this Joseph's son?* They expect the son of a prince, not the son of a carpenter, to be their Messiah. Thence note, That the poverty and meanness of Christ's condition was that which multitudes stumbled at, and which kept many, yea most, from believing on him. None but a spiritual eye can discern beauty in an humbled and abased Saviour. Observe, 2. Our Saviour wonders not that so few of his countrymen, among whom he had been bred and

brought up, and with whom he had lived most part of his time, did despise his person, and reject his doctrine; he tells them, *No prophet has honour in his own country*; that is, very seldom has; teaching us, that usually the ministers of God are most despised where they are most familiarly known; sometimes the remembrance of their mean original and extraction, sometimes the poverty of their parents, sometimes the indecencies of their childhood, sometimes the follies of their youth, sometimes the faults of their families and relations are ript up, and made occasions of contempt; and therefore the prophet that comes from afar, and has not been much known, gains the greatest reputation amongst a people who being ignorant of his extraction, look upon his breeding as well as his calling to be divine. This good use ought to be made of our Saviour's observation, that his ministers be very wise and discreet in conversation with their people, not making themselves cheap and common in every company, nor light and vain in any company; for such familiarity will breed contempt, both of their persons and their doctrine. But our duty is by strictness and gravity of deportment to keep up an awe and esteem in the consciences of our people; always tempering our gravity with courtesy and a condescending affability. That minister which prostitutes his authority, frustrates the end of his ministry, and is the occasion of his own contempt.

25 But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land:

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Here our Saviour by a double instance confirms what he had last told his countrymen at Nazareth, namely, that prophets are most despised by their own countrymen and acquaintance, and that strangers oft-times have more advantage by a prophet than his own people. The first instance of this which our Saviour gives them, is in the days of Elias, though there were many widows then in his own nation, yet none of them were qualified to receive his miracles, but a stranger, a widow of Sarepta. The second instance was in the days of Elisha; when though there were many lepers in and about the neighbourhood, yet they being his countrymen, despised him, and none were qualified for a cure but Naaman the Syrian, a man of another country. Thus the prophets of God, like some fishermen, catch least in their own pond, and do more good by their ministry among strangers, than among their own countrymen, kinsfolk, and near relations: "No prophet is accepted in his own country."

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill (whereon their city was built) that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

Observe here, 1. The horrid impiety of the people of Nazareth, in thrusting our Saviour out of the city, and their barbarous and bloody cruelty in bringing him to the brow of the hill, with full intent to cast him down headlong. But Christ was to die a clean contrary way, not by throwing down, but by lifting up. O ungrateful and unhappy Nazareth! Is this the return you make that divine guest, which for thirty years had sojourned in your coasts! No wonder that the ablest preaching, and most exemplary living of the holiest and best of Christ's ministers, obtain no greater success at this day amongst a people, when the presence of Christ at Nazareth, for thirty years together, had no better influence upon the minds and manners of that people; but instead of receiving his message, they rage at the messenger; neither let any of the ministers of Christ think it strange, that they are ignominiously despised, when our Master before us was in danger of being barbarously murdered, and that for his plain preaching to his own people, the men of Nazareth. But observe, 2. The miraculous escape of our blessed Lord from the murdering hands of the wicked Nazarites; *He passing through the midst of them, went his way.* How and after what manner he escaped is not declared, and therefore cannot without presumption be determined. Although the Romanists, to make way for their doctrine of transubstantiation, positively affirm, that contrary to the nature of a body, he penetrated through the breasts of the people. But whether he struck them with blindness that they did not see, or smote them with fear that they durst not hold him, or whether by a greater strength than theirs (which his godhead could easily supply his human nature with) he escaped from them, it is neither prudent to enquire, nor possible to determine; we know it was an easy thing for him, who was God as well as man, to quit himself of any mortal enemies; and at the same time, when he rescued himself, could have ruined them, by frowning them into hell, or looking them into nothing.

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

33 ¶ And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and he cried out with a loud voice;

34 Saying, Let us alone; what have

we to do with thee, *thou* Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Our blessed Saviour, being driven out of Nazareth by the fury of his countrymen, departs to Capernaum, where he entered into their synagogues and taught. *The people were astonished at his doctrine:* the reason of which astonishment is added, *For his word was with power;* that is, there was majesty in his person, spirituality in his preaching, and powerful miracles accompanying both, and confirming both, of which the evangelist here gives us an account, namely, *The casting out of a devil in one possessed, ver. 33. There was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and he cried out;* that is, the devil, that unclean spirit, did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Amongst many other calamities which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, to be bodily possessed by Satan. The devil has an inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other. O! how much is it our interest, as well as our duty, by prayer, to put ourselves, morning and evening, under the divine care and protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits! Observe, 2. The substance of the devil's outcry, *Let us alone, What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?* that is, to restrain us from the exercise of our power; the devil thinks himself destroyed when he is restrained from doing mischief. Observe, 3. The title given by the devil to our Saviour, he styles him, *The Holy one of God.* How comes this acknowledgment out of the devil's mouth? Could an apostle make a profession beyond this? But how comes Satan to make it? For no good end and with no good intention, we may be sure; for the devil never speaks truth for truth's sake, but for advantage sake: probably, 1. He might make this profession, that so he might bring the truth profest into question; hoping that the truth, which received testimony from the father of lies, would be suspected: or, 2. It might perhaps be done to make the people believe, that our Saviour had some familiarity with Satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem to put honour upon him. "See the latter end of the note to Mark," chap. i. 24.

38 ¶ And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her. And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them.

Here observe, 1. That St. Peter, a disciple, yea, an apostle, was a married man. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New did abstain from the marriage bed, nor did judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome, by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, Heb. xiii. 4. *Marriage is honourable amongst all men*. Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness: strength of grace, and dearness of respect, even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases: God's own children are visited with bodily sickness as well as others. Observe, 3. Here was an ordinary distemper cured in an extraordinary manner, by a touch of Christ's hand, in an instant: *Immediately the fever left her, and she arose, and ministered unto them*: That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous; that she administered unto Christ and his disciples, argued her thankfulness. After Christ hath healed any of us, it ought to be our first care to administer unto him; that is, to employ our recovered strength in the service of Christ, and to improve our restored health to the honour and glory of Christ.

40 Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with diverse diseases, brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was Christ.

The evangelist here declares several other cures wrought by our Saviour; he healed the sick and dispossessed the devils. In our Saviour's time we read of many possessed with devils, but of few either before or afterwards. Probably, 1. Because Satan, perceiving the Messiah to become in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover the greater malice and enmity against mankind. 2. Perhaps Almighty God suffered Satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power, by casting Satan out. It is added, "That he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him;" that is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, lest the world should from thence

take occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles which he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly from the devil's owning Christ to be the Holy One of God, the pharisees concluded that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them; and thereupon their affirmation was groundless, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils."

42 And when it was day, he departed, and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

Observe here, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life, to preach the gospel. "I must preach the kingdom of God, for therefore came I forth." Preaching was Christ's great work, it is undoubtedly his ministers. Christ omitted some opportunities of working miracles, that he might preach to other cities: this was his great work. Observe, 2. It being Christ's great design to plant and propagate the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to one particular place, no not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolve to preach the word in smaller towns and villages: leaving his ministers herein an instructive example, to be as willing to preach the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest and most populous cities, if God calls us thereunto. Let the place be ever so obscure and mean, and the congregation ever so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct a handful of people.

CHAP. V.

AND it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesar,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Here observe, 1. That our Saviour used the sea as well as the land in his passage from place to place to preach the Gospel; and the reason why he did so might probably be these: 1. To shew nature's intent in the making of the sea, namely, to be sailed upon, as the land to be walked upon. 2. That Christ might take occasion to manifest his deity, in working miracles upon the sea; namely, by calming of the waves and stilling of the winds. 3. It might be to comfort sea-faring men in their distresses, and encourage them to pray to such a Saviour as had an experimental knowledge of the dangers of the sea; it were well if sailors would consider this, and instead of inuring themselves to the language of hell, when they go down into the deep, would direct their prayer unto Christ, and look up to him: who now in heaven has the remembrance of what he himself endured and underwent here on earth, and on the sea. Observe, 2. The circumstance of time, when Christ used to put forth to sea: it was usually after he had wrought some extraordinary miracle, which set them on admiring and commending of him: as after he had fed so many thousands with a few barley loaves and fishes, presently he put forth to sea: shunning thereby all popularity and vain glorious applause from the multitude, which he was never ambitious of, but industriously avoided. Observe, 3. That after our Saviour's resurrection we never find him sailing any more upon the sea. For such a fluctuating and turbulent condition which necessarily attends sea voyages, was utterly inconsistent with the constancy, stability, and perpetuity of Christ's estate when risen from the grave. The firm land better agreeing with his fixed state, he keeps upon it till his ascension into heaven. Observe, 4. That Christ scruples not to preach to the people, in and out of the ship; *He set down and taught the people out of the ship.* Sometimes we find our holy Lord preaching upon a mountain, sometimes in a ship, sometimes in a house, as often as may be in a synagogue: he that laid hold of all seasons for preaching the gospel, never scrupled any place which convenience offered to preach in: well knowing, that it is the ordinance that sanctifies the place, and not the place the ordinance.

4 ¶ Now, when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And

they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken;

19 And so *was* also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour having delivered his doctrine to the people, confirms his doctrine with a miracle, and with such a miracle as did at once instruct and encourage his apostles; the miraculous number of fish which they caught did presage and prefigure their miraculous success in preaching, planting, and propagating the gospel. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's command to Peter, and his ready compliance with Christ's command; *Let down your nets for a draught,* says Christ; "We have toiled all night," says St. Peter, and caught nothing: nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net." This mystically represents to us, 1. That the fishers of men may labour all night and all day too, and catch nothing. This is sometime the fishermen's fault, but oftener the fishes. It is the fisher's fault that nothing is taken, if he doth only play upon the sands, and not *launch out into the deep*; deliver some superficial and less necessary truths, without opening to the people the great mysteries of godliness. If they fish with broken nets, either deliver unsound doctrine, or lead unexemplary lives. "If they do not cast the net on the right side of the ship;" that is, rightly divide the word, as workmen that need not be ashamed. And if they do not fish at Christ's command, but run a fishing unsent, it is then no wonder that they labour all their days and catch nothing. But very often it is the fishes fault, rather than the fisherman's; worldly men are crafty and cunning, they will not come near the net; hypocrites are slippery like eels, the fisherman cannot long hold them, but they dart into their holes; priding themselves in their external performances, and satisfying themselves with the round of duties. The great men of the world break through the net; the divine commands cannot bind them. Jer. v. 5. "I will go to the great men, and speak to them, but they have broken the yoke and burst the bonds." Observe, 3. The miraculous success which St. Peter had, when at Christ's command he let down the net: *They enclosed such a multitude of fishes, that the net brake.* Two things our Saviour aimed at in this miracle, 1. To manifest to his disciples the power of his godhead, that they might not be offended at the poverty and

meanness of his manhood. 2. To assure them of the great success which his apostles and their successors might expect in planting and propagating of the gospel. If the ministers of Christ, whom he calls *fishers of men*, be faithful in the cast, his power shall be magnified in the draught. Some of our flesh will cleave eternally to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more will wallow in the mud, and continue all their days in the filth of sin, if our Master, at whose command we let down the net, doth not inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the casting of it. Observe, 4. What influence the sight of this miracle had upon St. Peter; it occasioned fear and amazement, and caused him to adore Christ, and declare himself unworthy of his presence. *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* Not that the good man was weary of Christ's presence, but acknowledged himself unworthy of it. It is a great discovery of our holiness, to revere God, and fear before him, when he doth wonderful things before us, though they be wonders of love and mercy: here was a wonderful appearance of Christ's power and mercy to St. Peter, but it affects him with a reverential fear and awful astonishment. Observe, 5. How St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, at Christ's call, forsook all and followed him; they left their father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus: whom Christ calls he calls effectually; he draws whom he calls, and works their hearts to a ready compliance with their duty. And although when they were first called to be disciples, they followed their trades of fishing for a time, yet upon a second call to the apostleship, they left off their trade and forsook all to follow the ministry: teaching the ministers of the gospel, that it is their duty to give themselves wholly up to their great work, and not to incur themselves with secular affairs and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's incumbering himself with worldly concerns and business; "They forsook all and followed Jesus."

12 ¶ And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy: who seeking Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

Observe here, 1. The petitioner, that in a very humble and submissive manner sues unto Christ for cure and healing; "A leper fell on his face, and besought him, saying; Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts his willingness to help and heal him. Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed by all those who expect benefit by him, and healing from him. Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal the distressed person; *Jesus touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched; therefore Christ touching this leper, shews himself to be above the law; that he was Lord of it, and might dispense with it: and his healing this leper, by the word of his mouth and touch of his hand, shewed him to be truly and really sent of God; for leprosy among the Jews was accounted an incurable distemper, called the finger of God; a disease of his sending, and of his removing. Our Saviour, therefore, as a proof of his being the Messiah, tells John's disciples, Matt. xi. 5, "The lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised by him;" which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of the lepers is as much an act of divine power, as raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2 Kings v. 7. it is said, "Am I God, that this man sends unto me to cure a person of his leprosy?" Observe, 3. The certainty and the suddenness of the cure was a farther proof of Christ's divine power. *Immediately the leprosy departed.* Christ not only cured him immediately but instantaneously; not only without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ shewed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness. Observe, 4. A two-fold charge and command given by Christ to the leper, 1. To tell it to no man: here the great modesty, piety, and humility of our Saviour, is discovered, together with the prudent care he took of his own safety; his modesty in concealing his own praises; his humility in shunning all vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety in referring all the honour and glory to God his Father; his care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create untimely danger from the pharisees. 2. The next part of the charge given to the recovered leper is, to go and shew himself to the priest, and to offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them; that is, to testify to the Jews, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand: and also that the miracle might testify that he was the true and promised Messiah. Learn hence, That our blessed Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time of its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood, he would have it exactly observed. See note on St. Matt. viii. 2.

16 ¶ And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.

The duty of private and solitary prayer is not more strictly enjoined by our Saviour's command, than it is recommended to us by his example. Observe, 1. The duty which our Lord performed, *prayer*: we have much more business with God in prayer than Christ had: he had no sins to be

humbled for, nor beg pardon of; no need to pray for any sanctifying habits of grace, the Holy Spirit being given to him without measure; yet did our holy Lord spend much of his time in prayer! he took delight in paying homage to his heavenly Father. Observe, 2. What kind of prayer our Lord did eminently delight in, it was solitary and private prayer. He often went alone, even out of the hearing of his own disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable and acceptable. There are times and seasons when a Christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that intercourse which passes between him and his God. Observe, 3. The place our Lord withdraws to for private prayer, it is the desert; he withdrew into the wilderness and prayed, both to avoid ostentation, and also to enjoy communion with his Father. The modest Bridegroom of his church, says St. Bernard, will not impart himself so freely to his spouse before company. St. Mark i 35, adds, "That our Saviour rose up a great while before day, and went into the desert place to pray." Teaching us, That the morning is the fit season, yea, the best of seasons, for private duties; now are our spirits freshest, and our minds freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us: it is certainly much better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer. Note, lastly, That our blessed Saviour had no idle hours here in the world; his time did not lie upon his hands as ours does; he was always preaching or praying, or working miracles; either paying homage to God, or doing good to man. Lord, help us to imitate this thy instructive example, by embracing all opportunities of glorifying God, and doing good to one another.

17 ¶ And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with *his* couch, into the midst before Jesus.

20 And, when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the scribes and pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this that speak-

eth blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he, answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23 Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

As the great end of our Saviour's miracles was to confirm his doctrine, so commonly after his preaching he wrought his miracles: the Scribes and Pharisees, though they had no love for our Saviour's person, nor value for his ministry, yet they frequently accompanied him wherever he went, partly to cavil at his doctrine, and partly out of curiosity to see his miracles; but observe the gracious condescension of our Saviour, although he well knew that the pharisees at this time attended upon him with no good intention, yet he puts forth his divine power in working miracles before them; *The power of the Lord was present to heal*; not that Christ's power was at any time absent, but it is said now to be present because it was now exerted and put forth at his will and pleasure. And accordingly at this time, before the pharisees' eyes, he miraculously cures a person sick of the palsy, as the paragraph before us does inform us. Wherein observe, 1. The diseased and distressed person, *one sick of the palsy*, which being a resolution and weakness of the nerves, enfeebles the joints, and confines a person to his bed or couch. As a demonstration of Christ's divine power, he was pleased to single out the palsy and leprosy, incurable diseases, to work a cure upon. Now this person was so great a cripple by reason of the palsy, that he could not go, nor be led, but was carried in his bed or couch. Observe, 2. As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of the people's faith. The man and his friends had a firm and full persuasion, that Christ was clothed with a divine power, and able to help him; and they hope in his goodness that he was willing as well as able. Accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncover some part of it, and let the bed down and the sick man in it, and lay him at the foot of Christ, in hopes of help and healing. Observe, 3.

no sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ exerts his divine power in healing; yet the object of their faith probably was not Christ's divine power as God, but they looked upon him as an extraordinary prophet, to whom God had communicated such a divine power as Elijah and Elisha had before him. Yet see the marvellous efficacy even of this faith, which obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals the body and soul too, saying, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thereby our Saviour signifies to them, that sin is the meritorious cause of sickness, and consequently, that in sickness the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon; for the sense of pardon will in some degree take away the sense of pain. Observe, 4. The exception which the pharisees take against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him; they charge him with blasphemy, urging that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin; indeed their proposition was true, but their application was false. Nothing more true, than that it is the highest blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate and assume to himself the incommunicable property of God, absolutely and authoritatively to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sins, which he had as God from all eternity, and, as Mediator, God and man in one person, when here on earth: this was blasphemy in them; but the assuming and challenging of it, none in him. Observe, 5. To cure, if possible, the obstinacy and blindness of the pharisees, our Saviour gives them a twofold demonstration of his Godhead: 1. By letting them understand, that he knew their thoughts, *Jesus perceived their thoughts*, ver. 22. To know the thoughts, to search the hearts, and understand the reasonings of men, is not in the power of angels or men, but the prerogative of God only. 2. By assuming to himself a power to forgive sins; for our Saviour here, by taking upon him to forgive sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and a convincing evidence of his Godhead: *For who can forgive sins, but God only?* Observe, 6. The effect which this miracle had upon the minds of the people, they marvelled and were amazed, were filled with fear but not with faith: astonished, but did not believe. Learn hence, That the sight of Christ's own miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the efficacious grace of God; the one makes us marvel, the other must make us believe.

27 ¶ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me.

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

31 And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The number of our Lord's apostles not being filled up: Observe, 1. What a free and gracious, what an unexpected and undeserved choice Christ maketh. Levi, that is, Matthew (for he had both names) a grinding publican, who gathered the tax for the Roman emperor, and was probably guilty as others were, of the sins of covetousness and extortion, yet he is called to follow Christ, as a special disciple. Learn hence, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it sometimes calls and converts sinners unto Christ, when they think not of him, nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet is he here called by him, and that with an efficacious call; Matthew, a publican; Zaccheus, an extortioner; Saul, a persecutor; all these are effectually called by Christ, as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace. Observe, 2. Levi, or Matthew's ready compliance with Christ's call: *He presently arose and followed him*; when the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies and yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Our Saviour, (says the pious bishop Hall,) speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit efficaciously to our hearts, Satan cannot hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall with Levi instantly arise and follow our Saviour. Observe, 3. Levi, to shew his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Levi to a discipleship, Levi invites Christ to a dinner; the servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour; a better guest he could not invite, Christ always comes with his cost with him. We do not find that when Christ was invited to any table, that he ever refused to go; if a publican, if a pharisee invited him, he constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good: Christ feasts us when we feed him. Levi, to give Christ a pledge and specimen of his love, makes him a feast. Learn thence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive of their love unto him. Levi's heart being touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast. Observe, 4. The cavil and exception which the scribes and pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners; malice will never want matter of accusation. Our Saviour justifies himself, telling them he conversed with sinners as their physician, not as their companion: *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*; as if our Lord had said, With whom should a physician converse, but with sick patients? And is he to

he accused for that? Now this is my case. I am come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men; surely then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, *for they that are sick need the physician*; but as for you Scribes and Pharisees, who are well and whole in your opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you; for such as think themselves whole, desire not the physician's help. Now from this assertion of our Saviour, *The whole need not a physician, but the sick*; these truths are suggested to us, 1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness. 2. That Christ is the physician appointed by God, for the cure and healing of this disease. 3. That there are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, who yet think themselves sound and whole. 4. That such, and only such, as find themselves sin-sick, and spiritually diseased, are subjects capable of Christ's healing. *They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.* I come not, says Christ, to call the (opinionatively righteous but the sensible) sinner to repentance.

33 ¶ And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples of the pharisees*; but thine eat and drink?

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 ¶ And he spake also a parable unto them, No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old: if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken out of the new*, agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles: and both are preserved.

39 No man also having drunk old *wine* straight-way desireth new: for he saith the old is better.

An objection is here made against the disciples of our Saviour, that they did not fast so much and so often as John Baptist's disciples did. John's disciples imitated their master, who was a man of an austere life; Christ's disciples imitated him, who was of a more free conversation. Observe, therefore, our Saviour's defence, which he makes for the

not fasting of his disciples: he declares, that at present it was neither suitable nor tolerable; *not suitable*, in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them, who being their *bridegroom*, and his disciples children of the *bride-chamber*; it was now a day of joy and rejoicing to them, and mourning and fasting would be very improper for them. But when the bridegroom *shall be taken away*, that is, Christ's bodily presence removed, then there will be cause enough for the disciples to fast and mourn. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is the bridegroom of his spouse the church. 2. That this bridegroom was to be taken away. 3. That because of the bridegroom's removal, the church did, shall and must fast: "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away, and then shall they fast." Again our Saviour declares that this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for his disciples, for they were at present, but raw, green, and tender, unable to bear the severities and rigours of religion, any more than an old garment can bear a piece of new cloth to be set into it, or any more than old bottles can bear new wine to be put into them. The sense of our Saviour's words seems to be this, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted; they cannot, therefore, at present undergo the austerities of religion, fastings, weepings and watchings; but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down my Holy Spirit upon them, which shall enable them to do all the duties that the gospel enjoins." The lesson of instruction which we may probably gather from hence, is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, for weak christians, to be put upon the severer exercises of religion; or to be urged to the performance of all such duties as are above their strength, but they ought to be treated with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour, says one, doth here commend prudence to his ministers, in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing: we must consult what progress our people have made in christianity, and manage accordingly.

CHAP. VI.

AND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing *them in their hands*.

2 And certain of the pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful on the sabbath-days?

3 And Jesus answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred and they which were with him;

4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and

gave also to them that were with him, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

In the former part of this chapter we find our blessed Saviour defending his disciples from the clamorous accusations of the pharisees for breaking the sabbath-day, because they plucked the ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands in order to the satisfying of their hunger. Where note, 1. The great poverty, the low estate and condition of Christ's own disciples in the world. They wanted bread, and were forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger: God may, and sometimes does, suffer his dearest children to fall into straits, and to taste of want, for the trial of their faith and dependence upon his power and goodness. Note, 2. How the hypocritical pharisees blame this action of the disciples, namely, their plucking of the ears of corn, yet they did not charge them with theft for so doing; because to take in our great necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose, that if he were present and knew our circumstances he would not deny us, is not theft. But it was the servile labours on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the pharisees scruple and object against. Where note, how hypocrites expend their zeal in and upon lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater; placing all holiness in the observation of outward ceremonies, whilst they neglect moral duties. Note, 3. The argument with which our Saviour defends this action of his disciples, it is taken from the example of David; necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat; for in cases of necessity, a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty. Works of mercy, for the preserving our lives, and the better fitting us for sabbath services, are certainly lawful on the sabbath day. Note lastly, The argument which our Saviour uses to prove the sabbath's observation may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity, and that is drawn from that authority which Christ the Instructor and Lord of the sabbath, had over it: *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*; that is, he hath authority and power as God, and as Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change it, to dispense with a breach of it upon a just and great occasion; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done upon the sabbath day. This action of the disciples being of that nature, is without just cause censured and condemned by the pharisees; a sort of men who were resolved to cavil at, and quarrel with, whatever our Saviour or his disciples either did or said.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, also, on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught. And there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst: and he arose, and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand: And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The miraculous cure which our Saviour wrought upon the man which had the withered hand; and, 2. The effect which this miracle had upon the wicked pharisees. In the former, note, The place where our Saviour wrought this miracle, *in the synagogue*; the time when, *on the sabbath-day*; the manner how, by speaking of a word; the persons before whom, namely, the envious and malicious pharisees. These men were always slandering Christ's doctrine, and cavilling at his miracles, yet does our holy Lord go on with his work before their faces without discouragement. Learn thence, That the unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us, for well doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty, either towards God or towards our neighbour. Although the pharisees watched our Saviour wherever he went, and when they could find no occasion of quarrel, would invent and make one, yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that *he bids the man who had the withered hand stand forth*, to shew that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in the doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we follow the example of our blessed Redeemer. Observe, 2. The influence and effect which this miracle had upon the wicked pharisees, they were filled with madness, and took council to kill him: instead of being convinced by this miracle, they conspire against him for it. The enemies of Christ and his holy religion, when arguments fail, fall to violence. It is a certain sign of a weak cause, that must be supported by passion; which is all tongue and no ear.

12 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Observe here, 1. The duty which our holy Lord performed, The duty of prayer: we have much more business with God in prayer, than Christ had: he had no sins to confess, no want of grace to make known; yet did our Lord spend much time, even a whole night in this duty. Lord, what delight didst thou take in paying this homage to thy heavenly Father! O how does thy zeal and forwardness condemn our remissness and lukewarmness! Observe, 2. It was solitary prayer that our Lord did so exceedingly delight in: *He went into the mountain alone to pray*, not suffering his very disciples to be with him. There are times and seasons when a Christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that intercourse which passes betwixt him and his God. Observe, 3. The place which our Lord withdraws to for privacy in prayer; *He went into a mountain*, as a place of retiredness, God delights to meet with his children alone. The modest bridegroom of the church, says St. Bernard, will not impart himself to his spouse before company. Observe, 4. The time when Christ retired into this mountain to pray, and to spend a whole night in prayer to God. If we look back to the former part of the chapter, we shall find that it was at a time when the pharisees were filled with rage and madness against him, and conspired to take away his life. Thence learn, That it is our duty, at such times, especially when enemies lie in wait to do us hurt, to give ourselves much unto prayer. Again, if we look forward, the next verse tells us that our Saviour was now about to send forth his twelve apostles to preach and propagate the gospel. Christ thought so great a work was not to be done without solemn and extraordinary prayer. Accordingly he spends a whole night in prayer to God upon that occasion, leaving herein a most instructive example to his church, to continue in prayer at all times; but then especially to abound in it, when persons are to be set apart for the momentous work of the ministry, that they may enterprize it with extraordinary dread and caution, not with aspiring, but tremendous thoughts; for who is sufficient for these things?

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom, also, he named apostles;

14 Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;

15 Matthew and Thomas; James, *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon, called Zelotes;

16 And Judas, *the brother of James*, and Judas Iscariot, which, also, was the traitor.

As the Jewish church arose from twelve patriarchs, so the Christian church became planted by twelve apostles. The person sending them forth was Christ: none may undertake the work and calling of the ministry, but those whom Christ appoints and calls, not immediately by himself, but immediately by the governors of his church; the

persons commissioned were disciples before they were apostles; to teach us, that Christ will have such as preach the gospel, to be disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the faith and doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. Observe next, How carefully the names of the twelve apostles, those laborious persons in the service of souls, are recorded and transmitted with honour to posterity. God will signally honour those who signally honour him, and are the special instruments of his glory. Of the twelve apostles, Peter is named first, and Judas last; Peter is first named, because probably elder than the rest, or because for order sake he might speak before the rest; from whence may be inferred a primacy, but no supremacy; a priority of order, but no superiority of degree; as a foreman of a grand jury has a precedency, but no pre-eminency; he is first in order before the rest, but has no authority over the rest; neither did St. Peter ever assume to himself a power of deciding controversies: but we find St. James in that first general council, mentioned Acts xv. 13, speaking somewhat definitively, *This I judge*, or determine the matter, and yet St. Peter was then and there present. Had the champions of the church of Rome such a passage in all the scripture for St. Peter's authority, it would make a louder noise than *pasce oves*, feed my sheep, John xxi. 16. Again, as St. Peter is named first, so Judas is mentioned last, with a brand of infamy upon him, the traitor; the person that betrayed his Lord and Master; from whence we may gather, that though the truth of grace be absolutely necessary to a minister's salvation, yet the want of it doth not disannul his office, nor hinder the lawfulness of his ministry. Judas, though a traitor, was yet a lawful minister; and a heart-hypocrite is no hypocrite *in foro ecclesiae*, before the church, though he should be damned for his hypocrisy before God.

17 ¶ And he came down with them, and stood in the plain; and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases:

18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed.

19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and he healed them all.

Observe here, 1. The great zeal and forwardness of the people in attending upon our Saviour's ministry; he had newly begun to preach in this place, and the people flock after him from all parts from Judea, from Jerusalem, from Tyre and Sidon, to hear his doctrine, and see his miracles. When our Saviour first began to preach, the people came unto him from every quarter. His ministers find it thus; at our first coming among a people, our labours are most acceptable, and they do most good. Our people's affec-

tions are then warmest, and perhaps our own too. 2. What sort of people were they that attended thus zealously on our Saviour's ministry; they were the common and ordinary people; the poor received the gospel; the learned scribes, the knowing pharisees, those wise men after the flesh, the mighty, the noble, the great and honorable, these despised our Saviour's person, alighted his ministry, yea, sought to take away his life. Thus from the first plantation of the gospel to this day, the poorer and meaner sort of the people have entertained the glad tidings of salvation; it is a sad but a certain truth, that heaven is a place where few, comparatively, but very few of the great men of the world are like to come; their temptations are many, their corruptions strong, and their great estates, through their own abuse, become fuel to their lusts: Lord! how rare is it to find those who are eminently great exemplarily good! Observe, 3. The nature of our Saviour's miracles. Moses' miracles were as great judgments as wonders, but Christ's miracles were as great miracles as wonders, they were salubrious and healing; "There went virtue out of him, and healed them all." Christ's miracles were like the author of them, full of goodness; yet would not the obstinate pharisees be convinced, either by the goodness that was in them, or by that omnipotent power which wrought them: all our Saviour's miracles were wonderful, but wonders of love and mercy.

20 ¶ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

As our Saviour's condition in this world was very poor, so was his disciples' condition also; therefore to relieve them against their poverty and low estate in this world, he thus bespeaks them; "Blessed be ye poor;" you that believe in me, and follow me, are in a happier condition than those that are rich, and have received their consolation; "for yours is the kingdom of heaven." Christ was the poor man's preacher, and the poor man's comforter; yet a bare outward poverty, or an avowed voluntary poverty, will entitle none to the blessing. It is not a poverty of possession, but a poverty of spirit, that makes us members of the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh.

Hunger and thirst are not blessings in themselves, nor yet are they curses in themselves. Sanctified hunger is a far greater blessing than surfeiting fullness: St. Matthew therefore adds, chap. v. 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Learn thence, 1. That such as spiritually hunger and thirst after Christ and his righteousness, are certainly in a happy and blessed condition. 2. That the happiness of those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, consists in being filled, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh;" as if Christ had said, "You, my disci-

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ples, that are now in a sad, mournful, and afflicted state, are blessed; for there will come a time when ye shall be comforted, a time when God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes;" yet must we think that we have nothing to do but to mourn? there is a time to rejoice, as well as a time to mourn; not that bare mourning and weeping in itself and for its own sake, is acceptable unto God; but we mourn rationally for our sins, and the sins of others. God will comfort us in this world by his word and spirit, and in the world to come with the sight of himself.

22 Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake:

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Observe here, 1. The sufferers described, the disciples; and their sufferings foretold, ye shall be hated, separated, and reproached. Hatred of Christ's disciples, is the bitter root from which persecution grows; where there is hatred in the heart, no wonder that reviling is in the lips. And as the disciples of Christ then were for his sake hated, reproached, and cast out of the Jewish church, so now such disciples as will cordially embrace and steadfastly hold fast, the faith delivered by our Saviour, must expect and prepare for hatred and persecution, to be separated from civil society, excommunicated from church fellowship; and all this by them who shall call themselves the guides and governors of an infallible church.

24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Observe here, 1. That though St. Luke omits divers of the beatitudes mentioned by St. Matthew, chap. v. yet he recited the woes which St. Matthew omitted. If we will understand our Saviour's doctrine fully, we must consult all the Evangelists thoroughly. Observe, 2. These woes are not to be understood absolutely, but restrainedly; the woe does not belong to men because they are *rich*, because they are *full*, because they do *laugh*; but because they place their happiness in these things, take up with them for their portions, and rejoice in them as their chief good; valuing themselves by what they have in hand, not by what they have in hope: he that is rich and righteous, he that is great and gracious, he that has his hands full of this world, and his heart empty of pride and vain confidence; he that laughs when God smiles, he that expresses himself joyfully

when God expresses himself graciously, such a man is rich in grace, who is thus gracious in the midst of riches: for to be rich and holy, argues much riches of holiness.

26 ¶ Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Our Saviour's design in these words, is not to condemn any of his disciples or ministers; who have, by doing their duty, gained a fair reputation amongst the men of the world; but to let us understand how rarely and seldom it is attained; for usually the best of men are the worst spoken of: neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor John Baptist, the prophet of the New Testament, nor Christ himself, nor his apostles, did ever gain either the good will, or good word, of the men of that generation in which they lived. The applause of the multitude, that contingent judge of good and evil, rather attends the vain than the virtuous. None have ever been so much reproached by man, as the faithful ministers of God, who have learned to take pleasure in reproaches: for though grace does not bid us invite reproaches, yet it teaches us to bid them welcome. The world has all along taken effectual care, by their cruel mockings, bitter reproaches, and sharp invectives, to free the ministers of God in all ages from the danger of our Saviour's woe here denounced; "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you."

27 ¶ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you:

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other: and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.

Observe here, 1. The noble spirit, of christianity, and the large extent of christian charity; the Jewish kindness was limited and confined to those of their own religion, kindred, and nation, their charity began and ended at home; but our Saviour obliges his followers to the exercise of a more extensive charity, even to all mankind, even the worst of men, our enemies that seek our destruction. Christianity is so far from allowing us to persecute them that hate us, that it commands us to love them that persecute us. Observe, 2. The nature and quality of the duty enjoined: "Love your enemies;" there the inward affection is required. "Bless them that curse you;" there outward civility and affability is required. "Do good to them that hate you;" here real acts of kindness and beneficence are required to be done to the worst of enemies, though they be guilty of the worst of crimes, calumny and cruelty; striking both at our reputation and our life. Learn, That christianity obliges us to bear a sincere love to our most malicious enemies, to be ready at all times to

pray for them, and upon all occasions to do good unto them. Thus to do, is an imitation of God our Maker, of Christ our Master: it is for the good of this lower world, and the way to a better; it is the ornament of our religion, and the perfection of our nature, and an high degree and pitch of virtue. To which may be added, the next duty, "not to revenge injuries;" where private revenge is the thing forbidden, and we are directed rather to suffer a double wrong, than to seek a private revenge. The truth is, revenge is a very troublesome and vexatious passion, the man's soul swells and boils, and it is in pain and anguish, and has no ease. Besides, by our avenging of one injury, we necessarily draw on another, and so bring on a perpetual circulation of injuries and revenges; whereas forgiveness prevents vexations to others, disquietment to ourselves.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

These and the like precepts of our Saviour, are not to be taken strictly, but restrainedly; we are thereby obliged to charity according to others' necessities, and our own abilities; but not bound to give every one that has the confidence to ask for what we have. Indeed every man that really wants is the proper object of our christian charity; and we must, with a compassionate heart and open hand, relieve him according to his necessity, but answerable to our ability. Nor must the second part of the verse be understood as forbidding christians to seek the recovery of their just rights, by pursuing thieves, and following the law upon oppressors: but requiring us to forbear all acts of private revenge, as directly contrary to the spirit and temper of christianity. As jealousy is the rage of a man, so revenge is the rage of the devil, it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Here our Saviour lays down a most excellent rule of life, for all his disciples and followers to walk by, namely, always to do as we would be done by. The golden rule of justice and equity in all our dealings with men is this, "To do as we would be done unto." It is a full rule, a clear rule, a most just and equitable rule, which the light of nature, and the law of Christ binds upon us. St. Matthew, chap. vii. 12. adds that "This is the law and the prophets;" that is, the sum of the Old Testament, and the substance of the second table. The whole of the law is this, To love God above ourselves, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which

do good to you, what thank have ye: for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil.

36 Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

The design of our blessed Saviour in all and every of these precepts, is to recommend unto us all sorts and kinds of mercy and charity; namely, charity in giving, charity in forgiving, charity in lending; it is sometimes our duty, (if we have ability) to lend to such poor persons as we cannot expect will ever be in a capacity either to repay or requite us. This is to imitate the divine bounty, which does good to all, even to the unthankful and unholy. Love for love is justice; love for no love, is favor and kindness; but love and charity, mercy and compassion, to all persons, even the undeserving, and the ill-deserving, this is a divine goodness, a Christ-like temper, which will render us illustrious on earth, and glorious in heaven. St. Luke says here, "Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful," St. Matthew says, chap. v. verse last, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect;" implying, that love and mercy, charity and compassion, is the perfection of a christian's graces; he that is made perfect in love, is perfect in all divine graces in the account of God. Perfection in all graces, but especially in love and charity, ought to be our aim in this life, and shall be our attainment in the next.

37 Judge not and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

This prohibition, Judge not, is not to be understood of ourselves, but our neighbour. Self judging is a great and necessary duty; rash judging of others is a heinous and grievous sin, which exposes to the righteous judgment of God: it is private judging and private condemning of persons which Christ forbids; it follows, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; not that a bare forgiving of others, is all that God requires in order to our forgiveness, but it is one part of that obedience which we owe to God, without which it is in vain to expect forgiveness from God; "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." See note on St. Matt. vii.

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken

together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.

I think there is not any one text of scripture that declares the bounty of God more fully in rewarding acts of charity and mercy than this before us. O how liberal a paymaster is God! how sure and bountiful are the returns Christ makes to us for the relief given to him in his members! He promises us here, 1. Not bare measure, but good measure. 2. "Pressed down, shaken together, and running over; nothing adds more to the measure, than the shaking of the bushel, the crowding and pressing of the corn, and heaping till the measure runneth over; now a measure will run over as long as you will pour. Learn, hence, That charities done in faith, in obedience to God, and with an eye to the glory of God, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches; giving is the best and surest way of thriving. A little charity from us; if we have but little, is looked upon by God as a great deal. But it is the greatest imprudence, as well as impiety, to do but a little when we have ability to do much; for he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully; "good measure, pressed down and running over."

39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

Our Saviour doubtless applied these words to the scribes and pharisees, the Jewish leaders, doctors and teachers, who being ignorant of the spiritual sense of the law (interpreting it only to the restraining of the outward man) were very unfit to instruct and lead others; for where one blind man leads another, both are in danger of the ditch; that is, to run into ruin and destruction. Learn, 1. That ignorant, erroneous, or unfaithful ministers, are the greatest plague and sorest punishment that can befall a people. 2. That Christ having forewarned us of such guides, to follow them will be an inexcusable sin and folly, and never free us from the danger of destruction, but rather be an aggravation of our condemnation, "If the blind lead the blind, both will," inevitably, yet inexcusably, "fall into the ditch."

40 The disciple is not above his Master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.

The application of these words, no doubt, our Saviour intended to his own disciples, partly to comfort them under sufferings, and partly, to encourage them to obedience: did they suffer hard things from an unkind world? the remembrance of what their Master suffered before them may support them. Did they meet with hard and difficult duties, such as loving enemies, doing good to them that hate and persecute them? Their Lord's example may encourage and instruct them, who loved them when they were enemies, who prayed for his murderers, and offered up his blood to

God on behalf of them that shed it. Learn thence, That the perfection of a christian in this world, consisteth in his imitation of Christ Jesus, in being as our Master, in coming as near to his example as it is possible for persons clothed with flesh and blood to arrive at. "Every one that is perfect must be as his Master."

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

By the mote in our brother's eye is meant some small and little sin discerned or suspected. By the beam in our own eye, some greater sin undiscerned: now, says our Saviour, there is no greater sign of hypocrisy than to be curious in spying out the smaller faults of others, and at the same time indulge greater in ourselves. Learn hence, There is no such way to teach us charity in judging of others, as to exercise severity in judging of ourselves. 2. That those who desire others should look upon their failings with a compassionate eye, must not look upon the failings of others with a censorious eye; "For with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again.

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Our Saviour here and elsewhere frequently compares persons to trees, the heart of man is as the root, the actions as the fruit; as the root is the principle from which the fruit springs, so the heart of man is the principle from which all human actions flow; an holy heart will be accompanied with an holy life; where there is a vital principle of grace within, there will be actings of grace without; a good

conscience will be accompanied with a good conversation. Observe farther, A double treasure discovered in the heart of man. 1. An evil treasure of sin and corruption from whence flow evil things; but why should sin be called a treasure? Not for the preciousness of it, but for the abundance of it; a little doth not make a treasure; and also for the continuance of it; for though sin be perpetually overflowing in the life, yet doth the heart continue full. The treasure of original corruption in man's heart and nature, though by sanctifying grace it be drawn low, yet it is never in this life drawn dry. 2. Here is a good treasure of grace discovered in a sanctified and renewed man: which is the source and spring from whence all gracious actions do proceed and flow; namely, a sanctified and renewed heart and nature. When once the will of man is made conformable to the will of God, it doth will and desire, choose and embrace, take pleasure and delight in what God approves, commands, and loves, and it will lay an injunction upon all the members of the body to act conformably thereunto.

46 ¶ And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and hear-eth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and, when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 And he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Our Saviour here concludes his sermon with an elegant similitude: he compares the faithful doer of the word to a wise builder, which founded his house upon a rock. Others he resembles to a foolish builder, that built his house upon the sand: The house is the hope of heaven and eternal life; the rock is Christ; the building upon the sand, is resting upon the bare performance of outward duties; the rain, the winds, and the floods, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings and persecutions, that may befall us. The sum is, men's hopes of salvation built upon any other besides Christ, or built upon Christ without a sincere or uniform obedience to him, are vain hopes, deceitful hopes; for when the storm arises, when affliction or persecution comes, their confidence will fail them, their foundation will be shaken. Learn, 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man that builds his hopes of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation; Christ is the rock that he builds upon, and one Christ is before a thousand creatures, one rock better than millions of sands to build upon. 2. That such professors as rest

in the bare performance of outward duties, are foolish builders; their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and deceitful. Lord! how does the carnal world build all their hopes upon the sand, on the wisdom of their flesh, on their policies, counsels, friends and riches: they bottom their very souls upon fancies, presumptions, delusions, and vain hopes: they expect to be happy without being holy, which is to expect to be easy, without being healthy. Woe to that man whose portion lies in the creature's hands, who builds all his hopes upon this earth; for when the earth is shaken, his hopes are shaken, and he is even at his wits end: whereas the christian that builds upon the rock, stands firm and sure; for if ever the christian falls, Christ must fall with him: he shall never be disappointed of his hopes, unless faithfulness can disappoint; he shall never be deceived, unless truth itself can deceive. If it be impossible for God to lie, then it is impossible for the obedient, holy, and circum-spect christian finally to miscarry.

CHAPTER VII.

The former part of this chapter relates to us a double miracle wrought by our blessed Saviour, the one in raising the centurion's servant from his bed, the other in raising the widow's son from his bier: both of them eminent acts and instances of his divine and almighty power. The history of the former stands thus:

NOW, when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And, when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this.

5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them, And, when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof;

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself

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worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed,

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say, unto one, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

In our Saviour's miraculous cure of the centurion's servant, we have several particulars very observable; as 1. The person applying himself to our blessed Saviour for help and healing; he was a Gentile, an heathen, a Roman soldier, an officer and commander; yet he believes in, and relies upon the power of Christ. Note, That such is the freeness of divine grace, that it extends itself to all sorts and ranks, to all orders and degrees of men without exception; even the bloody trade of war yields worthy clients to Christ; he doth not so much regard what we are, and whence we are, as with what disposition and desires, with what purposes, and inclinations we come unto him. Observe, 2. The person whom the centurion came to Christ for; not for himself, not for his sons, but for his servant, *His servant was sick*; he doth not drive him out of doors, nor stand gazing by his bedside, but looks out for help and relief for him; a worthy example of humanity. Some masters have not so much regard for their sick servants as they have for their oxen and their swine. But he is not worthy of a good servant, that, in the time of sickness is not willing to serve his servant. Observe, 3. Unto whom the centurion seeks, and with what zeal and application; he seeks not to wizards and conjurers, but to the physician, for his sick servant; yea, to Christ the chief physician: and this not with a formal relation in his mouth, but with vehement aggravation of his disease, *My servant lies sick of the palsy, grievously tormented*. St. Matt. viii. 6. where the master's condolency, and tender sympathy with his afflicted servant, is both matter of commendation and imitation. Observe, 4. the happy mixture of humility and faith, which was found in this centurion. See his wonderful humility in not thinking himself worthy to come into Christ's presence, or that Christ should come under his roof. The best men have always the lowest thoughts of themselves; when we esteem ourselves unworthy of any favors, Christ accounts us worthy of all. See also, his faith in Christ's divine power; he believed that Christ was able at a distance, and by a single word, to command off the distemper of his servant; he tells him that diseases were as much at Christ's command, as his servants were at his command. Humility, we see, is both the fruit of

faith and the companion of faith. An humble soul has even more an high esteem of Christ's power, and a low esteem of itself. Observe, 5. How our blessed Saviour exceeds not only the centurion's desires, but his expectations also. St. Matt. viii. 7. *Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.* O wonderful condescension! In St. John iv. 47 we read of a certain nobleman and ruler that twice entreated our Saviour to come to his house and heal his son, but our Lord refused. Here the centurion doth but barely tell Christ of his poor servant's sickness, and Christ, both unasked and undesired, says, *I will come and heal him.* O how far is Christ from seeming in the least to honor riches and despise poverty! He that came in the form of a servant, goes down to visit a sick servant upon his poor pallet-bed, who did not come near the rich couch of the ruler's son. Observe, 6. The notice and observation which our Saviour takes of the centurion's faith, he wondered at it from him: admiration agreed not to Christ as God, but as man it did. Christ wrought this faith as God, and wondered at it as man: what can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder? We find not our Saviour wondering at worldly pomp and greatness; when the disciples wondered at the magnificence and stately buildings of the temple, Christ rather rebuked them than wondered with them: but when he sees the gracious acts and exercises of faith, he is ravished with wonder. Let it teach us to place our admiration where Christ fixes his; let us be more affected with the least measures of grace in a good man, than with all the gaities and glories of a great man; let us not envy the one, but admire and imitate the other. Observe lastly, Christ doth not only admire the centurion's faith, but publishes it: *Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;* that is among the generality of the Jewish nation. For, as to particular persons, several had showed a greater faith than this, as Joseph and Mary. This expression lets us know, that where the means of faith are but small, the noble acts and exercise of faith are wonderful and soul amazing.

11 ¶ And it came to pass, the day after that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12 Now, when he came nigh unto the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14 And he came and touched the bier: And they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and

began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother.

16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up amongst us; and That God hath visited his people.

17 And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

There were three persons raised from death to life by the powerful word of Christ's mouth; namely, Jairus' daughter, mentioned by St. Matthew; Lazarus, recorded by St. John; and here the widow's son, only taken notice of by St. Luke. The place where the miracle was wrought, was the city of Nain; out of their cities and not within them, the Jews were wont to bury their dead. Our Saviour, at the gates of this city, meets with the sad pomp of a funeral, a sorrowful widow attended with her mournful neighbours, following her only son to the grave. Where note, 1. The doleful and distressed condition of the widow; there were many heart-piercing circumstances in her affliction: 1. It was the death of a son: to bury a child rends the heart of a parent, for what are children but the parent multiplied; but to lay a son in the grave, which continues the name, and supports the family, is a sore affliction. 2. This son was a young man, in the strength and flower of his age, not carried from the cradle to the coffin; had he died an infant, he had not been so much lamented; but then when the mother's expectations were highest, and the endearments greatest, even in the flower of his age; he is cut off. 3. He was not only a son, but an only son; one in whom all his mother's hopes and comforts were bound up. The death of one out of many, is much more tolerable, than of all in one. The loss of that one admits of no consolation. 4. Still to heighten the affliction, it is added, that *she was a widow*; she wanted the counsel and support of a loving yoke-fellow. Had the root been left entire, she might better have spared the branch; now both are cut down, and she has none left to comfort her in her comfortless state of widowhood. In this distressed condition, Christ, the God of comfort, meets her, pities her, relieves her. Observe, 2. The compassion of Christ towards this distressed widow; *He saw her, and had compassion on her.* Christ saw her, she did not speak to him: no tears, no prayers, can move Christ so much as our afflictions and his own compassion: Christ's heart pitied her, his tongue said to her, *Weep not*, his feet went to the bier, his hand touched the coffin, and the power of his God-head raised the dead. But how strange doth Christ's counsel seem! To bid a mother not weep for such a loss, was to persuade her to be miserable, and not feel it; to feel it, and not regard it; to regard it, and yet conceal and hide it. It is not the decent expression of our sorrow, then, which Christ condemns; but the undue excess and extravagancies of it, which our Saviour blames. And the lesson of instruction which we learn from hence, is this, That christians ought to moderate their sorrow for their dead relations, how many afflicting circumstances and aggravations soever

do meet together in their death; here was a child, that child a son, that son an only son, that only son carried to the grave in the flower of his age; yet Christ says to the pensive mother, a sorrowful widow, *Weep not.* Observe, 3. The power of Christ, in raising the widow's son to life. The Lord of life arrests the serjeant death, and rescues the prisoner out of his hand. Christ says not, In the name of God, young man arise; but, *I say unto thee, Arise.* Christ had a power in himself, and of himself to command the dead to arise; and the same powerful voice which raised this young man, shall in the last day raise up our vanished bodies; for it is as easy for Omnipotency to say, Let them be repaired, as to say at first, Let them be made. The Socinians here own, that Christ raised this young man by a divine power, which God had communicated to him; yet deny him at the same time to be essentially God. But let them prove, if they can, that a divine power, which is proper to God alone, ever was, or ever can be, communicated to a creature, without the communication of the divine nature: true, we find St. Peter, Acts ix. 40, commanding Tabitha to arise; but we find all he did was by faith in Christ, and by prayers unto Christ, Acts ix. 34. *Jesus Christ healeth thee, arise:* but Christ here raised the widow's son without prayer, purely by his own power, which undeniably proves him to be God. Observe, 4. The reality of the miracle; *he sits up, he begins to speak, and is delivered to his mother.* Death has no power to hold that man down, whom the Son of God bids rise up: *Immediately he that was dead, sat up:* and the same power which raised one man, can raise a thousand, a million, a world; no power can raise one man, but an Almighty power, and that which is Almighty can raise all men. It was not so much for the child's sake, as the mother's sake, that the son was raised; it was an injury to the son, though a kindness to the mother, for he must twice pass through the gates of death, to others once; it returned him from rest to labor, from the peaceful harbour back again to the tempestuous ocean. Observe, lastly, What effects this miracle had upon the multitude: seeing the divine power thus manifestly exerted, they are filled with astonishment and amazement; they look upon our Saviour with awful and admiring looks; *They glorify and praise God, for sending a great Prophet amongst them,* accounting it a great act of favor that God had in this wonderful manner visited his people; yet a prophet was the highest name they could find for him, whom they saw like themselves in shape, but above themselves in power; *A great Prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people.*

18 ¶ And the disciples of John showed him all these things.

19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them unto Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?

20 When the men were come unto him they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21 And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits: and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

About the time of our Saviour's appearing in the world there was a general expectation of a great prince that should come out of Judea, and govern all nations; this prince the Jews called *Messias*, or the Anointed, and waited for his appearance. Accordingly, when John the Baptist appeared in the quality of an extraordinary prophet, the Jews sent to know of him whether he was the *Messias* or not, John i. 19. he answered that he was not, but only the harbinger and forerunner of the *Messias*; so that it was very evident that it was not for John's own information, that he sent two of his disciples to Christ, to know whether he was the *Messias* or not: for John was assured of it himself by a voice from heaven at our Saviour's baptism, Mat. iii. ult. but it was for his disciples' satisfaction that he sent to Jesus; because John's disciples were unwilling to acknowledge Christ to be the *Messias*, out of a great zeal for the honor of him their Master; they were not willing to own any person greater than John their Master, lest such an acknowledgment should eclipse and cloud him: from whence we may note, How the judgments of the best of men are very apt to be biassed and perverted by faction or interest: no doubt John's disciples were good men, and no doubt their master had often told them, as he did others, that he was not the *Messias*; yet they will not believe their own master, when they apprehend him to speak against their own interest; for they knew that they must rise and fall, in their reputation and esteem, as their master did; therefore, that John's disciples might receive full satisfaction from Christ, he sends two of his disciples to him, to hear his doctrine and see his miracles; for John perceiving his disciples to be ill affected towards our Saviour, and hearing them speak with some envy of his miracles, he sent them to him, that being eye witness of what he did, they might be convinced who he was. Observe, next, The way and means which our Saviour takes to convince and satisfy John's disciples that he was the true *Messias*: he appeals to the miracles wrought by himself, and submits those miracles to the judgment and examination of their senses; *Go and show John the miracles which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear.* Christ

was all this in a literal and spiritual sense also; he was an eye to the understanding of the ignorant, a foot of power to the weak, he opened an ear in deaf hearts to receive the word of life, and the poor receive and embrace the gospel. Miracles are the highest attestation, and the greatest external confirmation and evidence, that can be given to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. Now our Saviour's miracles, for their nature, were divine and God-like, they were healing and beneficial to mankind; freeing men from the greatest calamities of human life; for their number, they were many; for the manner of their operation, they were publicly wrought in the sight and view of multitudes of people: to free them from all suspicion of fraud and imposture, he wrought them before his enemies, as well as in the presence of his friends and followers. And this not done once or twice, or in one place, but at several times, and in several places, wherever he came, and this for a long time, even for three years and a half; so that our blessed Saviour had all the attestation that miracles can give, to evidence himself the true and promised Messias.

—To the poor the gospel is preached.

The poor hear and receive the gospel. See Matt. xi. 5. Note, That all along, in our Saviour's time and since, the poor of the world have been more disposed to hear and embrace the gospel than other men, and the reasons of it are these: 1. Because the poor have no worldly interest to engage them to reject Christ and his gospel. The high priests, the scribes and pharisees, had a plain worldly interest to engage them to oppose Christ and his doctrine; but the poor were free from these incumbences and temptations. They had nothing to lose, therefore our Saviour's doctrine went down more easily with them, because it did not contradict their interest, as it did the interest of those who had great possessions. 2. Those that are poor, and enjoy little of the good things of this life, are willing to entertain the glad tidings of happiness in another life. Such as are in a state of misery here, are glad to understand that it shall be well with them hereafter, and are willing to listen to the good news of a future happiness; whereas the rich, who have had their consolation here, are not much concerned what will become of them hereafter.

—And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

No doubt our Saviour uttered these words with particular respect and reference to John's disciples, who, out of an extraordinary zeal for the honor of their Master, were prejudiced against our Saviour: but the general import of the words doth show, that there are many to whom Christ is a rock of offence; the Jews were offended at the meanness of his extraction, at the poverty of his parents, at the lowliness of his breeding, at his suffering condition: from their traditions, they expected the Messias should be a temporal prince, whereas the prophets declared, he should be a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs*; be despised and put to death. Thus at this day, many are offended at Christ; some are offended at the asserted divinity of his person, and the meri-

toriousness of his satisfaction; some are offended at the sublimity of his doctrine, others at the sanctity and strictness of his laws; some are offended at the free dispensation of his grace, others that the terms of christianity are very hard, and lay too great a restraint upon human nature: *Blessed is he, says Christ, that shall not be offended in me*; intimating, that such as, instead of being offended at Christ, do believe in him, and ground their expectations of heaven and salvation wholly upon him, are in a happy and blessed condition; *Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.*

24 ¶ And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John; What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Our Saviour having given, as we may suppose, full satisfaction to John's disciples, and sent them away, he enters upon a large commendation of John himself; where we have observable, 1. The persons whom he commended, John, not before his own disciples, but before the multitude; for John's disciples had too high an opinion of their Master already, insomuch, that they envied our Saviour for overshadowing their master; John vii. 26. *Behold Christ baptizeth, and all men come unto him.* It was a great eye sore to John's disciples, that Christ had more hearers and followers than their master; therefore, not before John's disciples, but before the multitude is John commended: for as John's disciples had too high, so the multitude had too low an opinion of John; possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings: there was a time when the people had high thoughts of John's person and ministry; but being now clouded with sufferings, they disesteem and undervalue him. Learn hence, How vain it is for any men, but especially for the ministers of the gospel to value themselves by popular applause. The people condemn to-day what they admired yesterday; he who to-day is cried up, to-morrow is trodden down: the word and ministers are the same; but this proceeds from the fickleness and inconsistency of the people: nothing is so mutable as the mind of man; nothing so variable as the opinion of the multitude. Observe, 2. The time when our Saviour thus commended John; *when he was cast into prison by Herod.* Not when he was in prosperity, when the people flocked after him, when he

after him, when he preached at court, and was revered by Herod; but when the giddy multitude had forsaken him; when he was disgraced at court, and had preached himself into a prison; now it is that Christ proclaims his worth, maintains his honor, and tells the people, that the world was not worthy of such a preacher. Learn thence, That Christ will evermore stand by, and stick fast unto, his faithful ministers, when all the world forsakes them; let the world slight and despise them at pleasure, yet Christ will maintain their honor and support their cause; as they bear a faithful witness to Christ, so Christ will bear witness to their faithfulness for him. Observe, 3. The commendation itself. Our Saviour commends John for four things; for his constancy, for his sobriety, for his humility, for his gospel-ministry. 1. For his constancy, he was not a "*Reed shaken with the wind*;" that is, a man of an unstable and unsettled judgement, but fixed and steady. 2. For his sobriety, austerity, and high degrees of mortification and self-denial; he was no delicate and voluptuous person, but grave, sober, and severe. He was mortified to the glory and honor, to the ease and pleasure of the world: John wrought no miracles, but his conversation was almost miraculous and as effectual as miracles to prevail upon the people. 3. For his humility John might once have been what he would, the people were ready to cry him up for the Messiah, the Christ of God; but John's humble and lowly spirit refuses all; "*He confessed, and denies not; saying, I am not the Christ,*" but a poor minister of his, willing, but not worthy, to do him the meanest service. This will commend our ministry to the consciences of our people; when we seek not our own glory, but the glory of Christ. 4. Our Saviour commends John for his clear preaching, the gospel, and for his making known the coming of the Messiah to the people: "*He was more than a prophet,*" because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any of the prophets before him; the ancient prophets beheld Christ afar off, but John saw him face to face. They prophesied of him, he pointed at him, saying, "*This is he,*" The clearer any ministry is in discovering of Christ, the more excellent and useful it is.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Our Saviour having highly commended John in the former verses, here he sets bounds to the honor of his ministry; adding, that though John was greater than all the prophets that went before him, seeing more of Christ than all of them, yet he saw less than those that came after him. The meanest gospel minister that preaches Christ as come, is to be preferred before all the old prophets who prophesied of Christ to come. That minister who sets forth the life and death, resurrection; and ascension, of Christ, is greater in the kingdom of heaven, that is, has an higher office in the church, and a more excellent ministry, than all the prophets, yea, than John himself. The excellency of a

ministry consists in the light and clearness of it; now though John's light did exceed all that went before him, yet it fell short of them that came after him; and thus he that was least in the kingdom of grace on earth, much more he that was least in the kingdom of glory in heaven, was greater than John. See note on Matt. xi. 11.

29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

These words are our Saviour's farther commendation of John the Baptist; he tells us, That John had two sorts of hearers. 1. The common people and publicans. 2. The pharisees and lawyers; and declares the different effects which John's ministry had upon these two different sorts of persons. As to the former, the common people and the publicans; the common people were accounted by the Jewish doctors as the dregs of mankind, an ignorant and rude mob; the publicans were esteemed notoriously wicked, guilty of great injustice, oppression and extortion; yet these vile persons were converted sooner than the knowing men of the time, the self-justifying pharisees and lawyers; for it is said, "*The publicans were baptized of John, and justified God;*" that is, they looked upon John as a prophet sent of God; they owned his ministry, received his message, and submitted to his baptism. Those who believe the message that God sendeth, and obey it, justify God; they that do not believe and obey, accuse and condemn God. But of the others it is said, namely of the pharisees and lawyers, That "*they rejected the counsel of God against themselves;*" That is, the revealed will of God, refusing to be baptized of him. This rejecting the counsel of God we are guilty of, when we have low and undervaluing thoughts of Christ and his gospel, when we are ashamed in times of persecution, to own and profess him, when we stop our ears to the voice of his ministers and messengers, when we submit not ourselves to the reasonable laws and commands of Christ; and this rejection of Christ at the great day, will render our condition worse than the condition of heathens, that never heard of a Saviour; yea, than the condition of devils, for whom a Saviour never was intended. Lord! where shall we appear, if we either reject or neglect thy great salvation? The chief thing then observable here, is this, That in rejecting John's baptism and ministry, they are said to reject the counsel of God towards themselves, that is, the gracious design of God in calling them to repentance by John's ministry, by which refusal they declared, that they approved not of God's counsel as just and righteous in calling them to repentance, who were such zealots for the law, and so unblameable in their conversation, that it became a proverb amongst them, That if two persons went to heaven one of them must be a pharisee. They therefore judged it an incongruous thing to call such righteous persons to repentance, as they took themselves to be, and to threaten

them with ruin, who were so dear to God; but the publicans and common people, being conscious to themselves of their sin and guilt, did approve of this counsel which God sent them by his messenger, and submitted to this baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins, to which God by the Baptist now called them.

31 ¶ And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what they are like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

35 But Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Our blessed Saviour in these words describes the perverse humour of the pharisees, whom nothing could allure to the embracing of the gospel, neither John's ministry nor Christ's. This our Saviour sets forth in two ways, allegorically and properly; by way of allegory he compares them to sullen children, whom nothing would please, neither mirth nor mourning; if their fellows piped before them, they would not dance! if they sang mournful songs to them, they would not lament: that is, the pharisees were of such a censorious and capricious humor, that God himself could not please them; although he used variety of means and methods in order to that end. Next, our Lord plainly interprets this allegory, by telling them, that John came to them neither eating nor drinking; that is, not so freely and plentifully as other men, being a very austere and mortified man, both in his diet and habit, all which was designed by God to bring the pharisees to repentance and amendment of life. But instead of this, they censure him for having a devil, because he delighted in solitude, and was not so free in conversation. "That he that delighteth in solitude is either an angel or a devil," either a wild beast or a God. John being thus rejected, Christ himself comes to them, who being of a free and familiar conversation, not shunning the society of the worst of men, no not of the pharisees themselves, but complying with their customs, and accompanying them innocently at their feasts, yet the freedom of our Saviour's conversation displeased them as much as John's reservedness of temper; for they cry, "Behold a man gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners;" Christ's affability towards sinners they account an approbation of their sins; and his social disposition, looseness and luxury. Learn hence, That

the faithful and zealous ministers of Christ, let their temper and converse be what it will, cannot please the enemies of religion, and the haters of the powers of godliness; neither John's austerity, or Christ's familiarity could gain upon the pharisees: it is the duty of the ministers of God, in the course of their ministry, to seek to please all men for their good; but after all our endeavours to please all, if we strenuously oppose the errors and vices of the times, we shall please but very few. But if God and conscience be of the number of those few, we are safe and happy. Observe, 2. That it has been the old policy of the devil, that he might hinder the success of the gospel to fill the minds of persons with an invincible prejudice against the ministers and dispensers of the gospel. Here the pharisees are prejudiced unreasonably both against John and against Christ, that the success of both their ministers must be frustrated and disappointed. Observe, 3. That after all the scandalous reproaches cast upon the christian religion, and the ministers and professors of it, such as are wisdom's children, wise and good men, will justify religion, that is, approve it in their judgments, honor it in their discourses, and adorn it in their lives; "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

36 ¶ And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Observe here, 1. The pharisee's civility, and our Saviour's courtesy; the pharisee invites Christ to eat with him, Christ readily accepts the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good. There is a duty of civil courtesy which we owe to the worst of men; none are so bad but we may soberly eat and drink with them; only let us take care, that if our converse do not make them better, their example may not make us worse. Observe, 2. What an opportunity our Saviour lays hold upon, in the pharisee's house, of doing good to a sinful woman; who coming to Christ bowed down in a sorrowful sight and sense of her sins, finds an hearty welcome to him, and is dismissed with comfort from him. The history runs thus: "Behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner;" that is, a Gentile, say some; a remarkable, notorious, and infamous sinner, say others; probably a lewd, unclean woman; she is led in with a note of admiration. "Behold a woman that was a sinner!" Learn, That to see a sensual and notorious sinner,

out of true remorse of conscience, to seek unto a Saviour, is a rare and wonderful sight. Observe farther, It is not said, Behold a woman that sinned, but, "Behold a woman that was a sinner!" one action does not denominate a person a sinner, but an habit and trade of sin. Again, it is said, "Behold a woman in the city;" the place where she acted her lewdness, added to the heinousness of her sin, it was in the city; the more public the offence, the greater the scandal. Sin is sin, though in the desert, where no eye sees it, but the offence is aggravated by the number and multitude of beholders: yet *observable* it is, That there is no mention made, either of the woman's name, or of the city's name: and it is both presumption and injuriousness for any to name her, whose name God has been pleased to conceal; for this is not the same woman that anointed Christ's feet, Mat. xxvi. Mark xiv. and John xii. that was in Bethany, this is in Galilee; that in the house of Simon the leper, this of Simon the pharisee. Observe, 3. The behaviour and demeanour of this poor woman, she appears in the posture of a penitent: "She stood at Christ's feet behind him, weeping." Where note, 1. The great change wrought in this sinful woman, and the evident effects of it; her eyes, which had been formerly lamps of fire by lust, are now an holy fountain of penitential tears; her hair, which she had used as a net to catch her fond and foolish lovers, doth now become a towel for her Saviour's feet. Verily such a heart as has once felt the sting and smart of sin, will make plentiful expressions of the greatest of its sorrow. Again, 2. "She stands behind Christ and weeps;" this proceeded, no doubt, from an holy bashfulness; she that was wont to look boldly upon the faces of her lovers, dares not now behold the face of her Saviour; she that was wont to shed her alluring beams forth into the eyes of her wanton lovers, now casts her dejected eyes down upon the earth; and behold the plenty of her tears, they flow in such abundance, that she washes Christ's feet with them. "She began to wash his feet," says the text, but we read not when she ended; never were our Saviour's feet bedewed with more precious liquor than this of remorseful tears. Thus doth an holy penitent account no office too mean that is done to the honor of its Saviour.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me,

therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered, and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Observe here, 1. How unreasonably the Pharisee was offended with Christ, for permitting this poor woman to come near him, and touch him. Admit that she had been the greatest of sinners, might not such come to Christ, when he was come from heaven to them? Oh blessed Saviour! there is merit enough in thy blood, and mercy enough in thy bowels, to justify and save the vilest sinners, which by repentance and faith do make a timely application to thee. Observe, 2. The parable which Christ makes use of for the Pharisee's conviction, and the woman's comfort; namely, the parable of two debtors, one of whom owed a greater sum, and the other a less, who both having nothing to pay, were both freely forgiven; and both upon their forgiveness loved their creditor much, but he most to whom most was forgiven. Now from this parable we gather these lessons of instruction; 1. That great is the debt which all mankind have contracted, and lie under to the justice of God; it is here expressed by "five hundred pence." Our debt is infinite, and had not miraculous mercy interposed, divine justice could never have been satisfied, but by undergoing an infinite punishment. 2. That yet all sinners stand not alike indebted to the justice of God; some owe more, and others less; all are guilty, but not all alike: some owe five hundred talents, others fifty pence. 3. That be men's debts greater or less, their sins more or fewer, it is utterly impossible for any person of himself to clear his debt, and make satisfaction; but they that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness; "He forgave them both." 4. That the forgiveness that is in God is a free, gratuitous, and gracious forgiveness, he frankly forgave them both. "Gracious art thou, O Lord, in thy doings towards thy children, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works!"

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment,

47 Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins,

which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he saith unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recounts and sums up the several particular instances of this woman's love and respect towards himself: she washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed his feet, according to the custom of those eastern countries. Love will creep where it cannot go, it will stoop to the meanest offices, and is ambitious of the highest services, for and towards the persons we sincerely love. Observe, 2. The words of comfort, given by our Saviour to this poor woman, "*Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.*" Thence learn, That the pardoning mercy is boundless and unlimited; it is not limited to any sort of sins or sinners; it is not limited to any degree of sins or sinners; "*Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee;*" and thy sins, which are heinous, are forgiven also. Observe, 3. What is the effect and fruit of pardoning mercy, it is great love; her sins, which are many, are forgiven, "for she loved much." Her love to Christ was the effect of his pardoning love to her, and not the cause of it: she did not first love much, and then Christ forgave her; but Christ first forgave her, and then she loved much. Her love was a love of gratitude, because she was pardoned, and not a love of merit to purchase and procure her pardon. The papists interpret this word (*for*) as if it were the antecedent cause of her forgiveness; whereas it is a consequential sign and evidence, that the free grace and mercy of Christ had forgiven her; her many and great sins were forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. The debt is not forgiven, because the debtor loves the creditor; but the debtor therefore loves, because the debt is forgiven. Forgiveness goes before, and love follows after. Hence learn, That much love will follow great forgiveness. Love will work in the heart towards God, in some proportion to that love, which we have experienced from God. Observe lastly, The very gracious dismissal this woman meets with from our blessed Saviour: what could she desire that is not here granted to her? Here is remission, safety, faith, and peace; all these here meet to make a contrite soul happy: remission is the ground of her safety, faith the ground of her peace, peace the fruit of her faith, and salvation the issue of her remission: O woman! great was thy sin, great was Christ's pardoning grace, and great was thy joy and comfort: "*Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village preaching, and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him;

Observe here, The great work and business, which not only the apostles, but Christ himself was engaged in and employed about, namely; preaching the gospel, those glad tidings of salvation to a lost world. Where note, That Christ himself labored in this work of public preaching; he did not send forth his apostles as his curates to work and sweat in the vineyard, whilst he himself took his ease at home; but he accompanied them himself, yea, he goes before them himself, in this great and excellent work: "Jesus went preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, and the twelve were with him." Learn hence, That preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and pre-eminence in the church be what it will, surely none of the servants are above their Lord and Master! Did he labor in the word and doctrine? well may they. Observe, 2. The places where Christ and his apostles preached, not only in populous cities, but in the poor country villages: "They went through every city and village preaching the gospel." Some will preach the gospel, provided they may preach at court, or in the capital cities of the nation; but the poor country villages are overlooked by them. Our Saviour and his apostles were not of this mind; it is true, they were itinerary preachers, we are settled: but be the place ever so mean and obscure, and the people ever so rude and barbarous, we must not think it beneath the greatest of us to exercise our ministry there, if God calls us thither: "Christ went through the villages, as well as cities, preaching."

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.

3 And Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Amongst the number of those that did accompany our Saviour and his apostles, mention is here made of certain women, who had been healed by Christ of evil spirits and infirmities; that is, of spiritual and corporal diseases, for the Jews were wont to call vices and evil habits, by the name of devils, as the devil of pride, the devil of malice, &c. Now as concerning these women's

following of Christ, and administering to him, several circumstances are observable: as, 1. That women did make up a considerable number of Christ's followers, *aye*, and of his apostles' followers too, *The devout women not a few*, Acts xvii. 4. And verily it is no disgrace or shame, but matter of glory, and cause of thankfulness, if our ministry be attended by, and blest unto, the weaker sex. I believe in many of our congregations, and at most of our communions, are found two women for one man; God grant them knowledge answerable to their zeal, and obedience proportionable to their devotion. Observe, 2. One of these women that followed Christ was *Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward*. What! one of Herod's family transplanted into Christ's household! O the freeness of the grace of God! Even in the worst societies and places, God has a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth: we read of a Joseph in Pharaoh's court; of an Obadiah in Ahab's court; of a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court; of a church in Nero's house; and of a Joanna here in bloody Herod's family, who had put John the Baptist to death. Observe, 3. The holy courage and resolution of our Saviour's female followers: no doubt they met with taunts and jeers, with scoffs and scorn enough, and perhaps from their husbands too, for following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen; but this does not damp, but inflame their zeal. The Holy Ghost acquaints us with several instances of masculine courage, and manly resolution, in the women that followed Christ as his female disciples. At our Saviour's trial, the women clave to him, when his disciples fled from him; they accompanied him to his cross, they assisted at his funeral, they attended his hearse to the grave, they watched his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the rudeness of the soldiers. These feeble women had more courage than all the apostles. Learn, That courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where he gives courage, it is not in man to make afraid. Observe, 4. The pious and charitable care of these holy women, to supply the wants and outward necessities of our Saviour; *They administered to him of their substance*. Where note, 1. The great poverty of Christ; he lived upon the basket, he would not honor the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, but was beholden to others for what he ate and drank; yet we must not suppose that either Christ or his apostles were common beggars, but it is probable there was a bag or common purse amongst them, which upon occasion supplied their necessities; and there were certain sisters, or christian women, as the learned Dr. Hammond observes, who accompanied Christ and his apostles in their travels, and provided necessities for them, when they went up and down preaching the gospel. Note also, The condescending grace and humility of Christ; he was not ashamed either of these women's following of him, or administering to him, because of their former vicious course of life; it is not what we formerly were, but what now we are, that Christ considers; it is a glory to him to have great and notorious sinners brought to a closure and compliance with him. The reproach is not that they have been sinners, for Christ did not give himself for a people that were pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, but to make them so by his word and Spirit, Ephesians v. 26. Christ is only ashamed of those that eat of his bread, and lift up the heel against him.

4 ¶ And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The design and scope of this parable is, to show what are the causes of men's improving or not improving under the hearing of the word, and to let us know that there are three sorts of bad hearers, and but one good one.—The care and inconsiderate hearer, is like the *highway ground*, where the seed is trodden down and trampled upon. Hard-hearted sinners, whom the mollifying word doth not soften, these are like *stony ground*, where the seed takes no root, the word makes no impression. Those whose beads and hearts are stuffed with the cares of the world, are like the *thorny ground*, in which the seed is choaked, which should fructify to an holy immortality: this is the scope of the parable. Now from the subject matter of it, learn, 1. That by the *sower* [you are to understand Christ and his apostles, and their successors, the ministers of the gospel. Christ the principal sower, they the subordinate seedsmen. Christ sows his own field, they sow his field: he sows his own seed, they his seed. Woe unto us if we sow our own seed and not Christ's. Learn, 2. The seed sown is the word of God: fabulous legends, and unwritten traditions, which the seedsmen of the church of Rome sow, are not seed, but chaff; or if seed, (for they fructify too fast in the minds of their people) their own, not Christ's. Our Lord's fields must be all sown with his own seed, with no mixed grain. Learn thence, That the word preached is like the seed sown in the furrows of the field. Seed, as a fructifying, growing, and increasing nature, has in it an active principle, and will spring up, if not killed by accidental injuries; such a quickening power has the word of God to regenerate and make alive dead souls, if we suffer it to take root in our hearts: yet is not this seed alike fruitful in every soil; all ground is not alike, neither doth the word fructify alike in the souls of men: there is a difference both from the nature of the soil, and the influence of the spirit; for though no ground is naturally good, yet

ome is worse than other; nay, even the best ground doth not bring forth increase alike: some good ground brings forth an hundred fold, others but sixty, and some but thirty; in like manner a christian may be a profitable hearer of the word, although he doth not bring forth so great a proportion of fruit as others, provided he brings forth as much as he can.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Here we have the disciples' question, and our Saviour's reply; their inquiry is concerning the sense and signification of the parable; they own their ignorance, and desire better information; it is no shame for the best of ministers, yea, for the best of men, to acknowledge their own ignorance in the mysteries of religion, and to attend upon the means of instruction, in order to their farther information. In our Saviour's answer, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, &c." Observe, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is an invaluable privilege rightly to understand and know gospel-mysteries. 3. That this privilege all are not sharers in, and partakers of, but only those to whom it is given. 4. That it is a righteous thing with God to give such persons over to farther blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, who wilfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the evidence of it. The pharisees had all along shut their eyes, and said, they would not see; and now Christ closes their eyes judicially, and says, they shall not see.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the way-side are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choaked with cares and riches, and pleasures, of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Here our Saviour applies himself to interpret and explain the foregoing parable to his disciples; he tells them, *The seed is the word*; the sower is the preacher; the *soil or ground*, is the heart and soul of man; some hearers be compared to the *highway ground*, in which the seed lies uncovered for want of the harrow of meditation; others to *stony ground*, in which the word has no root; no root in their understandings, no root in their memories, in their wills, or in their affections, but they are instantly offended, either at the depth or profoundness of the word, or at the sanctity and strictness of the word, or else at the plainness or simplicity of it. Again, some hearers our Lord compares to *thorny ground*. Worldly desires and inordinate cares for the things of this life choke the word, as thorns overshadow the corn, draw away the heart of the earth from it, hinder the influences of the sun from cherishing it; the like ill effects have worldly affections and desires in the soul of man, rendering the seed of the world unfruitful. But the good christian bears the word attentively, keeps it retentively, believes it steadfastly, applies it particularly, practises it universally, and brings forth fruit perseveringly. Learn hence, 1. That no hearers are in Christ's account good hearers of the word, but such as bring forth fruit answerable for their hearing. 2. That a person may be a good hearer of the word in Christ's account, if he bring forth the best fruit he can, though not in so great a proportion as others do; as some ground brings forth *thirty*, some *sixty*, some *an hundred fold*; in like manner do all the sincere hearers of the word, they all bring forth fruit, though not all alike; all in sincerity though not all equally, and none to perfection. Learn, 4. That it is not sufficient, that we do at present believe, approve, and practise the truth delivered to us, or that we are affected with the word, and receive it with some kind of joy, delight and pleasure; unless we persist and persevere in obedience to all its precepts, and continue to bring forth fruit with patience.

16 ¶ No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed: but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest: neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

18 Take heed, therefore, how you hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given: and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

In these words Christ declares his end and design in

revealing unto his disciples the foregoing parable, and why he communicated to them the light of scripture knowledge and gospel-mysteries, namely, that they may communicate it to others, and not keep it close unto themselves; even as the candle in a house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and improve it for the good and benefit of others. Observe also, The argument which our Saviour makes use of to quicken his disciples to communicate their knowledge, and improve the grace they have received, for the good and advantage of others. *To him that hath shall be given*, that is, such as improve their spiritual gifts, shall have them increased; such as improve them not, shall have them blasted. Learn hence, That there is no such way to thrive in grace, and increase in gifts, as to exercise and improve them; he that hides his talent, forfeits it, is in danger of losing it, and also of being punished for not improving of it. Observe lastly, How our Lord shuts up this parable of the sower and the seed, with a cautionary direction to all his auditors, to take heed how they hear the word. *Take heed therefore how ye hear*: such as would profit by hearing the word, must diligently attend to the matter of the doctrine which they hear, and also to the manner how they hear: such is the majesty and authority of the person that speaks to us in the word, such is the sublimity and spirituality of the matter, and so great is our danger if we miscarry under the word, that it nearly concerns us to take heed both what we hear, whom we hear, and how we hear.

19 ¶ Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20 And it was told him *by certain*, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Two things are here observable, 1. The truth and verity of Christ's human nature: he had affinity and consanguinity with men, persons near in blood to him by the mother's side, called here his kinsmen. Observe, 2. That Christ's spiritual kindred were much dearer to him than his natural. Alliance by faith is more valued by Christ, than alliance by blood: to bear Christ in the heart is a greater honor than to carry him in the womb. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied us even now. Although we cannot see Christ yet love him we may; his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual presence is not denied to us. Though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, in affinity, and consanguinity, yet in heart, in faith, in love and service, he is or may be ours. Verily spiritual regeneration bringeth men into a more honorable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did. O how dear are obedient christians to Christ! he prefers them in esteem

before those of his own flesh and blood; *My brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.*

22 ¶ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples; and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake; and they launched forth.

23 But as they sailed he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled *with water*, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish! Then he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

Here observe, 1. Our Saviour and his disciples no sooner put forth to sea, but difficulty attends them, and danger overtakes them; a tempest arose, and that ship was covered with waves which Christ himself was in with his disciples. Learn hence, That the presence of Christ itself doth not exempt his disciples and followers from trouble and danger. Here was a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ himself was in their company. Observe, 2. The posture our Saviour was in when this tempest arose, being wearied with the labors of the day, he was laid down to sleep; thereby showing himself to be truly and really man; and that he not only took upon him human nature, but the infirmities of that nature also; he was subject to pain and weariness, to hunger and thirst. Observe, 3. The disciples' application made to Christ; they awake him with a sad outcry, *Master, master, we perish*; here was faith mixed with human frailty. They believed that he could save them, but being asleep, they concluded he must be waked before he could save them; whereas though his human nature was asleep, yet his divine nature neither slumbered nor slept. Learn hence, that the prevalency of fear in a time of great and imminent danger, though it may evidence weakness of faith, yet it is no evidence of a total want of faith; in the midst of the disciples' fears, they believed Christ's power and ability to save them; *Master, save us, we perish*. Observe, 4. A double rebuke given by our Saviour, 1. To the winds. 2. To the fears of his disciples: *Christ rebuked the winds, and instantly they were calm*, when the sea was as furious as a madman, Christ with a single word calms it. Learn thence, That the

most raging winds, and the outrageous seas, cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ: Christ as God lays a law upon the most lawless creatures, even when they seem to act most lawlessly. Observe farther, Christ rebukes his disciples' fears; and their want of faith, *Why are ye fearful? Where is your faith?* No sooner was the storm up, but their fears were up, and their faith was down. They forgot that the Lord High-admiral of the ocean was now on board their ship, and were as much overset with their boisterous passions, as the ship were with tempestuous winds: and accordingly Christ rebukes the tempest within before he calms the storm without: first he quickens their faith, then he quiets the seas. Note from hence, That great faith in the habit may appear but little in act and exercise. The disciples' faith, in forsaking all and following Christ, was great faith: but in this present act, their faith was weak, through the prevalency of their fear: Oh the imperfect composition of the best of saints! Faith and fear will take their turns, and act their several parts, while we are here: ere long our fears will be vanquished, and our faith swallowed up in vision, our hopes in fruition. Then shall we obey with vigor, praise with cheerfulness, love without measure, fear without torment, trust without despondency. Lord strengthen our faith in the belief of this desirable happiness, and set our souls a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

26 ¶ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils a long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains, and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and

they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told *it* in the city, and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear. And he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

40 And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him; for they were all waiting for him.

This piece of history gives us a very sad relation of a person that was possessed with a legion of devils; we read of few, if any, in the Old Testament, that were thus possessed, but of many in the New. Our Saviour came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; therefore he suffered satan to enter some human bodies, to shew his divine power in casting him out. Observe here, 1. That the evil angels, by their fall, lost their purity, but not their power; for, with God's permission, they have power not only to enter into men's bodies, and to possess them, but also to disemper their minds, and to drive them to frenzy and madness; such

was the deplorable case here. Note, 2. That the reason why the evil angels do not oftener exert their power in doing mischief to the bodies and lives of men, is from the restraining power of God: the devil cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can. Observe, 3. The place where these evil spirits delighted to make their abode, *amongst the tombs*, or graves, places desolate, forlorn, and solitary, which are apt to breed horror of mind, and to give advantage to temptation: from whence I gather, That it is very dangerous and unsafe for persons, especially in whom melancholy prevails, to give themselves too much to solitariness, to frequent desolate places, and to affect being much alone: for it gives advantage to satan, to set upon them with powerful temptations. It is much better to frequent human society, especially to delight in the communion of saints, by means whereof we may be more and more strengthened against satan's temptations. Observe, 4. How the devils own Christ to be the Son of God, and pay, unwillingly, worship and homage to him, yielding subjection to him as his slaves and vassals, not a free and voluntary service: *They cried out, and fell down before him, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* Where, by calling him Jesus, they owned him to be a Saviour, but none of their Saviour; *What have we to do with thee, Jesus?* Oh! what an uncomfortable expression is this, to own Christ to be a Saviour, and at the same time to know and declare, that he is none of our Saviour! *Quid est Deus, si non sit meus?* *What is God, if he be not my God?* What comfort in a Saviour, if he be not my Saviour? Observe, 5. What a multitude of evil spirits do enter into one man. Oh! the extreme malice and enmity of the devil against mankind, in that so many evil spirits should at once afflict and torment a single person, even a legion, many thousands of them! Note likewise, The unity and agreement which is amongst these evil spirits in doing mischief; though there was a multitude of them in this one person, yet have they all but one name; we see the very devils have a sort of unity amongst themselves, and in their malicious and mischievous designs against mankind, they are as one. O! how happy were it, if good men were as united in their designs and endeavours for the glory of God, and the good of one another; as devils conspire and contrive against them! Observe, 6. The request which the devils make to Christ; *We beseech thee, torment us not.* From whence we may gather, 1. That there are torments appointed to the spiritual nature of evil angels. 2. That the evil angels, or devils, are not so full of torment as they shall be, although they are as full of sin and discontent as they can be, there will be a time when their torments shall be increased; therefore they pray, *Torment us not before the time*; that is, do not increase our torments before the appointed time of their increase. Observe, 7. The devil's request for permission and leave to go into the herd of swine. Where note, 1. The devil's malice, he will hurt the poor beasts, rather than not hurt at all. 2. His powerful restraint, he cannot hurt a poor pig without a permission, *Suffer us to enter.* Satan's malice indeed is infinite, but his power is bounded; it is *potestas sub potestate*, a power under a power: if he could not hurt the swine, much less can he afflict the children of men without leave. Observe, 8. How satan's request is yielded to by our Saviour, *he suffered them to go into the swine*, not to gratify their desire in doing

mischief; but, first, hereby Christ showed his power over the devils, that they could not act without his permission and leave: next to show how great the malice and power of the devil is, if not restrained; and lastly, that the miracle of casting out so many devils might appear to be the greater. Learn hence, That sometimes Almighty God, for wise ends and just causes, doth suffer the devil to enjoy his desire, in doing mischief unto the creatures, *Jesus said unto them, Go.* Observe, 9. What a bad effect this miracle had upon the minds of the Gadarenes; instead of believing and owning Christ's divine power, the loss of the swine enrages them, and makes them desire Christ's departure from them. Learn, That carnal hearts prefer their swine before their Saviour, and would rather lose Christ's presence than their worldly profit. "They besought him to depart from them."

Sad is the condition of those from whom Christ departs; more sad the condition of such who say unto Christ, *Depart*: but most sad the condition of them who beseech and entreat Christ to depart from them: thus did the Gadarenes here, and we do not read that ever Christ returned more to them. Observe, 10. How desirous the possessed man was to continue with Christ, after he was come to himself, "he prayed that he might be with him:" this he might desire partly to testify his thankfulness to Christ, partly out of fear of being repossessed again by satan, or perhaps to have the opportunity of hearing Christ's doctrine, and seeing his miracles: for such as have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, and experienced the pleasure and profit of Christ's company, are very desirous of the continuance of it, and exceeding loath to part with it. However, our Saviour did not at this time think fit to suffer him, knowing that more glory would redound to God by publishing this miracle to his friends. Christ expects, after imminent deliverances wrought for us, that we should be publishers of his praises, and declare to all, far and near, the great and wonderful things which he has done for us. Observe, lastly, How Christ ascribes that power to God, by which he had wrought this miracle of healing; *Show how great things God has done for thee*; from whence the Socinians infer, that had he been God most high, and the author of that power by which he had wrought that miracle, he would have ascribed it to himself. Answer, Christ doth this as not seeking his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him: that is, as executing his prophetic office in his Father's name, and casting out devils by that Spirit which he had received from his Father.

41 ¶ And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

Observe here, 1. The person described who came to Christ on behalf of his sick daughter, by his name, *Jairus*; by his office, "a ruler of the synagogue;" by his gesture, "he fell down at Jesus' feet;" this gesture of his was not only a sign of tender affection in him towards his daughter, but also an evidence of his faith in our blessed Saviour; he believed him either to be God, or an extraordinary man, who had a miraculous power of healing. Observe, 2. How readily Christ complies with *Jairus'* request, "Jesus went with him." Although his faith was but weak, yet our Saviour doth not reject him, or deny his suit: O how ready should we be to go to Christ in all our distresses, who is so ready to hear, and so forward to help us, if we seek him in sincerity, though our faith be weak and feeble! Observe, 3. The great humility of our blessed Saviour in suffering himself to be thronged by poor people; much people followed him and thronged him. O humble and lowly Saviour! how free was thy conversation from pride and haughtiness! how willing to converse with the meanest of the people for their advantage! Christ did not only suffer them to come near him, but even to throng him. Let not then the greatest persons upon earth, despise or disdain the poorest of the people: but look upon some with an eye of favor, upon others with an eye of pity, upon none with an eye of contempt.

43 ¶ And a woman, having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him, before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

As our Saviour was on the way to *Jairus'* house, a diseased woman cometh behind him, toucheth his clothes, and is presently healed. The virtue lay not in her finger, but in her faith; or rather in Christ, which her faith drew forth. Observe, 1. The diseased woman, one with a bloody flux; let the women here take notice of the miseries which the sin of the first woman brought upon all women; amongst which this is one, that it has made their bodies subject to preternatural issues and fluxes of blood. Observe, 2. The long continuance of this disease, *twelve years*; it pleases God to lay long and tedious afflictions upon some of his children in this life, and particularly to keep some of them a very long time under bodily weakness, to manifest his power in the supporting them, to magnify his mercy in delivering them. Observe, 3. This poor woman was found in the use of means: she sought to physicians for help, and is not blamed for so doing, although she spent all that she had upon them. The use and help of physic is by no means to be neglected by us in the times of sickness, especially in dangerous diseases of the body; to trust to means, is to neglect God, and to neglect the means, is to tempt God. The health of our body ought to be dear unto us, and all lawful means used both to preserve it, to recover it, and to confirm it. Observe, 4. The actings of this poor woman's faith: her disease was unclean by the ceremonial law, and she was to be separated from society: accordingly, she is ashamed to appear before Christ, but comes behind him to touch his clothes; being firmly persuaded, that Christ had a power communicated to him miraculously to cure incurable diseases: and see how our Saviour encouraged her faith: he saith, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Learn hence, That faith oft-times meets with a better welcome from Christ, than it did or could expect: this poor woman came to Christ trembling, but went away triumphing. Observe, 4. Christ would have this miracle discovered; he therefore says, "Who toucheth me? For I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Christ says, first, in reference to himself, to manifest his divine power, that by the touch of his clothes he could cure such an incurable disease. Secondly, in relation to the woman, that she might have opportunity to give God praise and glory for the cure. And, thirdly, with respect to *Jairus*, that his faith might be strengthened in his belief of Christ's power to raise his daughter.

49 ¶ While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her; but

he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Observe here, 1. The doleful news brought to Jairus' ear, "Thy daughter is dead." The Lord doth sometimes suffer the faith and patience of his children to be greatly exercised and tried. The loss of dear relations, particularly children, especially of an only child, is one of the greatest sorrows of human life; a trial which has often shocked an ordinary patience and constancy of mind. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reasonable word of advice and comfort. "Fear not, only believe." Christ stands ready to comfort believers in the hour of their greatest trials and temptations. Observe, 3. Christ's application of himself, in order to the raising unto life Jairus' dead daughter. And here, 1. He goes into the house only with three of his disciples, and the father and the mother of the maid, which was sufficient to bear witness of the truth of the miracle. Our Saviour, to avoid all show of vain-glory, would not work this miracle publicly before all the people. 2. Our Saviour rebukes them for the show they made of immoderate grief and sorrow for the dead damsel: they wept and wailed greatly, with minstrels making a noise, say the other Evangelists, according to the custom of the heathens, who by a mournful sort of music sought to stir up the passions of grief at their funerals. To mourn immoderately for the dead, is an heathenish custom and practice; it is hurtful to the living, it is dishonorable to the dead; nor is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. 3. Christ adds a reason for this rebuke given by him, "for the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth:" *Vobis mortua, mihi dormit*; "She is dead to you, but asleep to me;" not so dead as to be beyond my power to raise her to life. Souls departed are under the conduct of angels to their several regions of bliss or misery: it is very probable, that the soul of this damsel was under the guard of angels, near her dead body, waiting the pleasure of God in order to its disposal, either to restore it again to the body, or to translate it to its eternal mansion. Observe farther, The nature of death in general, and of the saint's death in particular; it is a sleep. Sleep is a state of rest, sleep is a sudden surprisal; in sleep there is an insensible passage of our time, the person sleeping shall certainly awake. O how much it is wisdom to prepare for the bed of the grave; and so to live, that when we lie down in it, there may be nothing to disturb our rest! Observe farther, With what facility and ease our Saviour raises the dead damsel with a word speaking, and St. Mark tells us that the words were *Talitha cumi*,

Syrian words, to show the truth of the miracle; not like a conjurer, muttering a charm in an unknown tongue. The miracles which Christ wrought, were real miracles, and carried their own evidence along with them. Observe lastly, The charge given by our Saviour, not to publish this miracle; he charged them to tell no man what was done, that is, divulge it not imprudently to such of the scribes and pharisees as would not be convinced by it, but only cavil at it, and be the more enraged against him for it, and seek his death before his appointed time was come. Again, tell it to no man unseasonably, and all at once, but gradually, and by degrees: for it was the will of God, that the divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and on the sudden, but by little and little, during his state of humiliation; for his resurrection was the time appointed by God for the full manifestation of Christ's Godhead: Rom. i. 4. "Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead."

CHAPTER IX.

THEN he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats a-piece.

4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

We heard before, chap. vi. 13. of our Saviour's chusing his twelve apostles, and their several names, they were first chosen disciples, to be with Christ, to learn of him, and be instructed by him, and to be witnesses of what he said and did: now after some time thus spent in preparing and fitting them for public service, our Saviour sends them forth to preach the gospel, and gives them a power to confirm their doctrine by miracles. Observe here, 1. The person that sends the apostles forth to preach the gospel: it is Christ himself. Learn thence, That none ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function of the church till thereunto called by Christ himself. The apo-

stles were called by Christ, and immediately sent forth by himself. The ministers of the gospel are now called immediately and receive authority from Christ by the hand of the governors of the church. Observe, 2. The power given to the apostles by our Saviour to work miracles, for confirming that doctrine which they preached. "He gave them power over unclean spirits, &c." Now this miraculous power given to the apostles was necessary, partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor and unlearned men; but principally to gain credit and authority to their doctrine; for the doctrine of faith in the Messiah as now come, and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews, the truth and the certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified by miracles, which are the broad seal of heaven, to testify, that such a doctrine comes from God. Observe, 3. The charge here given by Christ to his apostles at the time of their sending forth; and this is threefold. First, Touching their preparation for their journey; he forbids them to take much care, or to spend much time in furnishing themselves with victuals, money, or clothes; because they were to finish their journey speedily, and to return again to Christ their Master.

This command of our Saviour to his apostles, not to encumber themselves, when going forth to preach the gospel, teaches his ministers their duty to free themselves as much as possibly they can from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in their ministerial services, 2 Tim. ii. 4. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." Secondly, Touching their lodging in their journey; Christ advises them not to change it, during their stay in one place; "But into whatsoever house they entered, they should there continue till they departed out of that place," that so they might avoid all show of lightness and inconsistency, and testify all gravity and staydness in their behaviour; this being a special means to gain reverence to their persons, and authority to their doctrine. Thirdly, Christ gives a special charge to his apostles concerning their carriage towards such as should refuse to give entertainment to them and their doctrine; they were to denounce the judgments of God against such contemners, "by shaking off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them." This action was emblematical, signifying that Almighty God would in like manner shake them off, as the vilest dust; for where the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either a testimony for, or against a people; for if the dust of a minister's feet whilst alive, and the ashes of his grace when dead, do bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons much more.

7 ¶ Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;

8 And of some, that Elias had appeared: and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded; but who is this of whom I

hear such things? And he desired to see him.

The history of the holy Baptist's beheading by Herod, is briefly here hinted at by St. Luke, but not so largely set forth by him, as we find it by St. Matthew, chap. xiv. and St. Mark, chap. vi. See the notes there. That which St. Luke takes particular notice of, is, That great perplexity of mind, which Herod's guilty conscience did occasion; he had murdered John, and now is afraid, his ghost haunted him; "Herod was perplexed." Learn hence, That guilt is naturally troublesome and uneasy, it disturbs the peace and serenity of the mind, and fills the soul with storms and thunder. Guilt is always full of fear; every thing affrights the guilty: a bad man is a terror to himself, and needs no farther disquietment, than what his own guilty conscience doth occasion him.

10 ¶ And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place, belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him; and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

St. Luke here gives a short account of several material passages, as, 1. Concerning the apostle's return to Christ after their first mission and sending forth; they acquaint their master how they had executed their office, and discharged the trust he had reposed in them. 2. He withdraws privately into a desert place from the multitude, that he might enjoy himself and his disciples; but there the people find him out and flock after him; and Christ, whose meat it was by day, and sleep by night, to do good, embraces the opportunity, bestowing upon their souls instruction, reproof, and counsel; upon their bodies health and healing; teaching us by his example, to mix spiritual alms with bodily relief. We must be in fee with the body sometimes, that we may come at the soul. Happy is that christian whom God hath made both able and willing to intermix spiritual alms with corporeal, and know how to feed two at once, soul and body both! This is the duty of all, but especially of spiritual persons; the Lord give us wisdom and grace to manage it to advantage.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye

them to eat. And they said, We have no more than five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them, twelve baskets.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the evangelists, and in the history of it, we have these observable particulars: 1. The seasonable expression of the disciples' pity towards the multitude, who had long fasted, and wanted now the ordinary comforts and supports of life; it well becomes the ministers of Christ to have respect to the bodily wants, as well as to the spiritual necessities of their people. Observe, 2. The motion which the disciples make to Christ on the behalf of the multitude: *Send them away, that they may go into the towns and comrny and get victuals.* Here was a strong charity, but a weak faith; a strong charity in desiring the people's relief, but a weak faith in supposing that they could no other way be relieved, but by sending them away; forgetting that Christ, who had healed the multitude miraculously, could also feed them miraculously whenever he pleased; all things being equally easy to an Almighty power. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's strange reply to the disciple's request, *They need not depart, give ye them to eat.* Need not depart, why? The people must either feed or famish; victuals they must have, and a dry desert will afford none; yet, says Christ to his disciples, *Give ye them to eat.* Alas! poor disciples, they had nothing for themselves to eat, how then should they give the multitude to eat: When Christ requires of us what we of ourselves are unable to perform, it is to discover to us our own impotency and weakness, to provoke us to look up to him, and to depend by faith on his almighty power. Observe, 4. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth has for himself and his family, *Five barley loaves and two fishes;* teaching us, that these bodies of ours must be fed, but not pampered: our belly must not be our master much less our God. The end of food is to sustain nature; we must not stifle her with a gluttonous variety. And as the quality of the victuals was plain, so the quantity of it was small, *five loaves, and two fishes;* well might the disciples say, *What*

are these among so many? The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and a divine power more easily produce. Observe, 5. How Christ the great Master of the feast, doth marshal his guests, *He commands them all to sit down by fifties in a company.* None of them reply, "Sit down! but to what? Here are the mouths, but where's the meat? We may soon be set, but when shall we be served!" Not a word like this, but they obey and expect. Lord! how easy is it to trust to thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, money in the purse; but when our stores are empty, when we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, is a noble act of faith indeed. Observe, 6. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour: *He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and they to the multitude.* 1. He blessed them, teaching us by his example never to use or receive the good creatures of God, without prayer and praise; never to sit down to our food as a beast to his fodder. 2. Christ brake the loaves; he could have multiplied them whole. Why then would he rather do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us that we may rather expect his blessing in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing, liberality is the way to riches. 3. Christ gave the loaves thus broken to the disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude. But why did Christ distribute by the disciples' hands? Doubtless to gain respect to his disciples from the people; and the same course doth our Lord take in a spiritual distribution; He that could feed the world by his own immediate hand, chuses rather by the hands of his ministers to divide the bread of life amongst his people. 7. The certainty and greatness of the miracle, *They did all eat and were filled;* they did eat, not a crumb or bit, but to satiety and fulness? all that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied: and yet *twelve baskets of fragments remain;* more is left than was at first set on. 'Tis hard to say, which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they left, we may wonder that they eat any thing; if what they ate, that they left any thing. Lastly, these fragments, Though of barley-loaves and fish bones, must not be lost, but at our Saviour's command gathered up; the great housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his orts. Lord! how tremendous will their accounts be, who having large and plentiful estates, do consume them upon their lusts! how will they wish they had been born to poverty and want, when they appear to make up their accounts before God!

18 ¶ And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, whom say the people that I am?

19 They answering, said, John the Baptist: but some say Elias: and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering, said, The Christ of God.

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded *them* to tell no man that thing.

22 Saying, The son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

These verses relate to us a private conference which our Saviour had with his disciples, touching their own and others opinion concerning himself. Where Observe, 1. Our Saviour's inquiry, what the generality of the people thought and said of him, *Whom do men say I am?* Not as if Christ were ignorant, or did vain-gloriously inquire after the opinion of the multitude! but his intention and design was to settle and more firmly establish his disciples in the belief of his being the true and promised Messias. The disciples tell him, some took him to be *John the Baptist, some Elias, some one of the prophets.* 'Tis no new thing, it seems, to find diversity of judgments and opinions concerning Christ and the affairs of his kingdom. Observe, 2. Peter, as the mouth of all the apostles, and in their names, makes a full and open confession of Christ, acknowledging him to be the true and promised Messias; *Thou art the Christ of God.* Learn thence, That the veil of Christ's human nature did not keep the eye of his disciples' faith from discerning him to be truly and really God. *Thou art the Christ of God.* Observe, 3. The charge and special injunction given by Christ, *to tell no man of him;* that is, not commonly to publish, and openly to declare, him to be the Son of God, because, being in his state of humiliation, the glory of his divinity was to be concealed till his resurrection. *He was then declared to be the Son of God with power.* Rom. i. 4. Observe lastly, The great wisdom of our Saviour in acquainting his disciples with the near approach of his death and sufferings: *The Son of man must suffer many things, &c.* This our Saviour did, 1. To prevent that scandal and offence which otherwise they might have taken at his sufferings. 2. The better to fit and prepare them to bear that great trial when it did come. 3. To correct the error which they had entertained concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, and that he was to be a great and mighty prince here upon earth; for these reasons did Christ frequently acquaint his disciples with his sufferings.

23 ¶ And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recommends his religion to every person's election and choice, not compelling any one by force and violence to embrace or entertain it: *If any man will be my disciple,* that is, if any man chooses and resolves to be a Christian. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's terms propounded; namely, self-denial, gospel-sufferings, and gospel-service. 1. Self-denial, *let him deny himself;* by which we are not to understand either the denying of our senses in matters of faith, or the renouncing of our reason in matters of religion; but a willingness to part with all our earthly comforts and temporal enjoyments for the sake of Christ, when called thereunto. They to whom we bear the greatest natural affection, even the wife of our bosom, and the offspring of our bowels, and those to whom we yield the highest reverence, and to whose commands we owe most entire obedience, as our fathers and mothers; if the authority of natural, civil, or ecclesiastical superiors should combine to tempt us to do what Christ forbids, yet Christ must be loved more than these, and obeyed before all these; yea, all these must be comparatively hated in respect of him. Farther, this precept requires us to deny our honour and reputation, our wealth and outward estate, our whole substance, and all our temporal good things, even life itself, when the interest of Christ and religion calls for it; otherwise we cannot be his disciples. 2. Gospel-sufferings; he must take up his cross daily: an allusion to a Roman custom, when a malefactor was to be crucified, he took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution. Here note, That not the taking of the cross, but patient bearing of it, when God has made it, and laid it upon our shoulder, is the duty enjoined; *let him take up his cross.* 3. Gospel-service; *let him follow me,* says Christ; That is, obey my commands, and imitate my example: he must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming of his life by that rule and pattern. Observe, 4. The arguments urged by our Saviour to induce men to a willingness to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; "He that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that is willing to lose his life for the sake of the gospel, shall find it;" intimating to us, 1. That the love of this temporal life is a great temptation to men to deny Christ, and to renounce his holy religion. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is to lay down cheerfully our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honour of religion, requires it at our hands.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Here our Saviour goes on to shew the folly of those that for saving their temporal lives will expose their eternal life, or the life of their souls, to hazard and danger; yea, sometimes by refusing to lay down our temporal life for Christ, we lose that also; which renders it the greatest folly in the world to refuse to part with any enjoyment, even life itself, at the call and command of Christ.

62 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son

of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and *in his Father's*, and of the holy angels.

That is, Whosoever shall deny and disown me, either in my person, in my doctrine, or my members, for any fear or favour of man, he shall with shame be disowned by me, and rejected of me, at the great day. There are two passions which cause men to disown Christ in the day of temptation; namely, fear and shame. Many good men have been overcome by the former, as St. Peter and others; but we find not any good man in scripture guilty of the latter, namely, that denied Christ out of shame; this argues a rotten, unsound, and corrupt heart: if any man thinks it beneath his honour and quality to own the opposed truths, and despised members of Christ, Christ will think it beneath him to own such persons at the great day. Learn hence, 1. That such as are ashamed of Christ's doctrine, or members, are in God's account ashamed of Christ himself. 2. That such as either for fear dare not, or for shame will not, own the doctrine and members of Christ now, shall certainly find Christ ashamed to own and confess them at the great day.

27 But I tell of you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

There is a threefold sense and interpretation of these words given by expositors. Some refer the words to the times of the Gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was propagated far and near, and the kingdom of God came with power. Learn thence, That where the gospel is powerfully preached, and cheerfully obeyed, there Christ cometh most gloriously in his kingdom. 2. Others understand these words, of Christ's coming and exercising his kingly power, in the destruction of Jerusalem, which some of the apostles, then standing by, lived to see. 3. Others (as most agreeable to the context) understand the words with reference to our Saviour's transfiguration; as if he had said, "Some of you, meaning Peter, James, and John, shall shortly see me upon mount Tabor, and that in such splendor and glory, as shall be a prelude, a shadow and representation of that glory which I shall appear in, when I shall come with power to judge the world at the great day." And whereas our Saviour saith not, there are some standing here which shall not die, but *which shall not taste of death*, till they have seen this glorious sight; this implies two things. 1. That after they had seen this transfiguration, they must taste of death as well as others. 2. That they should but taste of it, and no more. From whence learn, 1. That the most renowned servants of Christ, for faith, holiness, and service, must at length, in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death, as well as others. 2. That although they must taste, yet they shall but taste of death; they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup; though they fall by the hand of death, yet shall they not be hurt by it, but in the very fall be victorious over it.

28 ¶ And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and

John, and James, and went up in a mountain to pray.

29 And, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias;

31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone: And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Here we have recorded the history of our Saviour's transfiguration; when he laid, as it were, the garments of our frail humanity aside for a little season, and put on the robes of his divine glory, to demonstrate and testify the truth of his divinity; for this divine glory was an evidence of his divine nature, and also an emblem of that glory which he and his disciples, and all his faithful servants and followers, shall enjoy together in heaven. Observe, 1. The design of our Saviour in this his transfiguration, namely, to confirm his disciples' faith in the truth of his divine nature; he was therefore pleased to suffer the rays of his divinity to dart forth before their eyes, so far as they were able to bear it; his face shined with a pleasing brightness, and his raiment with such a glorious lustre, as did at once both delight and dazzle the eyes of his disciples. Observe, 2. The choice which our Saviour makes of the witness of his transfiguration; his three disciples, Peter, James, and John: but why disciples? why three disciples? and why these three? 1. Why disciples? Because this transfiguration was a type of

heaven: Christ vouchsafes therefore the earnest and first fruit of that glory only to saints upon earth, on whom he intended to bestow the full crop in due time. Why three disciples? Because three were sufficient to witness the truth of this miracle. Judas was unworthy of this favour, yet, lest he should murmur or be discontented, others are left out as well as he. 3. But why these three, rather than others? Probably, 1. Because these three were more eminent for great zeal and love towards Christ; now the most eminent manifestation of glory are made to those that are most excellent in grace. 2. Because these three disciples were to be witnesses of Christ's agony and passion, to prepare them for which, they are here made witnesses of his transfiguration. This glorious vision upon mount Tabor, fitted them to abide the terror of mount Calvary. Observe, 3. The glorious attendants upon our Saviour at his transfiguration; they were two men, Moses and Elias. This being but a glimpse of heaven's glory, and not a full manifestation of it, only two of the glorified saints attended it, and these two attendants are not two angels but two men, because men were more nearly concerned than angels in what was done; but why Moses and Elias more than any other men? 1. Because Moses was the giver of the law, and Elias the greatest of the prophets: now both these attending upon Christ, did shew the consent of the law and the prophets with Christ, and their accomplishment and fulfilling in him. 2. Because these two men were the most laborious servants of Christ; both adventured their lives in God's cause, and therefore were highly honoured by him; for they that honour him, he will honour. Observe, 4. That carriage and behaviour of the disciples upon this great occasion: 1. They supplicate Jesus; they do not pray to Moses or Elias, but to Christ; *Master, it is good being here*: O what a ravishing comfort and satisfaction, is the communion and fellowship of the saints! but the presence of Christ amongst them, renders their joys transporting. 2. They proffer their service to further the continuance of what they did enjoy. *Let us make three tabernacles*: saints will stick at no cost or pains for the enjoyment of Christ's presence, and his people's company. Learn hence, that a glimpse of heaven's glory is sufficient to raise a soul into extasy, and to make it of love with worldly company. 2. That we are apt to desire more of heaven upon earth, than God will allow us: we would have the heavenly glory to come down to us, but unwilling by death to go up to that. Observe, 5. How a cloud was put before the disciples' eyes, when the divine glory was manifested unto them; partly to allay the lustre and resplendency of that glory, which they were swallowed up with: the glory of heaven is insupportable in this imperfect state, we cannot bear it unveiled: and partly did this cloud come to hinder their looking and prying farther into this glory: we must be content to behold God through a cloud darkly here, ere long we shall see him face to face. Observe, 6. The testimony given out of the cloud by God the Father concerning Jesus Christ the Son; *This is my beloved Son, hear him*. Where note, 1. The dignity of his person, *he is my Son*, for nature co-essential, and for duration co-eternal, with his Father. 2. The endeared of his relation, *He is my beloved Son*, because of his conformity to me, and compliance with me: Likeness is the cause of love, and an union or harmony of wills, causes a mutual endearing of affections.

3. The authority of his doctrine, *Hear ye him*: "not Moses and Elias, who were servants, but Christ my Son, whom I have authorized and appointed to be the great prophet and teacher of my church, therefore adore him as my Son, believe in him as your Saviour, and hear him as your Law-giver." The obedient ear honours Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue.

37 ¶ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son, for he is mine only child:

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him that he foameth again, and, bruising him, hardly departed from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.

41 And Jesus, answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him: And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

Observe here, 1. The person brought to Jesus for help and healing, one bodily possessed by Satan, who rent, and tore him, but rather to torment than to dispatch him: O how does Satan delight to do hurt to the bodies, as well as the souls of mankind! Lord! abate his power, since his malice will not be abated. Observe, 2. The person who represented his sad condition to our Saviour: his compassionate father, who kneeled down and cried out, Need will make a person both humble and eloquent; every one has a tongue to speak for himself, happy he that keeps a tongue for others. Observe, 3. The physician which this distressed person is brought unto, first to the disciples, and then to Jesus: we never apply ourselves importunately to the God of power, till we despair of the creature's help. But what hindered the disciples, that they could not cast this evil spirit out? Why it was their unbelief; *O faithless generation!* Learn thence, That the great obstacle and obstruction of all blessings, both spiritual and temporal, coming to us, is our wretched infidelity and unbelief. Observe, 4. The sovereign power and absolute authority which Christ had when on earth over the devil and his angels! *Jesus re-*

buked him, cast him out, and charged him to return no more into him. This was a proof and demonstration of the god-head of Christ, that in his own name, that is, by his own power and authority, he could and did cast the devils out.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God; but while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Observable it is, How frequently our Saviour forewarned his disciples of his approaching sufferings, and as the time of his sufferings drew nearer, he did more frequently warn them of his death. But all was little enough to arm them against the scandal of the cross; and to reconcile them to the thoughts of his suffering condition; how an ordinary prophet should be delivered into the hands of men; they could easily understand, but how the Messiah should be so treated they could not apprehend; for the disciples had take up the common opinion, That the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and should conquer and reign here upon earth; and how to reconcile this with being killed, they could no ways apprehend; and they were afraid to be too particular in their enquiries about it. Now, from Christ's so frequently warning his disciples of his approaching sufferings, we may gather, That we can never hear, either too often or too much, of the doctrine of the cross, nor be too frequently instructed in our duty to prepare for a suffering state; as Christ went from his cross to his crown, from a state of abasement to a state of exaltation, so must all his disciples and followers expect likewise.

46 ¶ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

47 And Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him.

48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

And it may justly seem a wonder, that when our blessed Saviour discoursed so frequently with his disciples about his sufferings, that they should at the same time be disputing amongst themselves about precedence and pre-eminency, which of them should be the greatest, the first in place, and the highest in dignity and honour; but from this instance we may learn, That the holiest and best of men are too prone to ambition, ready to catch at the bait of honour, to effect a precedence before, and superiority over others: here the apostles themselves were touched with the itch of ambition; to cure this, our Saviour sets before them a little child, as the proper emblem of humility; shewing that they ought to be as free from pride and ambition as a young child, which effects nothing of precedence. Such as are of the highest eminency in the church, ought to be singularly adorned with the grace of humility, looking upon themselves as lying under the greatest obligation to be most eminently useful and serviceable to the Church's good.

49 ¶ And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us.

Observe here, 1. St. John's relation of a matter of fact to our Saviour, namely, his forbidding one to cast out devils in Christ's name, that did not follow Christ as they did: for though only the disciples which followed Christ had a commission to work miracles, yet were there others, no enemies to Christ, who, in imitation of the disciples, did attempt to do the like; and God was pleased, for the honour of his son, in whose name they cast out devils, to give them sometimes success. Observe, 2. The action of the disciples towards this person: we forbade, *because he followeth not with us*; where is observable, Their rashness in forbidding him of their own heads, before they had consulted Christ about it; and their envy and emulation in that they were grieved and discontented that good was done, because they did not do it: it is as hard a matter to look upon the gifts of others without envy, as it is to look upon our own without pride. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's reply, *Forbid him not*. Because our Saviour knew, that this action of casting out devils in his name would someway redound to his glory, although he undertook the matter without direction from Christ: we ought not to censure and condemn those who do that which is good in itself, though they fail in the manner of their doing it.

51 ¶ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

The time now drew on, wherein our Saviour was to be received up into heaven, and accordingly he sets his face to go to Jerusalem, that he might there suffer, and from thence ascend. Now here we have observable, 1.

That although Jerusalem was the nest of his enemies, the stage upon which his bloody sufferings were to be acted, the fatal place of his death, yet, nothing terrified with danger, he sets his face for Jerusalem; that is, come what will, he will go with an invincible courage and resolution. Learn thence, That although Christ had a perfect and exact knowledge of all the bitter sufferings he was to undergo, for and on behalf of his members, yet it did not in the least dishearten him in, or discourage him from, that great and glorious undertaking. Observe, 2. That though Christ was first to suffer before he did ascend, and to be lifted up upon the cross, before received up into heaven, yet is there no mention of his death here, but of his ascension only; as if all thoughts of death were swallowed up in his victory over death; teaching us, by his example, to overlook our sufferings and death, as not worthy to be named or mentioned with that glory which we are received into, after death. The Evangelist does not say the time was come when he should suffer, but when he should be received up.

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Our Saviour was now going from Galilee to Jerusalem, and being to pass through a village of Samaria, he sent messengers before him to prepare entertainment for him. The Son of God, who was heir of all things, sends to, and sues for, a lodging in a Samaritan cottage. O blessed Saviour, how can we be abased enough for thee, who thus neglected thyself for us! It was thy pleasure to appear, not in the figure of a prince, but in the form of a servant, yet the people in the Samaritan village would not receive him. Strange! to hear the Son of God sue for a lodging, and be denied; but the reason was, the difference of religion which was between the Jews and Samaritans: the Jews worshipped at the temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans at a temple of their own, built upon mount Gerizim. Upon the building of this new temple, there arose so great a feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and in process of time such an implacable hatred, that they would not shew common civility to one another. A Samaritan's bread to a Jew, was no better than swine's flesh: They would rather thirst than drink a draught of Samaritan water. Hence we learn, That no enmity is so desperate, as that which arises from matters of religion.

54 And when his disciples, James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Here observe, 1. The crime which these men were guilty of: no affront must be accounted little, no indignity light,

that is offered to the Son of God. But these Samaritans did not revile Christ, nor any of his retinue, that we read of; they did not violently assault him, they did not follow him with stones in their hands, or blasphemies in their mouths, but the wrong and injury was only negative, *They received him not*; they denied him a night's lodging, and this not out of any dislike to his person, but from an antipathy against his nation. Observe, 2. The carriage of the disciples upon this occasion; it was thus far commendable, that from the endeared love which they bore to their master, they did highly resent the churlish denial of an act of kindness towards him. A gracious heart is holily impatient at the sight of any indignity offered to Christ; but their fault was, that they were too far transported with passion and revenge, even to desire the death and destruction of the uncivil Samaritans; *Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?* They do not say Master, will it please thee, who art Lord of the creatures, to command fire to come down? Nor did they say, If it be thy pleasure, command us to call down fire; but Wilt thou that we command fire? This savours too much of pride, cruelty, and revenge; so dangerous is a misguided zeal.

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Here we have our Saviour's censure of the rash and hot motion of his disciples, which proceeded first from ignorance of themselves, *Ye know not what spirit ye are of*; ye are not now under the rough and sour dispensation of the law, but under the calm and gentle institution of the gospel, which designs universal love, peace, and good-will to all mankind. Hence learn, first, That a cruel and revengeful spirit is directly contrary to the design and temper of Christianity. Secondly, That no difference in religion, no pretence of zeal for God, can warrant and justify such a spirit and temper. Again, This rashness in the disciples proceeded from their ignorance of Christ their Lord and Master, as well as of themselves; *The Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*; that is, the proper intent and design of my coming was to save and not destroy, though the accidental event of it may be otherwise, through the malice and perverseness of men. Learn, That it was the design of Christ, and his holy religion, to discountenance all fierceness, rage, and cruelty, in men, one towards another, and to inspire them universally with a spirit of love and unity. Christ is so far from allowing us to persecute them that hate us, that he forbids us to hate them that persecute us.

57 ¶ And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Observe here, 1. A person resolving to follow Christ : a good resolution, if made deliberately and wisely, not for sinister ends, or secular advantages, which it is to be feared was the case here, by our Saviour's answer ; *For, says he, foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head :* as if Christ had said, " My condition in the world is very poor, I have no house of residence that I call my own, the birds of the air have their fixed nests, and the beasts of the earth have their dens and holes, but I have no fixed habitation ; therefore if you think to follow me for the sake of worldly advantage, you will find yourself greatly disappointed." Learn hence, That such men will find themselves miserably mistaken, and greatly disappointed, who expect to gain any thing by following of Christ, but their souls salvation. It was a common opinion among the Jews, that the disciples of the Messiah should get wealth and honour by following of him. 'Tis likely what this person said, proceeded from this opinion : accordingly, Christ discourages him from such expectation, by laying before him, his mean, poor, and low condition, in which he was to be followed by his disciples : as if Christ had said, " If you expect temporal advantages by following of me you will be much mistaken, for I have nothing I can call my own."

59 And he said unto another, Follow me : But he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead ; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

We are not to suppose by this prohibition, that Christ disallows or disapproves of any civil office from one person to another, much less of a child to a parent, either living or dying ; but he lets us know, 1. That no office of love and service to man must be preferred before our duty to God, to whom we owe our first and chief obedience. 2. That lawful and decent offices become sinful, when they hinder greater duties. 3. That such as are called by Christ to preach the gospel, must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons : as if Christ had said, " Others will serve well enough to bury the dead, but thou that art called to minister unto God, must do that unto which thou art called." Under the law, the priests might not come near a dead corpse, nor meddle with the interment of their own parents, unto which our Saviour here probably alludes.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee : but let me first go bid them farewel which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Here we have another person that promiseth to follow Christ, but desireth leave first to settle the affairs of his family, and to take leave of his friends : Our Saviour tells him. If he would be one of his ministers, he must be like a ploughman, who looks forward, and not backward, or he will never make his furrows right : they will either be too deep or too narrow ; he must mind his plough, and nothing else. Thus must they that are called to the work of the ministry, mind it wholly, attend to that alone ; their whole time, their whole strength, must be devoted to it ; the things of the world are things behind them, they must not look back upon them : nothing can justify a minister concerning himself with the incumbrances of worldly business, but only perfect necessity for the support of himself and his family. Again, ploughing work is hard work, a strong and steady hand is required for it ; he that ploughs, must keep on, and make on balks of the hardest ground he meets with ; verily, no difficulties must discourage either ministers or people in the way of their duty.

CHAP. X.

AFTER these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city, and place, whither he himself would come.

The Captain-general of our salvation, Christ Jesus, having called, commissioned, and sent forth his twelve apostles, as great commanders, to subdue his native kingdom of Israel to himself, at the sixth chapter of his gospel in this chapter he sendeth after them a band of seventy auxiliary forces to aid and assist them ; *After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy disciples, and sent them two and two before his face.* Where note, 1. The person commissioning and sending them forth ; Christ himself. Thence learn, That none ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or other ministerial functions in the church, till thereunto called by Christ himself. The twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, had an immediate mission from Christ himself ; all his ministers now are called mediately, and receive their authority from Christ by the hands of the governors of his church. Note, 2. The manner of their sending, two and two in a company, partly to make their message of more authority, partly to testify their mutual consent in the doctrine they taught, and partly to comfort and encourage, to assist and support each other. In imitation of this example, the Jesuits send forth their emissaries by pairs, *Jesuitæ semper sunt bini, &c.* Learn hence, That the ministers of the gospel do stand in great need of the mutual help and comfort of the united assistance and encouragement of each other, in the weighty duties of their calling and function. Our Saviour, in the next verse, compare

his ministers to harvest labourers, who are to help and assist one another, the strong endeavouring to strengthen the hand of the weak. But, Lord ! what tears are sufficient to bewail the want of love and unity, yea, the prevalence of that envy and malignity, which is found too often among the ministers of the gospel ! So that instead of going forth two by two, happy is he that is alone in a place. Well might Melancthon bless God, when he lay a dying, that he was going to a place where he should be freed from the implacable hatred of divines ; this is, and ought to be, for a lamentation.

2 Therefore said he unto them, the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Note here, 1. That God's church is an harvest field. 2. That the ministers of God are labourers in his harvest, under God the Lord of the harvest. 3. That to God alone doth it belong to send forth labourers into his harvest, and none must thrust themselves in, till God sends them forth ; *Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers.* 4. That the number of faithful labourers is comparatively small and few : the scribes and pharisees in the Jewish harvest field are many ; yet, says Christ, *The labourers are few.* 5. That it is the church's duty to pray, and that earnestly and incessantly, to God the Lord of the harvest, to increase the number of faithful labourers ; and to send forth more labourers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways : behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes : and salute no man by the way.

Our Saviour, 1. Arms his disciples against the difficulties, dangers, and discouragements, which they might meet with in the course of their ministry, by telling them, he sent them forth as lambs among wolves ; thereby intimating, that the enemies of the gospel have as great an inclination, from their malicious nature, to devour and destroy the ministers of Christ, as the wolves have, from their natural temper, to devour lambs ; *Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.* Our Saviour directs them, in this their first expedition to preach the gospel, to commit themselves to the gracious care and good providence of God, both for provision and protection ; *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor staff,* says St. Matthew ; as if he had said, Trust God with the care of your lives, rely upon his providence both for protection and provision ; yet must we take notice, that this was only a temporary command, given to the disciples for this particular journey, which they were quickly to dispatch ; for in the general, Christ allows his ministers, as well as others, to exercise a prudent and provident care for themselves, and their families. And as it is the minister's

duty to trust God in the use of prudential means for their maintenance, so it is the people's duty to take care for their minister's comfortable subsistence. *The workman is worthy of his meat,* says our Saviour ; that is, of all necessary supplies ; he is worthy of a comfortable subsistence, and, where it may be had, of an honourable maintenance.

5 And in whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it : if not, it shall turn to you again.

Here our blessed Saviour directs his disciples how to manage themselves in the executing of their office, *Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house,* they must wish peace to the sons of peace, yea to the enemies of peace also ; and as their peace shall rest upon the one, so shall it return from the other. *Peace be to this house* is a fit salutation for them to use, who were the disciples and ambassadors of the Prince of Peace ; and very agreeable to the gospel they were to preach, which was a gospel of peace : and 't was a prayer as well as a salutation : the disciples were to speak it not from the mouth only, but from the heart also. Peace is the music which both men and angels are delighted with, and the Christian religion is the greatest promoter and preserver of it, that commands us to *pray for peace, to follow after peace, to part with our coat and cloak ; that is, with our civil rights, for peace ; and, if it be possible, to live peaceably with all men.* Observe, 2. As the injunction given by our Saviour to his disciples to deliver a message of peace, first say, *Peace be to this house ;* so the prediction of what should befall them in the delivery of this their message. Their salvation, though it be peace, yet will not find a welcome and entertainment with all persons, but only with the sons of peace, *If the sons of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it.* Observe, 3. An encouragement not to be afraid of delivering their message, though it wanted success, *If your peace rest not, it shall return to you again.* Learn, 1. That as there was at the first preaching of the gospel, so there is, and always will be, some that are sons of peace, and others that are enemies of peace. 2. That this peace will rest on none but those that are fit to receive it. That though it doth not rest, yet it shall not be lost, but return again to those that publish it. Ministers can but say, *Peace be to this house,* they cannot make it, rest there ; we can offer terms of peace to a lost world, but cannot compel men to accept them ; and, if they finally refuse them, *We shall be a sweet savour unto God, as well as in them that perish, as in them that are saved.*

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give : for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and

they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

Here our Saviour gives his disciples sundry directions, how to manage themselves in this expedition for preaching the gospel. He enjoins them, 1. To observe the rules of decency in going from place to place, having entered an house to continue there, not changing their lodging, and going from house to house, thereby avoiding all shew of lightness and inconstancy, and testifying all gravity and stayedness in their behaviour; this being a special mean to win authority to their persons and ministry. 2. He gives them a power to work miracles for the confirming of the doctrine which they preached; *Heal the sick that are therein.* This was necessary, partly to procure reverence to their persons, being poor and unlearned men: and partly to gain credit and authority to their doctrine: for the doctrine of faith in the Messias, as now come and exhibited in the flesh, being a strange and new doctrine to the Jews, the truth and certainty of it was to be extraordinarily ratified and confirmed by working miracles: one sort of which was, healing of diseases in an extraordinary manner. Observe, 3. How Christ encourages his disciples against the want of success; he bids them denounce the judgments of God against such contemners of their doctrine, *by shaking off the dust of their feet*; which action was emblematical, and signified, that God in like manner would shake off them, and esteem them no better than the vilest dust. Learn hence, That those which despise the message that the ministers of the gospel bring, shall hereafter find the dust of their feet, and the ashes of their graves, to give a judicial testimony against them in the day of Christ; wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either a testimony for, or against a people. For, if the dust of a minister's feet bear witness against a people, their sermons much more. Observe lastly, The dreadful judgment denounced by our Saviour against the contemners of his disciples' doctrine; Verily it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. Where note, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That

in the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That of all sinners, the condition of such shall be saddest at the day of judgment, who, living under the gospel, die after all in their impenitency and infidelity; *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city.*

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin: woe unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

These cities in Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, having been the places where Christ preached and wrought his miracles, they have a woe denounced here against them, for their contempt of Christ, and the offers of his grace, *Woe unto thee, Chorazin, &c.* The higher a people rise under the means, the lower they fall if they miscarry. They that have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged: Capernaum's sentence will exceed Sodom's for severity, because she exceeded Sodom in the enjoyment of means and mercy. Observe here, 1. Capernaum's privilege enjoyed. *She was lifted up to heaven*: that is, enjoyed privileges above all other places, namely, the presence, preaching, and miracles, of our Saviour. Observe, 2. Capernaum's doom denounced, *Thou shalt be thrust down to hell*; that is, thy condition shall be sadder than those that never heard of a Saviour, even Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah; those rude and barbarous nations, out of the pale of the church, shall be in an easier state and condition, than those that have enjoyed gospel-ordinances and church-privileges, but not improved them. Learn hence, 1. That gospel-ordinances enjoyed are a mighty honour and advancement to the poorest persons and obscurest plagues. *Thou, Capernaum, art exalted to heaven.* 2. That gospel-ordinances, and church-privileges enjoyed, but not improved, provoke Almighty God to inflict the sorest judgments upon a people. *Thou that art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

16 He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

Here our Saviour encourages his ministers to faithfulness in their office, by assuring them, that he should reckon and esteem all the kindness shewn to them, as done unto himself: *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*:

he that despiseth you, despiseth me. Where note, That all the offices of love and respect, of kindness and charity, which we shew to the ministers or members of Christ, for his sake, Christ reckons it has done unto himself. Note farther, That the contempt of the message and messengers of the gospel, runs much higher than men are aware of. They think it no great matter to slight or neglect the messengers of Christ: but verily, that contempt lies in the face and authority of Christ himself, who gave them their commission; yea, in the very face of God the Father, who gave Christ his commission; and accordingly they are called God's mouth, Jer. xv. 19. their message and their mission being both from him: nay farther, this sin strikes at our own souls, and we are injurious to them as well as unto Christ, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me*: yet certainly no age was never deeper drenched in the guilt of this sin, than the present age is.

17 ¶ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Observe here, 1. The seventy disciples return to give Christ an account of the success of their expedition: they return as victors, with joy and triumph, shewing Christ the trophies of their conquest, *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name*; the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but spiritual and mighty through Christ; the powers of darkness cannot stand, but must fall before the power of Christ; the devils are no match for Christ, no, not for the meanest of the ministers of Christ, who go forth in his name, armed with his authority and power. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to the seventy disciples upon this occasion: *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.* A twofold interpretation is given of these words: 1. Some look upon them as a secret rebuke given by our Saviour to the seventy for that excess of joy, and mixture of vain-glory, which was found with them upon the account of those extraordinary gifts and abilities of casting out devils, and healing diseases, which were conferred upon them. *I beheld Satan*, says Christ, *falling like lightning from heaven*: as if Christ had said, "take heed of being puffed up with pride, upon the account of those endowments which I have bestowed upon you: remember Lucifer, the prince of pride, how he fell down from heaven by his arrogancy, and labour you to ascend thither by humility." The words in this sense afford this instruction: That those whom Christ has bestowed the greatest measure of spiritual graces, ministerial gifts, and temporal blessings upon, ought to be very watchful against that hateful sin of pride, which has ruined and destroyed so many thousands of angels and men. 2. Some understand this fall of Satan not literally, but figuratively, and mystically, of his ruin by the power and preaching of the gospel; as if Christ had said, I know that this is no vain boast of yours, no vaunt nor brag of your valour, that devils are conquered by your courage, for when I first sent you forth to preach the gospel, and armed you with divine

power, I easily foresaw that the devil's kingdom would shake about his ears, and that his power would be ruined by the power of the gospel, and that wherever you preached, Satan's strength and power should vanish like a flash of lightning suddenly and irrecoverably. Learn hence, That the powerful and efficacious preaching of the gospel is the special means ordained and appointed by Christ, for the ruin and subversion of Satan's kingdom in the world; as the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe and obey it; so it is the power of God unto destruction to Satan, and all that fight under his banner against it.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Our Lord finding that his seventy ambassadors had managed their former commission so well, he here enlarged it, adding thereunto a promise of divine protection, *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents, and nothing shall hurt you*: as if Christ had said, Go forth again in this armour of power, with which I have girt you, and I warrant you sword-free and shot-free, nothing shall by any means hurt you, neither strength nor stratagem shall overcome you. Neither the power, the presence, nor protection of God shall be wanting to any of Christ's ministers or members, who go forth in his strength against the spiritual enemies of their salvation: as we have a promise of power in this text to enable us to resist the devil, so we have a promise of success elsewhere upon our resisting him: *Resist the devil and he will fly from you.* St. James iv. 7.

20 Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In these words of our Saviour, there is something corrective and something directive; the corrective part lies in the first word, wherein Christ checks the suspected excesses of their joy for victories gained over evil spirits, *In this rejoice not*: that is, let not your hearts too much overflow with joy upon this occasion. The negation is not absolute, but comparative only. Christ doth not forbid, but only qualify and moderate their joy, *that the spirits are subject to you*, that is, the devils. Where note, 1. That though the evil angels by their fall have lost their happy condition, yet not their original constitution; their honour, but not their nature: they are spirits still. 2. The subjection of those evil spirits to the power of Christ, is not a free and professed, but an involuntary and imposed subjection, like that of a slave to his lord, whether he will or no. Learn hence, 1. That evil spirits are subject to the power of Christ, not only to his personal but to his ministerial power. 2. That it is matter of great joy to see evil spirits brought into subjection by the power of Christ: to see the evil spirit of pride and contention, of envy and malice, of error and falsehood, of jealousy and self-love,

of animosity and division, not only chained but changed; to see not only an unwilling subject, but a subjection of the will, given to Christ, is matter of great joy and unspeakable rejoicing. The directive part of our Saviour's words lies in the latter part of the verse, but *rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven*: There are no literal records in the court of heaven, no pen or ink, paper or parchment, but *to be written in heaven*, is to have a title to eternal life, and to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Learn, 1. That God has in heaven a book of life; a book written with the golden rays and beams of his own eternal love. 2. That there are names written in this book. 3. That persons may know that their names are written in that book, otherwise they could not rejoice, for no man can rejoice in an unknown good. 4. That it is greater matter of joy and rejoicing, to know that our names are written in heaven, than to have a power to cast out devils here on earth. A man may have power to cast forth devils out of others, and yet at the same time the devil may have power in and over himself. "Therefore in this rejoice not, that the devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, that your names are written in heaven." If you say, With what spectacles shall we read at such a distance? Who will ascend up into heaven, to see whether his name be written there? Or who can send a messenger thither to search the records? I answer, Turn thine eyes inward: if the name of God be written in thy heart, thy name is certainly written in heaven; if you in your daily actions write out a copy of God's book (the blessed bible) here below, assure yourselves the hand of God has written your names in his book above; that is, you shall certainly be saved.

21 ¶ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

Here we find our Saviour glorifying his Father, and magnifying himself. 1. He glorifies his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his gospel-grace to the meanest and most ignorant persons, whilst the great and learned men of the world undervalued and despised it; "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast revealed these things to babes." Learn hence, 1. That till God reveals himself, his nature and will, no man can know either what he is, or what he requires; *Thou hast revealed*. 2. That the wise and knowing men in the world, have in all ages despised the mysteries of the gospel, and have therefore been judiciously blinded by God: *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent*. When men shut their eyes against the clearest

light, and say, they will not see, God closes their eyes, and says, they shall not see. 3. That the most ignorant, if humble, and desirous of spiritual illumination, are in the readiest disposition to receive and embrace the gospel revelation; *thou hast revealed them unto babes*. 4. That this is not more pleasing to Christ than it is the pleasure of his Father; *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. Observe, 2. Our Saviour magnifies himself, 1. His authority and commission, *All things are delivered unto me*; that is, all power is committed to me as Mediator from God the Father. 2. His office, to reveal his Father's will to a lost world: *No man knoweth the Father but the Son, or the Son but the Father*: that is, no man knoweth their essence and nature, their will and pleasure, their council and consent, their mutual compact and agreement betwixt themselves, for saving a lost world, but only themselves, and those to whom they have revealed it. Learn thence, That all saving knowledge of God is in, by, and through Christ; he, as the great Prophet of his church, reveals unto us the mind and will of God for our salvation; "None knoweth, but he to whom the Son revealeth."

23 ¶ And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.

24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

From the very first giving out of the promise of Christ to Adam after the fall, Gen. iii. 15, there was in all good men a longing desire and expectation to see that person who should be so great a blessing to mankind, prophets and kings desire to see the promised Messiah. Now, says our Saviour to his disciples, *Blessed are you, for you have seen with the eyes of your body, what others only saw with the eyes of their mind*: with your bodily eyes you have seen the promised Messiah coming in the flesh, and also the miracles to confirm you that I am He, have been wrought before your eyes; therefore blessed are the eyes of your body, which have beheld me corporeally. A sight of Christ, by a believing eye, much more by a glorified eye, is a blessed sight. Blessed are those eyes which see Christ in his dispensations of glory hereafter.

25 ¶ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?

27 And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Here we have a lawyer, that is, an interpreter and expounder of the law of Moses, tempting our Saviour; that is, making trial of him, whether he would deliver any doctrine contrary to the law of Moses; he propounds therefore a question, *What should he do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, 1. He believed the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes his desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness to do something in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That all religion both natural and revealed, teaches men that good works are necessary to salvation, or that something must be done by them, who desire to enter into life, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* It is not talking well, and professing well, but doing well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal salvation, and this the very light of nature teaches. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's answer, *What is written in the law? How readest thou?* intimating to us, That the word and law of God, is the rule and measure of our duty; our guide to direct us in the way of eternal life: The man replies, That the law of God requires, "that we love God with all our heart, soul, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves." Where note, 1. That the favour of all our affections, and particularly the supremacy of our love, is required by God as his right and due. Love must pass through and possess all the powers and faculties of our souls. The mind must meditate upon God, the will must choose and embrace him, the affections must take complacency and delight in him, the measure of loving God is to love him without measure. Note, 2. That the best evidence of our sincere love to God, is, the unfeigned love of our neighbour; love to man, is both a fruit and testimony of our love to God. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Note, 3. That as it is every man's duty to love himself, so is he to love his neighbour as himself; not as he does love himself, but as he ought to love himself; not with the same measure and degree of love, but in the same manner and kind of love, that we love ourselves. Do we love ourselves freely and readily, sincerely and unfeignedly, tenderly and compassionately, constantly and perseveringly? So should we love our neighbour also: though we are not required to love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves, yet are we commanded to love him like as we love ourselves. Observe lastly, Our Lord's reply, *Thou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live.* Where note, That Christ intimates to him, that the law considered in itself could give life, but then a person must keep it perfectly and exactly, without the least deficiency, which is impossible to man in his fallen state; for the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that, Rom. viii. 3. the law becomes weak through the weakness of our flesh: such as seek salvation by the works of the law, must keep the law perfectly and exactly: which being impossible in our fallen estate, Christ has obtained of his father, that for his

sake our sincere, though imperfect obedience, shall find acceptance with God, and be available to our salvation.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jerico, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; And when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, he that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.

The design of our Saviour, in this parable, is to convince the lawyer, who put that question to him, *Who is my neighbour?* v. 29. that every one is, and ought to be accounted our neighbour, to whom God affords us an opportunity of doing good; contrary to the strait notion of the pharisees, that by the word neighbour, understood friends and kinsfolk, brethren by blood, neighbours by habitation, and persons of the same religion. Our Saviour by this parable taught him, that even strangers and professed enemies, every one that needeth our help and relief, is to be accounted our neighbour. To convince him hereof, Christ propounds this parable

of a Jew that fell among thieves, who was neglected by his own countrymen, but relieved by a Samaritan, who though a professed enemy upon the score of religion, yet was so exceeding kind and charitable, that he became physician, surgeon, and host, and a real neighbour, to the unknown traveller, wounded by thieves in his journey to Jericho. From the whole, learn, 1. That every person in misery is the object of our mercy, our neighbour, and capable of our charity. 2. That no difference in religion, much less in some doubtful opinion, will excuse us from exercising acts of charity and compassion towards such as are really in want, and need our assistance: our holy and merciful religion makes all persons the objects of our compassion, who are indigent and helpless; though they be strangers and foreigners, heathens, or heretics, friends or enemies; yea, be they good or bad, holy or wicked, as we "have opportunity, we must do good unto all, and imitate the example of our merciful God, who is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil." 3. That real charity is an active, operative thing; it consists not in good words given to the distressed, nor in a compassionate beholding of them, nor in a pitiful mourning over them, but in positive acts of kindness towards them. The Samaritan here is an example of real and thorough charity: he turns his face towards the forlorn man, his feet hasten to him, his hand pours in wine and oil into his wounds, after which he sets him upon his own beast, brings him to the inn, stays with him all night, and the next day, because his recovery would be a work of time and expence, he leaves him; but first leaves money with the host, and a special charge to take care of him; with a punctual promise, that whatever was expended more should be repaid. Behold here an instance and pattern of a complete charity, managed with as much discretion as compassion; well might our Lord say to this person, and in him to every one of us, *Go, and do thou likewise.*

38 ¶ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house.

Observe here, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life: it was to go about preaching the gospel. 2. The nature of the place which Christ at this time preached in, it was a poor village, Bethany, as some think. Christ did not only take care of populous cities, and great towns, but private villages and obscure places enjoyed also the blessing of his ministry. Our Saviour's example herein is instructive to his ministers, not to affect great auditories, and to preach only in populous cities, but to scatter the seed of the word in country villages, where are alike precious souls to be taken care of, and provided for; as Christ was sent himself, so he sends his ministers to preach the gospel to the poor. Observe 3. The party that entertained him in the village, *Martha received him into her house*; Martha is named, because she was probably the owner of the house. Though Christ had no house of his own, yet he had as many as pleased at his command; for wherever he had an heart, he was sure to have an house; *Martha received him into her house.*

39 And she had a sister called Mary which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

Observe, 1. Both these sisters were holy and devout women, both had an honour and reverence for Christ, and both are forward to entertain him; these were sisters by grace as well as by nature; yea, they both for a time attended upon Christ's preaching. Mary (also) sat at Jesus' feet, implying, that Martha sat there too, till household occasions called her away: O how happy is that family, where all parties are agreed to receive and entertain the Lord Jesus Christ! Observe, 2. No sooner is Christ entered into Martha's house, but he falls a preaching; whilst they provide bodily food for him, he prepares spiritual bread for them; O that in our place and measure we might all imitate Christ in this! Can we come into any house or company, and find nothing to say or do for God? Observe, 3. The holy and humble deportment of Mary upon this occasion *She sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.* When Christ was speaking, Mary was hearing, and little things could not take her off. Lord! how carefully should we take the present opportunity for our souls, to hear and learn of thee, as Mary did: she was not sure of another opportunity, therefore hears humbly, attentively, affectionately, as if it were her last hearing season.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me.

Observe here, 1. Martha's behaviour. *She was cumbered about much serving*; That is, much taken up with providing for the entertainment of Christ and his friends; all which considered in itself, was no miscarriage, but a token of Martha's endeared respect to her best friend. A person that sincerely loves Christ as Martha did, thinks, he can never shew enough of respect unto him. Martha having such a guest to honour her house, puts forth herself all she can, yea, more than she was able, to give him entertainment; *She was cumbered about much serving.* Observe, 2. Martha's complaint to Christ, concerning her sister's not joining with her in the work that lay so hard upon her; "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore that she help me," as if Martha had said, Is it a fit thing that the burden of all this company should lie upon me, whilst Mary sits still, and does not touch the least household business with one of her fingers? Lord! what infirmity and weakness intermixes and mingles with the virtues and graces of the best of thy servants, especially when they give way to their distempered passions! This good woman, at this time, did not attend upon Christ's preaching herself, but interrupts him with a frivolous complaint about her sister; *Bid her that she help me.* But why did not Martha speak to her

sister herself, and whisper in her ear, and acquaint her how she wanted her help, but makes her moan to Christ? Answer, 'Tis like she thought her sister was so tied by the ear with those adamant chains of Christ's heavenly doctrine, that until Christ was silent she had no power to stir; doubtless, she believed that Mary would not move, unless Christ spake to her so to do. Observe, 3. That all this while Mary speaks not one word for herself; no doubt it troubled her, good woman, to hear her sister complain of her to Christ, and to find herself blamed for her piety, and implicitly condemned for laying hold upon such a sweet opportunity of hearing the beloved of her soul, whose lips dropped as the honeycomb; however, she speaks not a word in her own vindication, but leaves her answer to her Saviour. Learn thence, that when we are complained of for well doing, it is our duty, and may be our prudence to seal up our lips in silence, and to expect our vindication from above. Mary says nothing, but Christ speaks for her in the next verses.

41 And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things;

42 But one thing is needful: And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

As if Christ had said, Martha, Martha, I well know thou dost all this in love to me, and it is no more than thy duty in its proper season, but thou hadst now an opportunity to hear my word, which thou canst not have every day, and it would have pleased me better, to whom it is meat and drink to feed souls if I had seen thee sitting with thy dear sister at my feet, and yielding an attentive regard to my holy doctrine, than to find thee performing a necessary civility to my person. Thou hast not made a bad choice, but Mary has made a better; she has laid all aside to attend upon my ministry, and the fruit of it continue with her to all eternity; "It is that good part which shall never be taken away from her." Note here, 1. The unexpectedness of our Saviour's answer to Martha, how contrary it was to her expectation; she thought that her sister should have been sent away with a check, and herself with thanks, but she is quite mistaken; for all the good cheer that she had prepared for Christ, he spares not to tell her of her fault; *Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things.* Learn thence, That no obligations to any particular persons should so enthrall us, but that our tongues should be at liberty to reprove them. Martha, though a pious and good woman, though a friendly and kind woman, though a woman greatly beloved of Christ, yet she is reprov'd by Christ. Note, 2. The reproof given to Martha, *Thou art troubled about many things;* where Christ condemns not her hospitality, but her solicitude and superfluity, her distraction and perplexity. O how prone are we to exceed in things lawful and necessary and to go beyond our bounds in them! When we are satisfied in the matter, we are prone to exceed in the measure. Martha's entertainment of Christ was a noble service, but she was too anxious and solicitous about it: she was cumbered, she was careful, she was troubled. Note, 3. Our Saviour's admoni-

tion, *But one thing is needful;* that is, there is one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us, and is of the greatest concernment to us; namely, the business of religion, and the care of our soul's salvation is the one thing necessary, and that which every man is concerned in the first place, and above all other things to regard and mind. Note, 4. Our Saviour's justification of Mary's choice, *Mary hath chosen that good part; Non tu malam, sed illa meliorem.* Christ did not tell Martha she had chosen a bad part, but her sister had chosen the better. Martha's entertainment of Christ was good, but Mary's attendance upon Christ's ministry was better and more pleasing unto Christ. Christ was better pleased to see Mary in the chapel, than Martha in the kitchen; though he doth not condemn the one, yet he extols the other; Mary had chosen the good part, and it being once chosen by us, it shall never be taken away from us; "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall never be taken away from her."

CHAP. XI.

AND it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

The learned Mr. Mede upon this place apprehends, that it was the custom of the Jewish doctors to deliver some certain form of prayer to their disciples to use, at least that John the Baptist had done so to his disciples: thereupon our Saviour's disciples besought him that he also would give them in like manner some form of his own composing, that they might pray with their Master's spirit, as John's disciples did with his. Accordingly our Saviour gives them here a form of his own, and commands them when they pray to use it. Indeed he had given them this prayer, about a year and a half before, in his sermon upon the mount, Matt. vi. 9. *After this manner pray ye;* where it is probable, that the disciples looked upon it only as a pattern of prayer and not as a form; for had they thought that Christ had given them a form of prayer before, they had not asked him for one now: therefore, says Christ, *When ye pray, say.* Certainly this gives us to understand, that our Saviour intended and commended it for a set form of prayer unto his church. Learn hence, That the Lord's Prayer is both a pattern and platform, according to which all our prayers ought to be framed; and also an exact form of prayer, which ought to be used by us in our addresses to the throne of grace; *After this manner pray ye,* says St. Matthew; *When ye pray, say,* says St. Luke.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say,

Observe here, The favour which Christ does us in prescribing a form of prayer to us; a great favour, no doubt,

though the world grows weary of it; we know not, alas! what to ask, but he himself teaches us, and frames our supplication for us, that it may be accepted. Should a king's son draw a petition for a poor subject, to be put up to his father, what ground of hope would there be, that whatever is desired would be obtained? If any of us then think meanly of our Lord's Prayer, O how meanly may he think of us, and of our prayers.

—Our Father which art in heaven;
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
come. Thy will be done, as in heaven,
so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we
also forgive every one that is indebted to
us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

The sense and signification of this best of prayer, is this —“ O Thou our Father in Jesus Christ! who remainest in thy throne in heaven, and there perpetually praised and perfectly obeyed by glorious angels and glorified saints. Grant that thy name may be glorified, thy throne acknowledged, and thy holy will obeyed here on earth below, by us thy sons and servants, as readily, as cheerfully and sincerely, and in some degree of proportion to what is done in heaven above. And because, by reason of the frailty of our natures, we cannot subsist without the comforts and supports of life, we crave our daily bread at thy bountiful hand; even such a proportion of the good things of this life as thy wisdom shall see convenient for us. And knowing that thy holiness and justice doth oblige thee to punish sin and sinners, we plead with thee for the sake of thy Son's satisfaction, to forgive us our daily trespasses; for it is our desire and endeavour, heartily to forgive those that have offended us; and this wicked world wherein we live is so full of snares and temptations of all sorts, we pray that by the power of thy grace, and the concurrence of our own careful endeavours, we may be kept from Satan's temptations, from the world's allurements, and from our own evil inclinations: and be preserved unblameable to thine everlasting kingdom; and in testimony of our desires and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*, so be it, so let it be, even so, O Lord, let it be for ever.” Learn, 1. That God is the Father of all his people; as a father he knows all his children, he loves them and takes care of them: as his children, it is our duty to honour him, to obey him, to imitate him, to cast our care upon him, and to long for the enjoyment of him. 2. From the word *Our*, learn, That it is our duty to pray for others, as well as for ourselves; we cannot pray acceptably for ourselves, if we pray only for ourselves. 3. That the hallowing, honouring, and sanctifying of God's name, as it is the first thing we are to pray for, so it ought to be preferred before all other things whatsoever: we pray for it before we pray for our own salvation: we say, *Hallowed be thy name*, before we say, *Forgive us our debts*. 4. Learn,

That sins are debts, and sinners indebted to divine justice. Sin is an infinite debt, a multiplied debt, an inexcusable debt, and if not discharged by our surety, we must lie in prison to all eternity, for non-payment of this debt. 5. That God has made our forgiveness of others the condition of his forgiving us: the word *As*, is not a note of equality, but of similitude; we cannot equal God in forgiving, but we must imitate him. 6. No sooner is sin pardoned, but Satan will be busy with his temptation. *Forgive us our sins, and lead us not into temptation*. 7. That it is a greater mercy to be delivered from the evil of temptation, than from temptation to evil. The evil of temptation is the evil of sin, but the temptation to evil is at most but the evil of punishment. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*; suffer us not to be led into temptation, or, if so, leave us not when we are tempted.

5 And he said unto them, Which of
you shall have a friend; and shall go unto
him at midnight, and say unto him,
Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey
is come to me, and I have nothing to set
before him.

7 And he from within shall answer,
and say, Trouble me not: the door is
now shut, and my children are with me
in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not
rise and give him because he is his friend:
yet because of his importunity, he will
rise and give him as many as he needeth.

The design of our blessed Saviour in these and the following verses, is to excite and stir up his disciples to fervency, importunity, and constancy, in the duty of prayer, and to this purpose he makes use of a double argument, the one of a friend, and the other of a father. 1. He lays before them the parable of a friend, coming to his friend at midnight, and by his importunity obtaining that of him which otherwise he must have gone without. From whence our Lord leaves us to infer, that if an imprudent proud beggar can obtain so much from man, what cannot an humble, earnest, and daily petitioner obtain from God? What friend so faithful and helpful to his dearest friend, as God is to us his children? From the whole, note, 1. That a man must be brought into a state of friendship and reconciliation with God, if he hopes his prayers shall be accepted. 2. That when any of the friends of God are in necessities and straits, he allows them the liberty at all hours to call upon him, and pray unto him; at midnight as well as at mid-day, God's ear is open to his praying friends. 3. That Almighty God takes pleasure in being urged in prayer by the holy importunity of his friends; never is he better pleased, than when his people, with holy Jacob, “wrestle with him, and

"I will not let him go till he hath blessed them." 4. That such holy and humble importunity shall not only obtain what we desired, but more than we expected; only three loaves were desired here, but because of importunity, he had as many as he needed; more is given in the concession, than was desired in the supplication. The original word here rendered *importunity*, signifies *impudence*; according to that saying among the Jews, The imprudent man overcomes the modest and the bashful; how much more God who is goodness itself?

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Our Saviour here goes on, to urge us to importunity and constancy in prayer; he bids us *ask, seek, and knock*, and assures us we shall be accepted, heard, and answered. Here note, 1. That man is a poor indigent creature, full of wants, but unable to supply them. As man is an indigent and insufficient creature, so God is an all-sufficient good, able to supply the wants, and relieve the necessities of his creatures. 3. That Almighty God stands ready to supply all our wants, not temporal only, but spiritual also, affording his grace and the assistance of his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. 4. If therefore we want the grace of God, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit, it is our own fault, and not God's; it is either for want of seeking or for want of earnestness in asking; for our Saviour expressly assures us, that God denied it to none; 'but every one that asketh receiveth.'

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

The second parable which our Saviour makes use of, is that of a father to his children; Christ represents the care and kindness of God towards us by the affections which earthly parents bear to their natural children, who though they be many times evil themselves, yet are not wont to deny their children necessary good things, when they dutifully and decently beg them at their hands: "If ye being evil—how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit;" that is, the continual presence and influence of his Holy Spirit, to all the purposes of guidance and direction, of grace and assistance, of comfort and support, in our Christian course. Learn hence, That the presence and

assistance of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do what God requires shall never be wanting to those that desire it, and endeavour after it. But we must always remember, that the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, though it be offered and tendered to us, yet it is not forced upon us; for if we beg the Holy Spirit and his assistance, but refuse to make use of it; or if we cry to him for his help to mortify our lusts, but do not put forth our own endeavours, we forfeit the divine assistance, and God will certainly withdraw his Holy Spirit from us.

14 ¶ And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake: and the people wondered.

15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and a house divided against a house, falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

A relation is here given of a famous miracle wrought by our Saviour in casting a devil out of a possessed man: it is called a *dumb devil*, because of the effect upon the poor possessed person, in restraining the use of his tongue. Learn here, 1. That among the many calamities which sin has rendered human nature liable and obnoxious to, this is one, to be bodily possessed by Satan. 2. That one demonstration of Christ's divine power, and a convictive evidence of his being truly and really God, was his casting out devils by the word of his power. Observe, 3. What a sad and contrary effect this miracle had upon the wicked pharisees, through their own blindness, obstinacy, and malice; instead of magnifying his divine power, they maliciously accuse him for holding a correspondence with the devil, and acting by a power derived from him; as if Satan should lend our Saviour a power against himself, and that for the destruction of his own kingdom. Lord, how dangerous is

a wilful opposition against the truth! It provokes the Almighty to deliver persons up to the most unreasonable infidelity, and obstinate obduracy. Observe, 4. Our Saviour, knowing their thoughts, makes a just apology for himself, by shewing how improbable and unlikely, how unreasonable and absurd, it is once to imagine or suppose, that Satan should cast out himself, and any way seek to oppose or destroy his own kingdom: Now if I have received (says Christ) my power from Satan, for casting out of Satan, then is the devil like a family divided within itself, and divided like a kingdom against itself, which can never stand, but must be brought to destruction. Observe lastly, Our Saviour tells the pharisees that they might with as much reason attribute all other miracles to the power of the devil, as those wrought by himself; for there were certain Jews among them that cast out devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; now our Saviour asks them by what power these their children cast them out? They acknowledged what they did was by the power of God, and there was no cause, but their malice, why they should not acknowledge that what he did was by the same power. "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? But if I with the finger of God cast them out, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you;" that is, the long expected kingdom of the Messias is certainly come, and I having wrought these miracles by my own power, is a demonstrative proof that I am the promised Messias.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and, finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house, whence I came out:

25 And when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Our Saviour having sufficiently shewn, that he did not work his miracles by the power of the devil, he next informs the pharisees from whence he had that power, even from God himself; accordingly, he compares Satan to a strong

man armed with weapons to defend his house, and himself clothed with divine power, he compares to one that is stronger than the strong man; so that the argument runs thus: the devil is very strong and powerful, and there is no power, but only God's, that is stronger than his: if then, says Christ, I were not assisted with a divine power, I could never cast out this strong man, who reigns in the bodies and souls of men, as in his house; for it must be a stronger than the strong man, that shall bind Satan; and who is he but the God of strength? Learn hence, That only Christ's divine power is superior to Satan's strength: he only can vanquish and over-rule him at his pleasure, and drive him out of that possession which he holds either in the bodies or souls of men; "The strong man armed keeps the house, till a stronger than he comes upon him, and overcomes him. When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none." Note here, 1. That Satan is an unclean spirit, he hath lost his original purity, his holy nature in which he was created; and is by sin become universally sinful and impure: no means being allowed him by God for the purging of his filthy and impure nature; yes, he is a perfect enemy to purity and holiness; maligning all that love it, and would promote it. 2. That Satan is a restless and unquiet spirit, being cast out of heaven, he can rest no where; when he is gone out either of a man by policy, or cast out by power, he has no content or satisfaction, till he returns into a filthy heart, where he delights to be, as the swine in miry places. 3. That wicked and profane sinners have this unclean spirit dwelling in them; their hearts are Satan's house and habitation, and the lusts of pride and unbelief, malice and revenge, envy and hypocrisy, these are the garnishings and furniture of Satan's house; man's heart was God's house by creation, it is now Satan's by usurpation and judiciary tradition. 4. That Satan, by the preaching of the gospel, may seem to go out of persons, and they become sober and civilized; yet may he return again to his old habitation, and the latter end of that man is worse than the beginning.

27 ¶ And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

28 But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Observe here, 1. How ready we are to admire persons for their external privileges, and the favours of divine providence, and to pronounce such blessed: *Blessed is the womb that bare thee.* 2. That Christ makes another judgment of persons, and pronounces them more blessed, that bear him in their hearts by faith, than his own mother, who bear him in her womb by sense. The blessedness of being an obedient believer, is far greater than that of being the mother of our blessed Saviour. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is not denied unto us now. Although we cannot

see Christ, yet love him we may; his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but his spiritual, gracious presence, is not denied us; though Christ be not ours in house, in arms, by affinity, by consanguinity; yet in heart, in faith, in love, in service, he is or may be ours; verily, spiritual regeneration, and an obediential doing of God's will, bringeth men into a more honourable relation to Christ, than natural generation ever did; "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

29 ¶ And, when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold a greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The sign which the pharisees here desired of our Saviour, was a miracle wrought by him: now our Saviour, though he was very ready to work miracles, to encourage and confirm his hearers' faith, yet not to satisfy the unbelieving pharisees' curiosity; and accordingly he tells them, they should have no other sign than that of his resurrection, which Jonas was a type of. Next he threatens them for their obstinacy and infidelity, which he aggravates from the example of the queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh. From thence learn, That the sins of infidelity and impenitency are exceedingly heightened, and their guilt aggravated, from the means afforded, by God to bring men to faith and obedience. The sin of the pharisees was infinitely greater in rejecting the evidence of Christ's miracles, than the sin of the Ninevites would have been in refusing to hearken to Jonas's ministry; therefore the Ninevites shall condemn the pharisees.

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

34 The light of the body is the eye;

therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

35 Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body, therefore, be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Our Saviour in these words does these two things: 1. He declares, that although his ministry had no effect upon the proud and obstinate pharisees, yet he would not hide the light which he came into the world to bring, nor conceal that heavenly doctrine which his father had committed to him to communicate to the children of men; teaching us, That such as are enlightened by God with the knowledge of his word and will, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and improve it for the good and benefit of others; "No man that lighteth a candle, putteth it under a bushel." 2. Our Saviour here discovers the reason why the pharisees continued blind under so clear a light as that of his ministry; namely, because, the eye of their understanding was darkened, not so much with ignorance as with prejudice, whereby they oppose Christ and his holy doctrine: for if the mind be clearly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God, that light will diffuse and spread itself in the soul, as the bright shining of a candle doth in the house; enlightening all the inward faculties, and directing all the outward actions, and communicating its light also to the enlightening of others.

37 ¶ And, as he spake, a certain pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And, when the pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravining and wickedness.

40 Ye fools! did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?

Observe here, 1. The free conversation of our blessed Saviour, how readily he complies with the pharisee's invitation to dine with him. I do not find that when Christ was invited to any table, that ever he refused to go; if a pharisee, if a publican invited him, he constantly went, not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts

us when we feed him: he says of himself, that he came eating and drinking, that is, allowing himself a free though innocent conversation with all sorts of persons, that he might gain some. Observe, 2. The exception which the pharisee takes at our Saviour's not washing his hands before dinner. This they made (but without any warrant for it) a religious act, abounding in external washings, but neglecting the inward purgation of their hearts and consciences from sin and uncleanness: Thus pharisaical hypocrisy puts God off with outward cleansing, instead of inward purity; regarding more the outward cleanness of the hand, than the inward purity of the heart. Observe, 3. Our Saviour does not condemn any external decency and cleanliness in conversation; but his design is, to shew the vanity of outward purity without inward sanctity, and to convince them of the necessity of cleansing the heart, in order to the purifying and reforming the life. The pharisee washed his hands clean, but left his soul full of uncleanness; not considering that he that made the soul as well as the body, requires that both should be kept pure; all the impiety of men's lives proceeding from the impurity of their hearts and natures.

41 But rather give alms of such things as you have: and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

As if Christ had said, The way to purify your meats and drinks, and estates, from all pollution cleaving to them, and to have them sanctified blessings to you, is (in conjunction with other graces) by doing works of mercy, and by liberal almsgiving, according to your ability. Learn, That charity and almsgiving, according to our ability and opportunity, is a special mean to sanctify our estates to us, and to cause us holily and comfortably to enjoy whatever we do possess; "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you." As if Christ had said, Your temporal enjoyments are unclean, that is, unlawful to be used by you till you have sanctified them by some act of charity, which will procure a blessing upon your substance.

42 But woe unto you, pharisees: for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Our Saviour here denounces a woe against the pharisees, for their strict and scrupulous observing the lesser things of the law, as tithing mint and rue, whilst they were regardless of the principal and substantial duties, which they owe both to God and man. Learn hence, That although some duties are of greater moment and importance than others, yet a good man will omit none, but make conscience of all, both great and small, in obedience to the command of God; there is no duty so little as to be neglected, no command so small as to be disobeyed; but yet there is a difference in duties, and our first regard ought rather to be to the greater, than to the less. Christ doth

not condemn them for tithing mint and rue, but for passing over judgment and the love of God.

43 Woe unto you, pharisees; for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

The next woe denounced against the pharisees, is for their ambition, pride, and popularity, affecting the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the markets; where there fault was, not in taking, but in affecting, these uppermost places: God is the God of order: there may and ought to be a precedence amongst persons. Honour is to be given to whom honour is due, and that by God's command. But pride and ambition are detestable vices, especially in such as are preachers, and ought to be patterns of humility.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

Another woe is here denounced against the pharisees, for cheating and deceiving the people with an outward shew and appearance of piety and religion. They were like graves and sepulchres grown over with grass, which, though they held dead men's bones, yet the putrefaction not outwardly appearing, men walked unawares over them, and so were polluted by them; intimating, that the inward rottenness and filthy corruptions of the pharisees not appearing unto men, the people were easily deceived by outward shews of pharisaical sanctity, and so fell into a dangerous imitation of them. Learn hence, That the great design of hypocrites is, to cheat the world with an empty shew of piety; the hypocrite's ambition is to be thought good, not to be so. Learn, 2. That nothing is more fatally dangerous, to the souls of men, and draws persons to an admiration and imitation of hypocritical professors, like their outward shews of sanctity, and their extraordinary appearances of devotion and piety. This it was that gained the pharisees such veneration, and esteem among the people, that it became a proverb amongst them, "If but two men went to heaven, the one must be a pharisee." But their counterfeit piety being double iniquity, they did receive for it double damnation.

45 ¶ Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also.

46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers: for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

The former woes were denounced by our Saviour against the pharisees, who had their names from the He-

brew word, which signifies *to separate*, because they were persons separated and set apart for studying the law of God, and teaching it to others. The next woe is here denounced against the lawyers, that is the scribes of the law, of which there were two sorts, the civil scribe, and the ecclesiastical scribe. The civil scribe was a public notary, or a register of the synagogue, employed in writing bills of divorce, and sentences in the phylacteries. The ecclesiastical scribe was an expounder of the scriptures, an interpreter of the law; men of learning and knowledge, whose decrees and interpretations the pharisees strictly observed. This lawyer here insolently calls our Saviour's reproof a reproach; however Christ who never feared the face, or regarded the person of any man, gives them their portion, and lets them know wherein they were faulty, as well as the pharisees, and accordingly pronounces a woe unto them also, for a threefold crime; for their laying heavy burdens upon others' shoulders, which they would not touch with one of their fingers. These burdens, in general, were a rigid exaction of obedience in the whole ceremonial law, and in particular, the burden of traditions, certain austerities and severities, which they imposed upon the people, but would not undergo any part of them themselves. In vain do we hope to oblige our hearers to follow those rulers of life, which we refuse or neglect to put in practice ourselves.

47 Woe unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.

50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

The second crime which Christ reproves in these men, is their grand hypocrisy, in pretending great honour to the saints departed, building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres, declaring against their fathers' impiety, that had they lived in their days, they would not have been partakers with them in their sins. Now their hypocrisy appeared in three particulars: 1. In that they continued in their own wickedness, and yet commended the saints de-

parted; they magnify the saints, but multiply their sins; and instead of imitating their virtues, they contented themselves with garnishing their sepulchres. 2. In professing great respect to the dead saints, and at the same time persecuting the living. Palpable hypocrisy! and yet, as gross as it is, it prevails to this day. The church of Rome who magnifies martyrs, canonizes saints departed, have yet added to their number by shedding of their blood. 3. In taking false measures of their love to the saints departed, from their building their tombs, and garnishing their sepulchres. Whereas the best evidence of our love to them is the imitating their virtues, and cherishing their followers. 'Tis gross hypocrisy to pay respect to the relics of saints, and veneration to their images, and at the same time to persecute and hate their followers. From the whole, note, 1. That the world has all along loved dead saints better than living ones, *Mortui non mordent*: the dead saints example, how bright soever, is not so scorching and troublesome at a distance, and he himself stands no longer in other men's light; whereas the living saints' example is a cutting reproof to sin and vice. Note, 2. That there is a certain civility in human nature, which leads men to a just commendation of the dead, and to a due estimation of their worth. The pharisees here, though they persecuted the prophets whilst alive, yet did they pretend to a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done unto them. Note, 3. That it is the greatest hypocrisy imaginable to pretend to love goodness, and at the same time to kill the prophets. Note, 4. That the highest honour we can pay to the saints departed, is not by raising monuments and building tombs to their memory, but by a careful imitation of their piety and virtue, following the holiness of their lives, and their patience and constancy at their death. Lastly, learn, That it is a righteous thing with God to punish children for the impiety of their parents, when they walk in their ungodly parents' footsteps; "Upon you shall come the blood of all the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias;" yet by this must be understood of temporal evils, not to eternal punishments; no man for his father's sins shall lie down in everlasting burnings; as our father's faith will not let us into heaven, so neither will their impiety shut us into hell: at the day of judgment every man shall be separately considered according to his own deeds.

52 Woe unto you, lawyers: for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.

The last woe pronounced by our Saviour against the scribes and pharisees, is for perverting the holy scriptures, and keeping the true sense and knowledge of them from the people: this St. Luke here calls, *The taking away the key of knowledge from men*, alluding to a custom of the Jews, in admission to their doctors; those who had authority given them to interpret the law and the prophets, were solemnly admitted into that office, by delivering to them a key and a table-book; so that by the key of knowledge is meant the interpretation and understanding of the scriptures; and by taking away that key,

is signified. 1. That they arrogate to themselves the sole power of understanding and interpreting the holy scriptures. 2. That they kept the true knowledge of the scriptures from the people, especially the prophecies which concern the kingdom and coming of the Messiah; and so they hindered men from embracing our Saviour's doctrine, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it. Learn, 1. That the written word is the key whereby an entrance into heaven is opened upon men. 2. That the use of this key, or the knowledge of the word of God, is absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to salvation. 3. That great is the guilt, and inexcusable the fault, of those who deny the people the use of this key, and deprive them of the knowledge of the holy scriptures, which alone can make them wise unto salvation. 4. That such as do so, shut the kingdom of heaven against men, endeavouring what in them lies to hinder their salvation; men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for lack of knowledge.

53 And, as he said these things unto them, the scribes and pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:

54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour's plain and faithful dealing with these men, enrages, instead of reforming them: they are filled with anger and indignation. 2. Their wrath sets their wits on work to ensnare him. Lord! when any of thy faithful ministers and ambassadors meet with the like usage and treatment from a wicked world; when any lie in wait to catch something out of our mouth, that therewith they may ensnare us, give us thy prudence and thy patience, that we may cut off occasion, from those that seek occasion against us, and disappoint them of their purpose; or else furnish us with such measures of meekness and patience, as becomes persons of our holy character and profession, that we may glory in reproaches, in persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, and that the Spirit of glory and of God may rest upon us.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the

(No. 19.)

light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

In this chapter our blessed Saviour furnishes his disciples with many instructions for the worthy discharge of their function in preaching the gospel; particularly he recommends unto them two gracious qualifications, namely, uprightness and sincerity, verses 1, 2, 3. Secondly, courage and magnanimity, verses 4, 5.—1. He recommends unto them the grace and virtue of sincerity. "Beware of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Learn hence, That hypocrisy is a dangerous leaven, which ministers and people are chiefly and especially to beware of, and to preserve themselves from. Hypocrisy is a vice in vizard, the face is vice, the vizard is virtue; God is pretended, self intended; hypocrisy is resembled to leaven; partly for its sourness, partly for its diffusiveness. Leaven is a piece of sour dough, that diffuses itself into the whole mass or lump of bread with which it is mixed. Thus hypocrisy spreads over all the man: all his duties, parts, and performances are leavened with it. Again, Leaven is of a swelling as well as of a spreading nature; it puffs up the dough, and so doth hypocrisy the heart. The pharisees were a sour and proud sort of people; they were all for pre-eminence, chief places, chief seats, chief titles, to be called *rabbi, rabbi*; in a word, as leaven is hardly discerned from good dough at first sight, so is hypocrisy hardly discerned and distinguished from sincerity. The pharisees outwardly appeared righteous unto men, but within were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Observe next, the argument which Christ uses to dissuade men from hypocrisy; "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed;" as if he had said, The day is coming, when a rotten and corrupt heart shall no longer pass under the vizard and disguise of a demure look. In the day of judgment hypocritical sinners shall walk naked; God, angels, and men, shall see their shame. Learn hence, That God will certainly, ere long, wash off all the varnish and paint which the hypocrite has put upon the face of his profession, and lay him open to the terror of himself, and the astonishment of the world.

4 And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do:

5 But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: Yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

The second duty which our Saviour presses upon his disciples, is that of holy courage and resolution: as if Christ had said, The preaching of the gospel will stir up many enemies against you; which will malign and oppose you; vex and persecute you; but I say unto you, fear them not who can only kill the body; but fear him, who, if you fail in your duty, can cast both body and soul into hell. Here note, 1. An unwarrantable fear condemned, and that it is the sinful, servile, slavish fear of man; 2. Fear not them that kill the

body." 2. An holy, awful, and prudential fear of the omnipotent God commended; "Fear him that is able to kill both body and soul." 3. The persons whom this duty of fear is recommended to, and bound upon; disciples, ministers, ambassadors, all the friends of Christ. They not only may, but ought to fear him; not only for his greatness and goodness, but upon the account of his punitive justice, as being able to cast both body and soul into hell. Such a fear is not only lawful but laudable, not only commendable but commanded, and not misbecoming the friends of Christ. The ministers of God may use arguments from fear of judgments, both to dissuade from sin, and to persuade to duty. It is not unsuitable to the best of saints, to keep in heaven's way, for fear of hell; it is good to bid a friend fear, when that fear tendeth to his good.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Observe here, 1. The doctrine which our Saviour preaches to his disciples, and that is the doctrine of the divine Providence, which concerns itself for the meanest of creatures. Even the birds of the air, and the hairs of our head, do fall within the compass of God's protecting care. Observe, 2. The use which our Saviour makes of this doctrine, namely, to fortify his disciples' spirits against all distrustful fears, and distracting cares. Learn hence, 1. That the consideration of the divine care and gracious providence of God over us and ours, ought to antidote our spirits against all distrustful fears whatsoever. If an hair from the head falls not to the ground without a Providence, much less shall the head itself: if the very excrescences of the body (such are the hairs) be taken care of by God, surely the more noble parts of the body, but especially the noblest part of ourselves, our soul, shall fall under his peculiar regard.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.

9 But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.

Note here, 1. That not to confess Christ is in his account to deny him, and to be ashamed of him. 2. That whosoever shall deny or be ashamed of Christ, either in his person, in his gospel, or in his members, for any fear or favor of man, shall with shame be disowned, and eternally rejected by him at the dreadful judgment of the great day. Christ may be denied three ways; doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment; verbally, by oral expressions; vitally, by a wicked and unpholy life; but woe to that soul that denies Christ any of these ways.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say,

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Although never man preached or lived as Christ did, yet there were those that spake against him; the person of Jesus was contemned and reproached, for the meanness of his birth, for the poverty of his condition, for the freedom of his conversation; but this sin did not exclude the hope of pardon; "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him;" all the reproaches cast upon Christ as man, were pardonable: "But whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him;" that is whoever affirms that divine power by which I do all my miracles, to be the power of the devil, such blasphemy will be unpardonable, because it is to resist the last remedy, and to oppose the best means of men's conviction.

13 ¶ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?

Whilst our Saviour was thus instructing his disciples, and the rest of his auditors, in things appertaining to the kingdom of heaven, one of the company being more intent, as it seems, upon his temporal than his eternal concerns desired him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Christ tells him he would neither be judge nor arbitrator in any civil affairs, or secular concerns. This work, as if Christ had said, belongs to the civil magistrate, to divide inheritances, and decide controversies betwixt man and man; but my work is of another nature, namely, to preach the gospel to a lost world, and to direct men how to secure an inheritance in heaven: not to divide inheritances here on earth: teaching us, that matters of civil justice do not belong to those whom Christ sends forth to preach the gospel: that work alone is sufficient for them; the proper work of a minister is work enough; one branch of which is, to manage a persuading task betwixt neighbour and neighbour, to prevent differences, and to compose them; but as Christ's commissioners and ministers of the gospel, they have no authority to intermeddle in civil judgments; "Who made me a judge over you?" said our great Master: that is, a judge in civil affairs

15 And he said unto them, Take heed,

and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Our Saviour, upon the occasion given him in the foregoing verses, admonishes all his disciples and followers to take heed and beware of the sin of covetousness, assuring them, that neither the comfort nor continuance of man's life doth consist in an abundance: for though something of this world's goods is necessary to the comfort and happiness of life, yet abundance is not necessary. Here observe, 1. The manner of our Lord's caution; he doubles it; not saying, *Take heed alone, or beware only*; but, *Take heed and beware both*: this argues, that there is a strong inclination in our natures to this sin: the great danger we are in of falling into it, and of what fatal consequence it is to them, in whom this sin reigns. Observe, 2. The matter of the caution of the sin which our Saviour warns his hearers against, and that is covetousness; "Take heed and beware of covetousness:" where, under the name and notion of covetousness, our Saviour doth not condemn a provident care for the things of this life, nor a regular industry and diligence for obtaining of them, nor every degree of love and affection to them; but by covetousness is to be understood an eager and insatiable desire after the things of this life, or using unjust ways and means to get and increase an estate; seeking the things of this life, with the neglect of things infinitely better, and placing their chief happiness in riches. Observe, 3. The reason of this caution; "Because a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Human life is sustained by a little; therefore abundance is not necessary either to the support or comfort of it. 'Tis not a great estate and vast possession that makes a man happy in this world, but a mind suited to our condition whatever it be.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, this will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods:

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool!* this night thy soul shall be required of

thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

The design and scope of our Saviour in this parable is, to show men the vileness and vanity of the sin of covetousness, or an eager and insatiable desire after the things of this world; when men heap up riches, and lay up treasures in this life, taking no care to be rich towards God in faith and good works. Our Saviour illustrates this by the parable of a rich man, whom God had blessed with great plenty, yet his desire of more wealth was never satisfied, but he is projecting how he may lay up goods in store for many years. Where note, 1. That the parable doth not intimate any indirect and unjust ways of gain which this man used to increase his estate, but condemns his insatiable desire and thirst after more. So that hence we may learn, That an eager and inordinate desire after the things of this world, though it be free from injustice, and doing wrong to others, is one species, or kind, of the sin of covetousness. Observe, 2. How this rich man looked no farther than himself, not looking upon himself as God's steward, but his own carver, he cries out, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to lay my fruits?" Not considering that the houses of the poor should have been his granaries for the abundance of his increase. Charity to the necessitous, is the best way of bestowing our abundance, God's extraordinary bounty is to be laid out for the relief of other's necessities, nor for the gratifying of our own luxurious desires. Observe, 3. The brand of infamy which the wise God fixes upon this covetous rich man; "Thou fool," says God. Learn thence, That it is an act and instance of the most egregious folly imaginable, for persons to spend their time and strength in getting and laying up treasure upon earth; and in the mean time neglecting to be rich towards God in faith and good works; "Thou fool," Observe, 4. The doleful tidings and threatening news brought unto him; "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Learn hence, 1. That all man's wealth is not able to preserve his life, much less to save his soul; and if wealth cannot save a man's life, why should men endanger their lives, nay, hazard their souls, to get or increase wealth? Learn, 2. That God takes away men's lives when they least suspect it; "This night," says God; "many years," says he: God will not have us think of rest in a place of disquiet, nor of certainty in a condition of inconstancy; we are dependent creatures, and our time is in God's hand; "This night shall thy soul be taken from thee." Learn, 3. That the souls of ungodly men are taken from them by force and compulsion; "Thy soul shall be required of thee." Good men have the same reluctances of nature which others have, yet they sweetly resign their souls into the hands of God in a dying hour; whereas a wicked man, though he sometimes dies by his own hand, yet he never dies with the consent of his own will; he chooses rather to eat dust (with the serpent) than to return to dust. Observe, 5. The expostulatory question, "Whose then shall these things be, which thou hast provided?" intimating, 1. That they should not be his; a man's wealth lasts no longer than his life, neither has he any longer the comfort of it; lay up gold, and it perishes with thee, but treasure up grace, and it shall accompany thee.

“Whose shall those things be?” Not thine, undoubtedly. 2. As these things shall not be thine, when thou art gone, so thou knowest not whose they shall be after thou art gone; whether they shall fall into the hands of a child or a stranger; of a wise man or a fool; the wealthiest man cannot be certain who shall be his heir, and whose his goods shall be. Observe lastly, The application which our Saviour makes of this parable to his disciples; “So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.” Learn hence, That such as are not rich in grace, rich in good works, shall find no benefit by, and take no comfort in all their worldly riches, in the time of their greatest need, at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Learn farther, How brutish and unworthy of a man it was, for this person to cheer up his soul with the hopes of worldly provisions, to bid his soul eat, drink, and be merry: alas! the soul can no more eat, drink, and be merry, with carnal things, than the body can with spiritual and immaterial things; it cannot feed upon bread that perisheth; but bring it to a reconciled God in Christ, to the covenant of grace, and sweet promises of the gospel; set before it the joys and comforts of the Spirit! and if it be a sanctified and renewed soul, it can make a rich feast upon these. Spiritual things are proper food for spiritual souls; deservedly then is this person branded with the name of fool, for saying, “Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.”

22 ¶ And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much are ye better than the fowls.

25 And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven: how much more *will he* clothe you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

There is a two-fold sense and interpretation given of these verses. 1. Some take them as spoken only to the apostles, directing them absolutely to cast off all care, for the things of this life, that so they might attend upon Christ's person, and wholly give up themselves to that work to which he had called them: and therefore St. Luke here takes notice, that after he had cautioned his hearers in general against covetousness, he applies himself particularly to his disciples, and tells them that he would have them so far from this sin of covetousness, that they should not use that ordinary care and common industry, about the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but necessary for men in all ordinary cases, ver. 22. “And he said unto his disciples, therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or drink.” But if we understand the words in this sense, we must look upon it only as a temporary command given to the apostles for that time only; like that in St. Matthew x. 9. “Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses, neither coat nor scrip;” which no man ever understood as a general law to all christians, but as a particular precept to the apostles at that time. 2. Others understand these injunctions of our Saviour to be consistent with a prudent and provident care for the things of this life, not forbidding a regular industry and diligence for the obtaining of them, but condemning only an anxious, vexatious, tormenting care, and an over-solicitous diligence for the things of this life; and taking our Saviour's words for a general and standing rule to all christians, they only forbid distrustful thoughtfulness, distracting cares, which drive a man's mind this way and that way (like meteors or clouds in the air, as the word signifies.) Now against this vexatious care and solicitous thoughtfulness, our Saviour propounds many weighty arguments or considerations; four especially. He tells us, such cares are needless, fruitless, heathenish, and brutish. 1. ‘Tis needless; “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things,” and will certainly provide for you; and what need you take care, and God too? Cast your care upon him. 2. ‘Tis fruitless; “Which of you by taking care can add one cubit to his stature?” We may sooner by our carping care add a furlong to our grief, than a cubit to our comfort. All our own care, without God's help, will neither feed us when we are hungry, nor nourish us when we are fed. 3. ‘Tis heathenish; “After all these things do the Gentiles seek,” Mat. vi. 32. The ends and the objects of a christian's thoughts ought to be higher and more sublime than that of heathens. Lastly, ‘Tis brutish, nay, worse than brutish. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the ravens of the valley, all are fed and sustained by God, without any care of their own, much more shall his children. Has God a breakfast ready for every little bird that comes chirping out of its nest, and for every beast of the

field that comes leaping out of his den! and will he not much more provide for you? Surely, that God that feeds the ravens when they cry, will not starve his children when they pray.

31 ¶ But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

As if Christ had said, "Let your first and chief care be to promote the kingdom of grace in this world, and to secure the kingdom of glory in the next, and then fear not the want of these outward comforts; they shall be added in measure, though not in excess; to satisfy, though not to satiate; for health though not for surfeit." Learn, 1. Christians ought not to be so solicitous about the necessities and conveniences of this life, as about the happiness of the next; "rather seek ye the kingdom of God." 2. That heaven, or the kingdom of God; must be sought in the first place: that is, with our principal care, and chief endeavours. 3. That heaven being once secured by us, all earthly things shall be super-added to us as God sees needful and convenient for us. But few men like our Saviour's method: they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and have heaven thrown in without their seeking; but this will not be granted; if we make religion and the salvation of our souls, our first and chief care, "all other things shall be added unto us," so far as the wisdom of God sees them fit and convenient for us.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

That is, fear not the want of any of these outward comforts, and be not over-solicitous for them; for your Father, which has provided a kingdom for you hereafter, will not suffer you to want such things as are needful for you here. Learn, 1. That the disciples of Christ are very subject to disquieting and perplexing fears, but must by no means cherish, but oppose them; a fear of present wants, a fear of future sufferings, a fear of death approaching, a fear that they shall not find acceptance with God, a fear lest they should fall fully or finally from God; the fear of all these evils doth oftentimes disturb them and discompose them. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of his church; the love and care, the compassion and tenderness, the prudence and providence, the guidance and vigilance, of a good shepherd; are found with him. 3. As Christ is the church's Shepherd, so the church is Christ's flock, though a little flock in opposition to the huge herds and droves of the men of the world. 4. That God the Father has a kingdom in store for his little flock, his church and children. 5. That the good will and gracious pleasure of God is the original spring, and formal cause, from whence all divine favors do proceed and flow; "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

(No. 19.)

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The next duty which our Saviour exhorts his disciples to, is the duty of almsgiving; that they should be so far from distrusting God's provision for themselves, that they should be always forward to a ready distribution towards others; yea, in cases of necessity, to be willing to sell their goods to relieve others; yet this precept is not to be taken as if it concerned all persons, at all times, and in all places, but respects only cases of extreme necessity; we should be found willing to part with any thing we have, for the relief of Christ in his members. Observe also, The argument used to excite to this duty of almsgiving; hereby we lay up our treasure in a safe hand, even in God's, who will reward us openly. The bellies of the poor are bags that wax not old; what is lodged there is laid up securely out of the reach of danger. We imitate the wise merchant in transmitting our estates into another world, by bills of exchange, where we are sure to receive our own with usury.

35 Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning.

26 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

The next duty Christ exhorts his disciples to, is that of watchfulness, with reference to his second coming. "Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning;" these words may be understood two ways; spoken either in a martial phrase, as to soldiers; or in a domestic, as to servants: if as to soldiers, then let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, is as much as that we should be always ready for a march, having our armor on, and our match lighted, ready to give fire at the first alarm of temptation. If the words are spoken as to servants, then our master bids us carefully expect his second coming, like a lord's returning from a wedding-supper (which used to be celebrated in the night) that they should not put off their clothes, nor put out their lights, but stand ready to open, though he comes at midnight.—When Christ comes, that soul only shall have his blessing whom he finds watching.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them,

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye, therefore, ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Here our Saviour makes use of several arguments to enforce the duty of watchfulness upon his disciples, the first is drawn from the transcendent reward Christ will bestow upon his watchful disciples. "He will gird himself, make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them;" a very high metaphorical expression; as if a master should be so transported with the diligence and faithfulness of his servant, as to vouchsafe not only to let him sit down to meat in his presence, but to take the napkin upon his arm, and wait upon himself at his table. Lord! how poor and inconsiderable is that service, which the best of us do for thee, and yet thou speakest of it, as if thou wert beholden to us for it. Thou dost not only administer to us a supper, but thou ministerest and waitest upon us at supper; "he will gird himself and serve them." The argument to excite us to watchfulness, is drawn from the benefit which we shall receive by watching in this life; that let the Lord come when he will, whether in the second or in the third watch, they shall be found ready, and in a blessed condition, who are found diligent in his service, and waiting for his appearance. Note here, 1. The Son of man will certainly come at one hour or other. 2. At what hour the Son of man will come, cannot certainly be known. 3. That there is no hour that we can promise ourselves that the Son of man will not come. 4. Very joyful will the coming of the Son of man be, if we be found upon our watch, and ready for his coming; "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

41 ¶ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them* their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him a ruler over all that he bath.

These words may be applied these two ways: First, to all the faithful servants of God in general: and then the note is

this, That for a christian to spend and end his days in the service of Christ, and doing his will, gives good assurance of a happy and blessed condition. *Blessed is that servant.* Secondly, These words may be applied to the ministers of the gospel in special; and then observe, 1. The character and duty of a gospel-minister, he is the steward of Christ's household, to give them their meat in due season. 2. A double qualification is requisite in such stewards; namely, prudence and faithfulness. Who then is that faithful and wise steward? 3. The reward insured to such stewards, with whom are found these qualifications; *blessed is that servant* Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of the gospel are in a spiritual sense stewards of Christ's household. 2. That faithfulness and prudence are the indispensable qualifications of Christ's stewards. 3. That where these qualifications are found, Christ will graciously and abundantly reward them. Our faithfulness must respect God, ourselves, and our flock; and includes integrity of heart, purity of intention, industry of endeavour, and impartiality in all our administrations. Our prudence must appear in the choice of suitable subjects, in the choice of fit language, in exciting our own affections in order to the moving of our people's. Ministerial prudence also must teach us, by the strictness and gravity of our deportment, to maintain our authority, and keep up our esteem in the consciences of our people; it will also assist us to bear reproach, and direct us to give reproof. He that is silent cannot be innocent; reprove we must, or we cannot be faithful; but prudently, or we cannot be successful.

45 But, and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming: and shall begin to beat the men-servants, and maidens; and to eat and drink, and to be drunken:

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers:

47 And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Our Lord in these verses describes a negligent and unfaithful steward of his household, and then declares that dreadful sentence of wrath which hangs over him. The unfaithful steward, or negligent minister of the gospel, is described, 1. By his infidelity, he believed not Christ's

coming to judgment, though he preaches it to others: "He sayeth in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming." 2. He is described by his hatred, envy, and malignity against his fellow-servants, that were more faithful than himself; "He begins to smite them," at least with the virulence of his tongue, if not with the violence of his hand. 3. He is farther described by his associating with the wicked, and strengthening their hands by his ill example, "He eateth and drinketh with the drunken;" that is, their associate and fellow companion. Thus the negligent steward and unfaithful minister is described: next his sentence is declared. 1. Christ will surprise him in his sin and security, "*by coming in an hour when he looketh not for him.*" 2. He will execute temporal vengeance upon him, "*he will cut him in pieces, as the Jews did their sacrifices, dividing them in two parts*" Hence some observe, That God seldom suffers slothful sensual ministers to live out half their days. 3. Christ will punish them with eternal destruction also, "*Appoint them their portion with unbelievers;*" teaching us, That such ministers as neglect the service of God, and the souls of their people, as they are ranked amongst the worst sort of sinners in this life, so shall they be punished with them in the severest manner in the next. When satan destroys the souls of men, he shall answer for it as a murderer only, not as an officer that was entrusted with the care of souls. But if the steward doth not provide, if the shepherd doth not feed, if the watchman doth not warn, they shall answer, not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office-neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully managed. Woe unto us, if at the great day we hear distressed souls roaring out their complaints, and howling out that doleful accusation against us, saying, "*Lord! our stewards have defrauded us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our guides have misled us,*" ver. 48.—"*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*" Here we learn, 1. That whatever we receive from God, is both a gift and a talent. 2. That every one has some gift or talent from God to be improved for God. 3. That God's gifts or talents are not given to all in the same measure. 4. That whether we receive little or much, all is in order to an account. 5. That answerable to our present talents will be our future accounts. The greater opportunities a man has of knowing his duty, and the greater abilities he has for doing good, if he do it not the greater will be his condemnation; because the neglect of his duty in this case, cannot be without a great deal of wilfulness and contempt, which is an heinous aggravation. If thy gifts be mean, the less thou hast to account for: if greater than others, God expects thou shouldest do more good than others, "*For where much is given, much will be required.*"

49 I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth; I tell you, Nay, but rather division,

52 For, from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three,

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.

Our Saviour in these verses declares what will be the accidental event and effect, but not the natural tendency of his religion; so that we must distinguish between the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. Christ's intentional aim, was to plant, propagate, and promote peace in the world; but through the lusts and corruptions of men's natures, the issue and event of his coming is war and division; not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel; but occasional and accidental only. Hence learn, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ, though it be not the genuine and natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion of all that war and tumult, of all that dissension and division, of all that distraction and confusion, which the world abounds with; "I am come to send fire on the earth." He is said to send the fire of dissension, because he foresaw this would be the certain consequence, though not the natural effect of the preaching of the gospel. There was another fire of Christ's sending, the Holy Spirit; this was a fire to warm to not burn; or if so, not men's persons, but corruptions; but that seems not to be intended in this place. Observe farther, the metaphor by which Christ sets forth his own sufferings. He styles them a baptism; "I have a baptism to be baptized with." There is a threefold baptism spoken of; a baptism with water, a baptism of the Spirit: both these Christ had been baptized with; but the third was the baptism of blood, he was soon to be drenched and washed in his own blood, in the garden, and on the cross; and was straitened or pained with desire, like the woman in travail, till his sufferings were accomplished.

54 ¶ And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud arise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Our Saviour in these words does at once upbraid the stupid ignorance of the Jews in general, and the obstinate infidelity of the pharisees in particular, in that they could make a judgment of the weather by the sight of the sky, by the appearance of the heavens, and the motion of the winds, but could not discern this time of the Messiah, though they had so many miraculous signs and evidences of it, and for this he upbraids them with hypocrisy; "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but you do not discern this time." Learn thence, That to pretend either more ignorance, or greater uncertainty in discerning the signs of the gospel times (the time of our gracious visitation) than the signs of the weather is great hypocrisy; "Ye hypocrites, can ye not discern this time?" Observe farther, That Christ does not here condemn the study of nature, or making observations of the state of the weather by the face of the sky: for Almighty God, by natural signs, gives us warning of a change in natural things, and in like manner by his providential dispensations, he gives us warning of a change in civil things. "He that is wise will observe both," and by their observation will come "to understand the pleasure of the Lord."

58 ¶ When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

In these words our Saviour advises persons to use the same prudence in divine matters, which they use in worldly affairs, and the same endeavours to seek reconciliation with God, which they put forth in order to their being reconciled unto men; for in such a case, when they see an action bringing against them, wherein they are sure to be cast, their best way is presently to seek to reconcile their adversary, and make their peace with him, that so they may escape the threatening danger: in like manner should they do here, lay hold of the present opportunity of mercy now offered to them; because it is a fearful thing to die without reconciliation with God. Note here; 1. That God and man were once friends. 2. That God and man are now adversaries. 3. That man, and not God, is averse to reconciliation and agreement. 4. That it is the wisdom, the duty, and interest of fallen man, speedily to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with God. 5. That an eternal prison will be their portion, who die in their enmity against God.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

There were two eminent sects among the Jews in our Saviour's time, namely, the Herodians and Galileans: The former stood stiffly for having paid tribute to the Roman emperor, whose subjects the Jews now were: but the Galileans (so called probably from Judas of Galilee, mentioned Acts v. 37.) opposed this tribute, and often raised rebellion against the Roman power: Pilate takes the opportunity, when these Galileans were come up at the passover, and sacrificing in the temple, to fall upon them with soldiers, and barbarously mingled their own blood with the blood of the sacrifices which they offered: neither the holiness of the place (the temple) nor the sacredness of the action (sacrificing) could divert Pilate from his barbarous impiety. Our Saviour understanding that some of his hearers then present concluded these persons to be the greatest sinners, because they were the greatest sufferers, he corrects their error in this matter, and assures them, that the same or like judgment did hang over all sinners, as well as these, if timely and sincere repentance prevented not. Learn hence, 1. That a violent and sudden death is no argument of God's disfavor. 2. That notwithstanding, persons are exceeding prone to pass rash censures and an uncharitable judgment upon such as die suddenly, especially if they die violently. 4. That none justly can conclude such persons to have been the greatest sinners, who have been in this world the most signal sufferers. 5. That the best use we can make of such instances and examples of God's severity, is to examine our own lives, and by a speedy repentance to prevent our own perdition, I tell you, nay, &c.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye, that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Another instance our Saviour gives of persons that fell by a sudden death; even eighteen that were slain by the fall of a tower in Jerusalem: he takes occasion from thence to caution the Jews, that they do not rigidly censure the sufferers, or conclude that those have wrought the most sin, who are brought to most shame. Oh! how ready are we to judge of men's eternal condition, by their present visitation; and to conclude them the greatest offenders, upon whom God inflicts the most visible punishments! Our Saviour forbids this and advises every one to look at home, telling the whole body of the Jews, that if they did not repent, they should all likewise perish, and that two ways: 1. *Certitudine Pœnæ*, by as certain a punishment as these did. 2. *Similitudine Pœnæ*, by the same kind of punishment;

shall perish by the ruin of your whole city, as they did by the downfall of that tower, if a timely and sincere repentance doth not intervene. Learn hence, that we must judge of persons by their conversation towards God, not by God's dispensation towards them, all things here fall alike to all. A sudden death, yea, a violent death, as it comes upon many men, so it may come upon the best of men, as well as others: Think not says Christ, that those eighteen were sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things; "I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish;" teaching us, that repentance is the only way and means to prevent punishment here, and perishing hereafter: "Except ye repent, ye shall perish."

6 ¶ He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

Our blessed Saviour, that he might excite the Jews to the practice of the last-mentioned duty of repentance, sets forth his long-suffering with them, and forbearance towards them, by the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard had long expected fruit from, but found none. Where note, 1. The great care that God takes to make poor sinners happy; he plants them in his church, as in a vineyard; that by the cultivating care of his ministers, and the fructifying influence of his Spirit, they may be fruitful in good works. Note, 2. That God keeps an exact account of reckoning, what means and advantages every place and people have enjoyed, "These three years" have I come seeking fruit, alluding to the three years of his own ministry among them. God keeps a memorial how many years the gospel has been amongst a people, how many ministers they have had, and how long with them; what pathetic exhortations, what pressing admonitions, what cutting reproofs, all are upon the file, and must be accounted for. Learn, 3. That God expects suitable and proportionable fruit from a people according to the time of their standing in his vineyard, and answering to the cost and culture, which his ministers have expended upon them, and the pains they have taken with them. Note farther, 4. That although God doth, and justly may expect fruit from such as are planted in his vineyard, to wit, the christian church, yet he expects it with much patience and forbearance, waiting from year to year, to see if time will work amendment; "These three years I have come seeking fruit, and found none." Lastly, If after all the cost that God has bestowed upon a people by his ministers and ordinances, they continue unfaithful, there is nothing to be expected but excision and final destruction; "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"

(No. 19.)

8 And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then*, after that, thou shalt cut it down.

Observe here, 1. The vine-dresser's petition and request: "Lord, let it alone this year also." This points out unto us, the office and duty of the ministers of God who are laborers in his vineyard, to be intercessors with God for sparing a barren and unfaithful people. Lord! spare them a little longer; "Let it alone this year also." If they cannot absolutely prevent judgment coming upon an unfruitful people, yet they endeavour to respite it, and delay its coming, all they can. Observe, 2. The condition upon which the vine-dresser's petition is grounded, "till I shall dig about it, and dung it;" phrases which intimate unto us the nature and quality of the ministerial work and service, signifying it to be a very difficult and laborious service. Digging is a painful work, and a spending work; and such is our ministerial work, if followed as it ought to be. We deal in mysteries, in the deep things of God, which are not received without much digging. Observe, 3. A double supposition here made by the vine-dresser: first, of future fruitfulness; "If it bear fruit, well?" secondly, of future incorrigibleness; "If not, after that thou shalt cut it down." 1. Here is a supposition of future fruitfulness; "If it bear fruit, well;" that is, it will be well for the master of the vineyard; herein is he glorified, when his fig-tree bears much fruit; well for the dresser of the vineyard; it rejoices the ministers of God to see their people bring forth fruit unto God: well for the vineyard and the rest of the trees that are in it: but more especially well for the tree itself, thereby avoiding the punishment of barrenness; and procuring the reward of fruitfulness; thus, "If it bear fruit, well" Here is a supposition of future incorrigibleness; "After that, thou shalt cut it down;" that is, after thou hast spared it, and I have pruned it; after thy patience and my pains; after thou hast forborn it and I have manured it, digged and dunged it; if after all this, it bear no fruit, then I have not a word more to say, "Thou shalt cut it down." Thou mayest cut it down, nobody will go about to hinder thee. From hence learn, That a people's continued unfruitfulness under the means of grace, doth in time take off the prayers and intercessions of the ministers of God for them, and provokes God to bring his judgments unavoidably and irrevocably upon them. "After that, thou shalt cut it down."

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

11 ¶ And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*:

12 And, when Jesus saw her, he called *her* to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid *his* hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you, on the sabbath, loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day?

17 And, when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Observe here, 1. The afflicted person; a woman which had a sore disease inflicted upon her by the devil for eighteen years, which almost bowed her together: there is nothing that the devil delights more in, than the miseries and calamities of mankind. Satan is not satisfied barely to infect the mind, and poison the souls of men; but he delights to hurt and afflict the body, where and when he can obtain leave. Observe, 2. Christ's compassion towards her, and his miraculous healing of her; "Jesus called her to him," and with a word speaking healed her. Where note, That the inveterateness of the disease, and the instantaneousness of the cure, made the miracle evident. She that had been bowed down eighteen years, in an instant is made straight, and only by the word of Christ's mouth; such a miraculous operation was an evident testimony of his divine mission, that he was the Son of God. Observe, 3. How the heart of the poor woman is affected with Christ's hand: she glorified God; that is, she gave thanks to God, and attributed the miracle to him. As the chief end of all God's extraordinary works, either of power or mercy, is the exaltation of his own glory: so the only way that we can set forth his glory, is by celebrating his praises, and expressing our thankfulness; "He that offereth me praise and thanks, glorifies me." Psal. 1. ult. Observe, 4. The unreasonable anger, and unjust indignation, which was found with the ruler of the synagogue, against our Holy Lord, for working this miraculous cure on the sabbath-day: there is no person so holy, no action so innocent, but may fall under unjust censure, especially where ignorance and malice are combined. What a severe reflection doth this man make upon our blessed Lord, for performing a work of mercy on the sabbath-

day! Observe, 5. Our Lord's vindication of himself from calumny and false accusation: 1. He charges his accuser with hypocrisy; "Thou hypocrite, doth not each of you loose his ox, or his ass, from the stall, on the sabbath-day, and water him?" It is one note of an hypocrite, to condemn that in another which he doth himself: the Jews held it lawful to loose and lead a beast to watering, on the sabbath-day, which was the work of servile labor, and yet would condemn Christ for healing a poor woman only with a word speaking. 2. Christ vindicates his own action by comparing it with theirs, which they judged lawful on the sabbath-day; Was their loosing and watering their beast, a work of necessity? much more was his. Was theirs a work of mercy? his much more; their compassion was to a brute beast, his to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman; but one of their own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham: nay, farther, Christ's act was an act of far greater necessity, and more special mercy than theirs. The beast might live a day without water: the beast might not be sick: but this woman was in sore distress, and had been so for eighteen years: nay, she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by satan. Was it not then a greater act of mercy and compassion to loose her, than to lead a beast? Observe, 6. What effect our Lord's vindication of himself had upon the hearers of it: "His adversaries were ashamed, and the people rejoiced," verse 17. His accusers were ashamed, and probably convinced, perhaps silenced: but we read not that they confessed their error, or acknowledged their unjust censure, or craved Christ's pardon. When persons' judgments are under conviction of an error or mistake, it is very hard to bring themselves to confess and own their mistake, because all men stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and look upon it as a reproach to own themselves mistaken; though it is really otherwise: but though our Saviour's adversaries were only ashamed, others rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 ¶ Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden, and it grew, and waxed a great tree: and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Our Saviour's design in both these parables, is to keep his disciples and followers from being offended at the small beginnings of his kingdom, and to foretel the future great success of the gospel, notwithstanding the present small appearance of the efficacy of it. To this purpose he compares the kingdom of God, that is, the gospel-church, "to a grain of mustard seed," which being one of the least

seeds, yet in that country grew into so large a tree, that the birds roost and lodge in the boughs of it. He also likens it to leaven, which quickly diffuses itself through the whole mass or lump, instantly turning a great heap of meal into its own nature. Christ shows hereby of what a spreading nature the doctrine of the gospel would be, notwithstanding all the malice and opposition of wicked men. Learn hence, That how small beginnings soever the gospel had in its first plantation, yet by the fructifying blessing of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit, it has had, and shall have a wonderful increase.

22 And he went through the cities and villages teaching, and journeying towards Jerusalem.

23 ¶ Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied pains and diligence of our holy Lord in preaching and publishing the glad tidings of the gospel to lost sinners; "He went through the cities and villages teaching;" not in great and populous cities only, but in poor and obscure villages also; not preaching by his exemplary life only, but by his holy doctrine likewise. -- Let such preachers, who look upon the work of preaching as the least part of their business, consider the indefatigable pains which our Lord took in that work: and how will his diligence shame our negligence? Observe, 2. A curious question put to our Saviour concerning the number of those that should be saved, whether they shall be few or many; "Lord, are they few that be saved?" Where note, How curiously inquisitive we naturally are after the knowledge of things that do not concern us, how forward to pry into unrevealed secrets, and to search into God's hidden counsel; it concerns us rather to understand what sort of persons shall be saved, than how many shall be saved, and to make sure that we be of that sort. Observe, 3. Our Saviour gives no direct answer to the curiosity of this inquirer, but turns his speech from him to the people: "Jesus said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate, &c." For the clearer understanding of which expression we must know, that Christ alludes to the feasts and marriage-suppers among the Jews; they that were invited did enter by a gate which was very straight and narrow, and as soon as the invited were once entered, the gate was shut and opened no more. Here Christ bids them strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven, before the gate is shut against them, and their entrance, by means of their coming too late, be made impossible to them: "Strive to enter, &c. for many will seek, &c." Where note, 1. The metaphor which Christ is pleased to set forth heaven and the happiness of a future state by; he compares it to a *strait gate*; to a *gate*, to denote the possibility of entering; to a *strait gate*, to denote the difficulty of entrance: a gate supposes the entrance possible, but a strait gate bespeaks the entrance difficult. 2. Here is a duty urged and enforced

upon all those that expect the happiness of another life, and that desire to enter in at this strait gate; and that is, a diligent and industrious striving; "Strive to enter in at the strait gate. 3. We have a forcible argument and motive to excite and quicken us to the practice of this duty, drawn from the paucity, or small number of those that shall obtain salvation in a dying hour; "Many will seek to enter in, but shall not be able." Learn thence, 1. That heaven or the happiness of a future state is attainable. 2. That it is not attainable without labor and difficulty. 3. That all those difficulties may be happily overcome by a diligent and industrious striving.

25 When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Our Saviour having exhorted all his followers in the foregoing verses to make sure of heaven and salvation to themselves, whilst the door of hope and salvation is open to them, by this parable the master of a family inviting guests to his table, and waiting for their coming, and at last shutting the door against them, because they either denied or delayed coming: Christ hereby represented to the Jews the great danger they were in, if they neglected the present season of grace and salvation, which now they did enjoy; telling them farther, how little it would profit them at the day of judgment, to alledge that they had eaten and drunk in his presence, and that they had heard him preach in their streets, if they did not forsake their sins, and obey his gospel. Adding farther, that it would be an heart-piercing sorrow, a soul-rending grief, to them at the great day, to see not only the patriarchs and prophets, and other Jews, but even the despised Gentiles from all quarters and nations,

whom they thought accursed, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, and themselves eternally shut out; "For the first shall be last, and the last first;" that is, the Gentiles who were afar off shall receive the gospel, when you for rejecting it shall be cast off. From the whole, note, 1. That there is a determinate time when souls must (if ever) accept of the offers of grace and salvation, which are made unto them; now is the door open, and persons invited in. 2. That ere long Jesus Christ, who now stands at every one of our doors waiting for our compliance with his gospel terms, will wait no longer upon us, nor strive any farther by the motions of his Spirit with us, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door." 3. That doleful is the condition of such miserable souls against whom the door is shut: the door of repentance, the door of hope, the door of salvation; all shut, eternally shut; and that by him, who shutteth, and none can open. 4. That all would be saved at last; all will cry for mercy; when it is too late, even such as now sinfully undervalue, and scornfully despise it; "ye shall stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us." Note, 5. That it is no good plea for admittance into heaven, because we have been church-members here on earth; no outward privileges, though Christ has taught in our streets; no external acts of communion, though we have eaten and drank in his presence, and at his holy table, will justify our hopes of entering into heaven, when wedie, if we be workers of iniquity whilst we live; "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence; but he shall say, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." Note, 6. That as hell will be a second heaven to the glorified, so heaven will be a second hell to the damned. Hell will be a second heaven to the glorified, that is, it will add exceedingly to the happiness of the saints in heaven, to see and be sensible of that misery which they escaped, and the damned endure; and on the other hand, heaven will be a second hell to the damned; that is, it will increase their torments, and add to the vexation of the spirits, to see some in heaven whom they little expected to see there; some that never saw, nor heard, nor enjoyed, what they have done; strangers, yea heathens taken in, when the children of the kingdom, that is, the members of the visible church, are shut out: "They shall come from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness."

31 The same day there came certain of the pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

33 Nevertheless, I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following:

for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

It may seem strange, that the pharisees, who had no kindness for our Saviour, should come here and acquaint him with a danger that he was in from Herod: "Get thee hence, for Herod will kill thee." It is probable they had a design to drive him out of the country, because his reputation was so great amongst the people, who were admirers of his person, hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles. But what intention soever they had in acquainting Christ with his danger, it is very evident, that our Saviour slighted it, by the message which he sent to Herod: go and tell that fox: where we must not suppose, that our Lord did fix this name of fox upon Herod as an opprobrious title, thereby reflecting the least dishonor upon him as a king; but it was as a prophet, to let him know, that being about his Father's work, he feared neither his power nor his policy; neither his cruelty nor his craft; and that nothing should take him off from finishing the work of man's redemption. Learn hence, That when God calls forth any of his servants to any special service for him, all the combined power and policy of the prince of darkness, and his instruments, shall never be able to hinder them, till they have finished their course, and done the service which God designed: "I must work to-day and to-morrow, and the day following;" as if Christ had said, "Let Herod know that my time is not in his hand; and as to this matter, I am not under his command or power, ere long my work will be finished, and then I shall be perfected." Observe here, That to impose this ignominious but suitable name of Herod, is not contrary to the command, not to speak evil of the ruler of the people; it being the office of a prophet, not to spare kings when they repore their offences. Accordingly Christ here uses his prophetic call and power, in giving this tyrant a name so suitable to his actions, Go and tell that fox from me, a prophet sent of God, and therefore authorised so to style him; that I am hastening to Jerusalem to lay down my life there, not fearing to be killed by him in the way; for it cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem: where the sanhedrim sit, who are to pass judgment upon me.—*Dr. Whitby.*

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord concludes this chapter with a compassionate lamentation over Jerusalem, the place where he was to

suffer. His ingemination, or doubling of the word, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, shows the vehemency of his affection towards them, and the sincerity of his desires for their salvation. Observe, 1. The kindness and compassion of Christ to the Jews in general, and Jerusalem in particular, set forth by a lively metaphor and similitude, namely, that of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings; as the hen doth tenderly cherish, and carefully hide and cover her young from the eye of her destroyer, so would Christ have shrouded and sheltered this people from all those birds of prey, and particularly from the Roman eagle, by whose talons they were at last destroyed. Again, as the hen continueth her call to her young ones from morning till night, and holds out her wings for shelter to them all the day long, so did Christ wait for his people's repentance and conversion; for it was more than forty years after they had killed his prophets, and murdered himself, before they met with a final overthrow.— Observe, 2. The amazing obstinacy and wilfulness of this people, in rejecting the grace and favor, the kindness and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ; *I would have gathered you, but ye would not*. Observe, 3. The fatal issue of this obstinacy. *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*; is left, that is, certainly and suddenly will be left desolate (the present tense being put for the *paulo post futurum*) which denotes both the certainty and proximity of this people's ruin. Learn, 1. That the ruin and destruction of sinners is wholly chargeable upon themselves, that is, on their own wilfulness and impenitency, on their own obstinacy and obduracy; *I would have gathered you*, says Christ, *but ye would not*. Learn, 2. How deplorably and inexcusably will they perish, who perish by their own wilfulness and obduracy under the gospel. 3. That there is no desire like unto God's desire of a people's repentance, no longing like unto God's longing for a people's salvation. "O Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee? When shall it once be?" Jer. xiii. 27.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him, which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus, answering, spake unto the lawyers and pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go:

5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen

(No. 19.)

into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

Several particulars are here worthy of our observation and imitation. Note, 1. The freedom of our Lord's conversation with men: he delighted in human society, and was of a social temper; we do not find, that whenever he was invited to a dinner that he disdained to go, not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Note, 2. The house he goes into, and is entertained in, one of the chief pharisees, who were some of his chiefest enemies; a great instance of our Lord's humanity, humility, and self-denial, in that he refuses not the conversation of those whom he knew did not affect him; teaching us to love our enemies, and not to shun conversing with them, that thereby we may gain an opportunity of being reconciled unto them. Note, 3. The day when our Saviour dined publicly at the pharisee's house, among the lawyers and pharisees, it was on the sabbath-day. Learn thence, That it is not simply unlawful for us to entertain our friends and neighbours with a plentiful meal on the Lord's day; it must be acknowledged, that feasting upon any day is one of those lawful things which is with difficulty managed without sin, but more especially upon that day, that it does not unfit us for the duties of the sabbath: however, our Lord's example in going to a public dinner amongst lawyers and pharisees, evidently shows the lawfulness of feasting on that day, provided we use the same moderation in eating and drinking that he did, and improve the opportunity as a reason for doing good, as he has taught us by his example. Note, 4. How contrary to the laws of behaviour, the decency of conversation, and the rules of hospitality, the pharisees watched him, making their table a snare to catch him, hoping they might hear something from him, or see something in him, for which they might accuse him; "He entered into the house of the pharisee to eat bread, and they watched him." Note, 5. Our Saviour chose the sabbath-day as the fittest season to work his miraculous cures in; in the pharisee's house he heals a man that had the dropsy, on the sabbath-day. Christ would not forbear doing good, nor omit any opportunity of helping and healing the distressed, though he knew his enemies, the pharisees, would carp and cavil at it, calumniate and reproach him for it; it being the constant guise of hypocrites, to prefer ceremonial and ritual observations, before necessary and moral duties. Note, 6. How our Saviour defends the lawfulness of his act in healing the dejected man, from their own act in helping a beast out of the pit on the sabbath-day: as if Christ had said, "Is it lawful for you on the sabbath-day to help a beast? and is it sinful to me to heal a man?" Note lastly, How the reason and force of our Saviour's argument silenced the pharisees; convinced them, no doubt, but we read nothing of their conversation; the obstinate and malicious are much harder to be wrought upon, than the ignorant and the scandalous; it is easier to silence such men than to satisfy them; to stop their mouths than to remove their prejudices: for obstinacy will hold the conclusion, though reason cannot maintain the premises; *They could not answer him again to those things.*

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 And he that bade thee and him, come and say *to* thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

It was observed before, that our blessed Saviour dined publicly on the sabbath-day with several pharisees and lawyers; that which is here worthy our notice is this; how holy and suitable our Lord's discourse was to the solemnity of that day: may be the matter of our imitation. It is not unlawful for friends to dine together on the Lord's day, provided their discourse be suitable to the day, such as our Lord's here; for observing how the company then at the table did affect precedence, and taking place one of another: he that before their eyes had cured a man of a bodily dropsy, attempts to cure the persons that dined with him of the tympany of pride. Where note, That it is not the taking, but the affecting of the highest place and uppermost rooms that our Saviour condemns. There may and ought to be a precedence amongst persons; it is according to the will of God. *That honor be given to whom honor is due*; and that the most honorable persons should sit in the most honorable places; for grace gives a man no exterior preference; it makes a man glorious indeed, but it is glorious within. Note farther, The way and course, the method and means, which our Saviour directs persons to, in order to their attaining real honor, both from God and men, *namely*, by being little in our own eyes, and in lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than ourselves; as God will abase, and men will despise, the proud and haughty, so God will exalt, and men will honor, the humble person; "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

12 ¶ Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy bre-

thren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind;

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Observe here, That this is not an absolute denial of calling brethren and kinsfolk and rich neighbours; but Christ forbids the inviting them alone, and requires that the poor be refreshed at or from our table: for when the rich feast one another, and let the poor fast and pine, this is very sinful. Accordingly our Saviour observing how the pharisee that bade him to dinner invited only the rich, overlooking and neglecting the poor, he exhorts him and the company, that whenever they make entertainments for the time to come, they should not only invite their rich neighbours and friends, who can and will invite them again, but remember the poor. Here note, 1. That civil courtesies, and hospitable entertainments, of kindred and friends, for maintaining and preserving love and concord, is not only lawful, but an expedient and necessary duty; *Use hospitality one to another*, says St. Peter, *without grudging*. 2. That though it be not unlawful to invite and feast the rich, yet it is most acceptable to God, when we feed and refresh the poor; *When thou makest a feast, call rather the poor, and thou shalt be blessed*. We must prefer the duties of christian charity before the acts of common civility: blessed are those peace-makers, who make the bowels of the hungry to bless them. 3. That God oft-times rewards our liberality to the poor very signally in this life; but if it be deferred, we shall not fail to receive it at the resurrection of the just; "The poor cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

15 ¶ And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servants at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five

yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

One of them that sat at meat with our Saviour in the pharisee's house, hearing Christ speak of being recompensed at the resurrection of the just, repeated that known saying among the rabbins, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God;" that is, who shall be partaker of the joys of heaven. Hereupon Christ utters the parable of the marriage-supper, recorded here by St. Luke, with small variation from what was delivered by St. Matthew, chap. xii. The first intention of our Saviour in that parable seems to be this, to set forth that gracious offer of mercy and salvation which was made by the preaching of the gospel unto the Jews, and to declare God's purpose of receiving the Gentiles into the fold of Christ, upon the Jews despising and rejecting that inestimable favor. But besides this, it has an aspect upon us christians, who have embraced the doctrine of the gospel. Here note, 1. That the gospel, for its freeness and fulness, for its varieties and delicacies, is like a marriage-supper; for 1. It does create the same relation between Christ and believers, that marriage doth between husband and wife. 2. It intitles to the same privileges that a conjugal relation doth; to the same endearing love and tenderness, to the same care and protection, to the same honor, and to the same happiness. 3. It obliges to the like duties, namely, unspotted love and fidelity, cheerful obedience to his commands, reverence to his person, submission to his authority. 4. It produceth the same effects; as the effect of marriage is increase of children, so the fruit of the gospel is "bringing many sons to God." Note, 2. That gospel invitations are mightily disesteemed: they made light of the invitation, and offered frivolous excuses for their refusal of it. Note, 3. That the preference which the world has in men's esteem, is a great cause of the gospel

contempt; One had purchased a piece of ground, another had bought five yoke of oxen. Note, 4. The deplorable sadness of their condition who refuse, upon any pretence whatever to comply with the gospel-tender of reconciliation and mercy; The king was wroth, pronounced them unworthy of his favor, and resolved they should not taste of his supper; but sends forth his servants to invite others, to his supper. Note, 5. The notion under which the Gentiles are set forth unto us, such as were in lanes, streets, and highways: that is, a rude, rustic, and barbarous people, whom the Jews despised, yea, whom they held accursed; yet even these are called and accepted, whilst the Jews, the first intended guests, are excluded by means of their own contempt.

Note lastly, The means used to bring in the Gentiles to the gospel-supper; Go and compel them to come in; not by violence, but persuasion; by argumentation, not compulsion; the plain and persuasive, the powerful and efficacious preaching of the word, with the motions and influences of the Holy Spirit, are the compulsions here intended; not external force, nor temporal punishments, not outward violence, *Non religionis est cogere religionem*, says Tertullian; "No man ought by force and violence to be compelled to the profession of the true faith." Observe then, How vainly these words are brought to prove, that men may be compelled by the secular arm to embrace the christian faith. This appears, 1. From the nature of a banquet, to which none are compelled by force, but by persuasion only. 2. From the scope of the parable, which respects the calling of the Gentiles, who believed by the great power of God.

25 ¶ And there went great multitudes with him; and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Our Saviour by these expressions doth not condemn natural love and affection, either to our relations or our lives, but only regulates and directs it, showing, That our first and chief love must be bestowed upon himself; we may have, and ought to cherish, tender and relenting affections towards our near and dear relations; but then the consideration of Christ's truth and religion must take place of these; yea, of life itself; and when they stand in competition with these, we are to regard them no more than if they were objects of our hatred. Learn hence, 1. That no man can be a sincere disciple of Christ, who gives any relation or outward enjoyment, a preference to Christ in his heart and affections. Christ must be loved above all, or we love him not at all: less love he accounts and calls "hatred." That which we can leave for Christ, we hate in comparison of that love which we bear to Christ. It is both impious and impossible to hate father and mother, and ourselves, absolutely; it must then be under

stood comparatively only: what we love less, we are comparatively said to hate. Learn, 2. That all the disciples of Christ must be ready and willing, whenever called to it, to quit all their temporal interests and enjoyments, even life itself, and submit to any temporal inconveniences, even death itself, and all this willingly and cheerfully, rather than disown their relation to Christ, and quit the profession of his holy religion: upon easier terms than these, can none of us be the disciples of Jesus.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Our blessed Saviour, by these two parables, advises all his followers to sit down and consider, to weigh well, and cast up beforehand, what it is like to cost them to go through with their profession of religion; this, he tells us, common prudence will direct men to do in other cases; particularly when they either go to build or fight. As a man that intends to build, will consult whether he is able to defray the charges, and a king that goeth forth to war, will consider what strength he has to make opposition; in like manner should persons engage in religion; not rashly, but advisedly, with consideration and judgment: it is good to remember the issues of action before we act; before we engage in the spiritual combat, to consider the difficulty of the battle; what proud leviathans we have to conflict with, what mighty giants to contend and strive against, even the world, the flesh and the devil. But then we must take great care that our deliberation and consideration of difficulties and dangers, may not deter us from, but work in us a steady resolution for the combat, looking up to Christ for his auxiliary aid and strength to render us victorious, who, though of ourselves we can do nothing, yet "may do all things through Christ that strengthens us." Learn from hence, That such as take up a profession of christianity, without considering the dangers and difficulties, the trials and troubles, the afflictions and

temptations, which may accompany, will never hold out in the spiritual warfare, but either fail in it, or run from it.

34 ¶ Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghil; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Our Saviour here compares his disciples to salt, thereby denoting their usefulness, salt being one of the most useful things in nature: and pointing also out their duty, which is to season themselves and others with sound doctrine. But hypocritical professors are like unsavory salt, they are neither savory in themselves nor serviceable to others. Our Saviour compares such christians, who have no savor of piety and goodness upon their spirits, to salt, that having lost its goodness, is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghil; that is, being of a brackish nature, it is wholly unfit to manure the ground, and will rather occasion barrenness than any fruitfulness or increase. Learn hence, That sincere and serious christians are and will be as the salt of the earth; that is, good and savory in themselves, and endeavouring by exhortation and good example to season others; but hypocritical professors and apostatizing christians will be cast out, and trampled upon as unsavory salt.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter consists of three parables: the design and scope of them all is this: to represent the great tenderness and compassion of God Almighty towards the vilest and worst of sinners upon their sincere repentance, and how highly pleasing it is to God when they do so. This is expressed by three parables; 1. Of a man seeking diligently a sheep that he had lost, and having found it, rejoiceth greatly, and inviteth his neighbours to partake of his joy. 2. Of a woman having lost a piece of silver, and seeking carefully till she had found it, and then in like manner rejoicing with her friends for her good success. 3. Of a prodigal son, who having spent his time, and consumed his estate in riot and excess, at length returns to his father's house, and is joyfully received.

THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2 And the pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

The publicans and sinners, as they had done several times before, came to hear our Saviour's instructions; he treated them very kindly and conversed familiarly with them: at this the pharisees were displeased and murmured,

censuring our Saviour for too much familiarity with those men, whom they looked upon as scandalous to converse with; not considering that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion; and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his patients; and that he might give all possible encouragement to the repentance of the greatest sinners, he sets forth, at once, the tender care of God in recovering such lost sinners, and the inexpressible joy that is found in heaven at the welcome news of their recovery: for thus it follows in the parables.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing,

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

In this parable, Christ compares sinners to sheep going astray, and God the Father to a tender and careful shepherd, seeking his stray sheep; wherein he secretly taxes the pharisees for their uncharitableness in censuring him for conversing with publicans and sinners, and for their envy at the recovery of such sinners by repentance; assuring them, that they are far from the temper of the holy angels, who rejoice more at the news of one notorious sinner's conversion, than for many righteous persons who went not astray; like as a father is touched with a more sensible joy, for the recovery of one son who was dangerously sick, than for the health of all the rest who were in no such danger. From the whole, note, 1. That the creature's aberration may serve for our instruction: the sheep's straying away from us, should put us in mind of our wandering away from God. 2. That Christ, the great shepherd of his church, with vigilance and care seeketh up, and findeth out his lost sheep, and will never give over his search till he hath found them. 3. That the recovery of one lost sinner, by repentance, is matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing to Christ, the great shepherd, and to all the blessed company of heaven; "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," or changeth the whole course of his life, "more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no such repentance." The opening of a sinner's heart to Christ, makes joy in heaven, and occasions triumph in the city of our God above; as when a young

(No. 20.)

prince is born, all the kingdom rejoiceth, and the conduits run wine; so when a soul is born to Christ under the gospel, O what a mighty satisfaction is it to the heart of Christ, and to all the angels and saints, that another soul is espoused to him. "O sinner, Christ never rejoiced over thee before: thou hast grieved him and wounded him a thousand times, but he never rejoiced in thee till now." And if there be such joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, Lord, what rejoicing must there be at the glorification of saints!

8 Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*.

9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The scope of this parable is the same with the former. 1. To express the joy that is found with God and his holy angels at the recovery and conversion of a notorious sinner. 2. To justify Christ in conversing with such sinners, in order to their repentance and conversion, from the malicious reflections of the pharisees made upon our Saviour for so doing. The sense of the words seems to be this, "If you do all justify the diligence and care of a woman, using all possible means to recover the loss of a piece of silver that has Cæsar's image upon it, why (might our Saviour say) will you pharisees censure and condemn me for seeking to recover and save lost sinners, that have the image of an holy God stamped upon them?" Learn hence, 1. That the conversion of a sinner from a course and state of sin and wickedness, is highly acceptable and pleasing unto God. 2. That it is reasonable to suppose, that the holy angels in heaven do conceive a new joy at the notice and news of a sinner's repentance and conversion unto God: how the angels come by this knowledge, whether by virtue of their ministry here below, or whether God is pleased to reveal it to them above, as a thing extremely welcome and delightful to good spirits, 'tis neither material to inquire, nor possible to determine. But their happiness not being intensely infinite, it is certain they may be happier than they are. Note, 3. That God is not only willing to receive and embrace repenting and returning sinners, but the news of their repentance is entertained with so much joy in heaven, that if it be possible for the blessed inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happiness, this will be a new accession to it; for though the happiness of God himself be intensively infinite, and have nothing added to it; yet the happiness of angels and glorified spirits being but finite, is capable of addition: and as their knowledge and love do increase, so their felicity may be growing and improving to all eternity: so that it is reasonable enough to suppose, that there is really joy among the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, over every sinner that repenteth.

11 ¶ And he said, a certain man had two sons;

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them *his* living.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and be merry.

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found, And they began to be merry.

In the two former parables, of the lost sheep and lost groat, was represented to us, the great pains and care which Christ takes for the recovery of lost sinners. In this third parable of the prodigal son, is shadowed forth unto us, with what great readiness, joy and gladness, our heavenly Father receives repenting and returning sinners. In the face of this prodigal, as in a glass, we may behold, first, A riotous sinner's aversion from God. Secondly, A penitent sinner's conversion to God. Thirdly, A pardoned sinner's acceptance and entertainment with God. From the whole, learn, 1. What is the nature of sin, and the practice of sinners? Sin is a departing from God, and every sinner doth voluntarily and of his own accord depart from him, "he took his journey into a far country." Learn, 2. The great extravagance which sinners run into when they forsake God, and give up themselves to the conduct of their lusts and vile affections; he wasted all his substance "with riotous living;" that is, spent his time, and consumed his treasure, in riot and excess. Observe, 3. That sin will certainly bring men into straits, but straits do not always bring men off from sin; "he began to be in want," yet thinks not of returning to his father's house. 4. That sinners will try all ways, and go through the greatest hardships and difficulties before they will leave their sins, and return home to their heavenly Father: "he joined himself to a citizen of that country, and went into the fields to feed swine;" he chooses rather to feed at the hog's trough, than to feast in his father's house. Observe, 5. At last the happy fruits of a sanctified affliction; they put the prodigal upon serious consideration; "he came to himself;" upon wise consultation, "I perish with hunger;" and upon a fixed resolution; "I will arise and go to my Father." Serious consideration, and solid resolutions, are great steps to a sound conversion and thorough reformation. Observe, 6. The affectionate tenderness and compassion of the father towards the returning prodigal; though he had deserved to be sharply reprov'd, severely corrected, and finally rejected and shut out of doors; yet the father's compassion is above his anger; not a word of his miscarriages drops from his father's mouth, but as soon as ever the son looks back, mercy looks out, and the father expresses, 1. His speedy readiness to receive his son, "he ran unto him;" the son did only arise and go, but the father made haste and ran; mercy has not only a quick eye to spy out a penitent, but a swift foot, it runs to embrace a penitent. 2. Wonderful tenderness, "he fell upon his neck;" it had been much to have looked upon him with the eye, more to have taken him by the hand, but most of all to fall upon his neck. Divine mercy will not only meet a penitent, but embrace him also. 3. Strong affectionateness, "he kissed him;" giving him thereby a pledge and assurance of perfect friendship and reconciliation with him. Learn hence, That God is not only ready to give demonstrations of his mercy to penitent sinners, but also to give the seals and tokens of his special reconciled favor to them; they shall now have the kisses of his lips, who formerly deserved the blows of his hand; "The father ran unto him, fell on his neck, and kissed him: Observe lastly, The great joy that appeared in the whole house, as well as in the father's heart upon this great occasion, the prodigal's son returning, "they all began to be merry," there was music and dancing. Learn hence, That sincere conver-

sion brings the soul into a joyful, into a very joyful state and condition. The joy that conversion brings is an holy and spiritual joy, a solid and substantial joy, a wonderful and transcendent joy, an increasing and never fading joy. Our joy on earth is an earnest of the joys of heaven, where there will be rejoicing in the presence of our heavenly Father and his holy angels to all eternity; "because we were dead, but are now alive again; we were lost, but are found."

25 Now, his elder son was in the field; and, as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29 And he, answering, said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is alive again: and was lost, and is found.

By the murmuring of the eldest son at the prodigal's returning to, and reception with, his father, some think the Jews in general are to be understood, whose peevishness to the Gentiles, and the repinings at the offer of salvation made unto them by the gospel, is very evident from many places of scripture; others understand it of the scribes and pharisees in particular, who presuming on their own righteousness, as if they had never transgressed God's commandments at any time, murmured at our Saviour for conversing with sinners, though it were in order to the bringing of them to repentance; which, instead of being frowardly discontented at, they ought to have rejoiced at. Learn hence, There is such an envious spirit in men, yea, even in the best of men, as inclineth them to repine at such dispensations in divine grace and favor as others receive, and they want. 3. That to indulge such a spirit and temper in ourselves, argues

great sin, and great folly; great sin, in being dissatisfied with God's dispensations, and affronting his wisdom and justice, and great folly, in making another's good our grief; as if we had less because another has more; "The eldest son was angry and would not go in;" it follows, "therefore came the father out and intreated him." This shows the meekness of God in dealing with us under our frowardness; and the high satisfaction he takes in a sinner's conversion and returning to his duty. Lastly, This points out unto us our duty to imitate God, and be followers of him as dear children. Doth he rejoice at a sinner's return to his duty? so should we.—'Tis the devil's temper to regret and envy the good and happiness of others; he gnashes his teeth, when the prey he thought himself sure of, is snatched out of his jaws. But to God and all his holy angels, nothing is so agreeable as the repentance and conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways, and the saving of a soul from death; this is looked upon as a resurrection from the dead; and a ground of the greatest joy and rejoicing; "it was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Whence note, That regeneration is the term from which all true pleasure commences. We never live a merry day till we begin to live unto God: when the prodigal son returned to his father, then, and not till then, they began to be merry.

CHAPTER XVI.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship! I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they must receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

Our Lord begins this chapter with the parable of a rich man's steward, who being called upon by his master to give up his accounts, in order to his being discharged from his office, cast about with himself what course he had best take to provide for his subsistence, when he should be turned out of his employment; at last he resolves upon this course: that he will go to his lord's debtors, and take a favorable account of them, writing down fifty for an hundred, that by this means he might oblige them to be kind to him in his necessity; this is the sum of the parable. Now the scope and design of it is this: to exhort all men that are entrusted by God here, with estates, honors, and authority, to make use of all these unto spiritual ends, the glory of God, and the benefit of others; for we are not proprietors and owners, but stewards only, of the manifold gifts of God, and must be accountable unto him for all at last; but in the mean time, to use, employ, and improve, our Lord's goods to the best advantage for ourselves, whilst we are entrusted with them; this is the scope of the parable; now the observations from it are these: 1. That all persons, even the highest and greatest of persons, are but stewards of the good things of God. 2. That our stewardship must and shall have an end; we shall not be always, nay, we shall not be long stewards. 3. That when we are put out of our stewardship, we must give an account of our carriage therein; and the greater our trust was, the heavier will our reckoning be. 4. That therefore it will be our highest prudence, whilst we are entrusted with our master's goods, so to use and improve them, as may make most for our comfort and advantage, when we give up our account.

8 And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Wisely, that is, discreetly, according to the wisdom of the men of this world, whose concern is only for the good things of this life. Christ commands him, not absolutely as a fit example to be followed in wasting his master's goods, but comparatively, as being worthy to be so far imitated by the children of light, as to take the same care to secure heaven as others do to get the world. Christ commends him no farther than we do a person, when we say such a one is a shrewd man for the world. In a word the steward is here commended, not for his dishonesty, but for his policy, shrewdness, and sagacity, having done cunningly for himself, though knavishly for his master, from whence our Saviour draws this conclusion, "That the children of this world, are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Hence note, That the generality of men are not so wise and provident for the soul, and the concerns of another world, as worldly men are for the interests and concerns of this life. It is seldom seen, that good men are so wise for the concerns of their souls, as worldly men are for their worldly interests.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness:

that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Here our Saviour makes application of the foregoing parable to his disciples. Where note, 1. The title given by our Saviour to wealth and riches; he calls it *mammon*, and *mammon of unrighteousness*: *mammon* was the name given by the heathens to the god of riches; the *mammon of unrighteousness* is riches unrighteously gotten. 2. The advice given by our Saviour, to the men of wealth, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness:" that is, make God your friend by a charitable distribution, that he may bless you; make the poor your friends, that they may unitedly engage their prayers for you; make your own consciences your friends, that they may not reproach and shame you, sting and torment you. Observe, 3. The argument used to excite the rich to this improvement of their wealth, "That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;" *When ye fail*, that is, when ye die, and your riches fail you, and can stand you in no farther stead. *They may receive you*; what they? Some understand it of the Holy Trinity, others of the blessed angels, whose office it is to convey the charitable and good man's soul to heaven, its eternal habitation. Some understand it of riches themselves, *They may receive you*; that is, your estates, laid out for God in works of piety and charity, may enter before you into heaven, and open the gates of eternal life for you, not in a way of merit, but in a way of means. Lastly, *They may receive you*: some understand it of the poor themselves, whose bowels our charity hath refreshed, that they will welcome us to heaven, and receive us with joyful acclamations into the eternal mansions, which are prepared for the merciful. Others say, the words, *They may receive you*, are personally put, for, That you may be received into heaven when you die. This is to imitate the wise merchant in sending over our money into another country by bills of exchange.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Our blessed Saviour having declared to his followers, in the foregoing verses, the great advantage they shall reap by the charitable distribution of temporal good things, he acquaints them in these verses with a great detriment and disadvantage that will redound to them if they do otherwise. 1. If they be not faithful in right employing temporal riches, they must not expect that God will entrust them with spiritual and heavenly, which are the

true riches: God will deal with his servants, as we deal with ours, never trust them with much, whom we find unfaithful in a little. 2. If they be not faithful in the improvement of these outward things, which God entrusts them with but for a time, and must shortly leave them to others; how can they expect that God should give them those spiritual good things, which shall never be taken away from them to whom they are given? Where note, 1. That the riches we have are called not our own, but another man's. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's;" because God hath not made us proprietors, but dispensers; not owners, but stewards of these things; we have them for others, and must leave them to others; we are only trustees for the poor; if much be put into our hands, it is to dispense to others according to our Master's orders; let us be faithful then in that which is another man's; that is, with what God puts into our hand for the benefit of others. Note, 2. That though our gifts are not our own, yet grace or spiritual goods are our own; others may have all the benefit of our gifts, but we shall have the benefit and comfort of our own grace: this treasure we cannot leave to others, and it shall never be taken away from ourselves. Note, 3. That God is just, and will be eternally justified in denying his special grace to those, who do not make use of his common gifts: would men be faithful in improving a little, God would entrust them with more; did they not abuse the trust of his common gifts, he would not deny them the treasure of his saving grace, called here, "The true riches."

13 ¶ No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Observe here, A twofold master spoken of, God and the world: God is our Master by creation, preservation, and redemption; he has appointed us our work, and secured us our wages: the world is become our master by intrusion, usurpation, and a general estimation; too many esteeming it as their chief good, and delighting in it as their chief joy. Observe, 2. That no man can serve these two masters, who are of contrary interests, and issue out contrary commands; when two masters are subordinate, and in their commands subservient to each other, the difficulty of serving both is not great; but where commands interfere, and interests clash, it is impossible: no man can serve God and the world, but he may serve God with the world; we may be served of riches, and yet serve God; but we cannot serve riches, but we must disserve God; we cannot serve God and the world both, and seek them as our chief good, and ultimate end, because no man can divide his heart betwixt God and the world. Learn hence, That to love the world as our chief good, to seek it as our highest interest, and to serve it as our chief commander, cannot stand with the love and service which we bear and owe to God our Maker. The world's servants, while such, can be none of God's freemen.

(No. 20.)

14 And the pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided him.

The pharisees were notoriously addicted to the sin of covetousness, accounting no man happy but them that were rich; and because the promises made to the Jews were generally (though not only) of temporal blessings, they looked upon poverty as a curse, and esteemed the poor accursed, John vii. 49. The pharisees hearing their covetousness reproved, and the doctrine of charity and alms preached and enforced by our Saviour, they derided him in the shamefullest manner, with the highest degree of contempt and scorn, wringing the nose, and making mouths at him, as the original words seem to import. Learn hence, 1. That sinners grow very angry and impatient under the ministry of the word, when they hear their darling sin, their beloved lust, struck at and sharply reproved. 2. That covetous men, who make wealth their idols, when they hear the doctrine of an holy contempt of the world preached, and the great duty of almsgiving urged and enforced, they make it the matter of their contempt and derision; "The pharisees heard and derided him."

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.

Here our Saviour sharply reproves the pharisees for their horrible pride, their self-justification, and vain affectation of the opinion and esteem of others; as if Christ had said, "You bear up yourselves, and take a pride in this, that men know no ill by you, that no man can say, black is your eye; but God can see, that black is your heart. You think, that because you glory in your own excellencies, that God glories in you too; but who is highly esteemed by you, is abominated by God." Learn, That no man ought to think himself approved of God, barely, because he is approved by himself; for all who justify themselves upon the goodness of their works are not good.

16 The law and the prophets *were* until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband, committeth adultery.

Our Saviour in these words gives the pharisees to understand that their contempt of his person and doctrine

was the more inexcusable, because they lived in and under the clearest light of the gospel: the preaching of the law and the prophets continued but till John the Baptist came amongst you: since which time the gospel has been clearly preached, both by him, and myself, unto you; and it hath pleased God to give my doctrine great acceptance in the world. Though you pharisees reject it; yet every one, that is, very many pass into it: so that the doctrine which you mock, the holy doctrine of the gospel, others will embrace. Yet lest, while Christ spake thus highly of the gospel, the pharisees should reproach him as a destroyer of the law, he shows that the obligation of the moral law was of eternal force, and that heaven and earth should sooner pass, than the obligation of that law cease: which yet the pharisees most shamefully violated, particularly the seventh commandment; which they brake, by permitting and practising divorces, upon unjustifiable grounds. Learn hence, That the moral law, in all the branches of it, which is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, is an eternal rule of life and manners, which is to stand in force as long as the world stands, and the frame of heaven and earth endures.

19 ¶ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores.

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

Our Saviour, in his parabolical history of Dives and Lazarus, instructs us concerning the right use of riches, which is, to capacitate us to do good to others, declaring, That in the life to come, the pious poor man shall be eternally happy, whilst the unmerciful rich man shall be intolerably miserable. Hence observe, 1. The different state and condition of good and bad men in the other world from what they are in this; here the wicked prosper, grow rich and great, and the good and virtuous are in calamity, suffer poverty and distress; which has staggered many men, yea, the best of men, in the belief of a Divine Providence. Observe, 2. That our Saviour did not censure the rich man for being rich, but for being sensual; not for wearing costly apparel, and keeping a plentiful table (which if managed according to men's qualities and estates is a commendable virtue) but his sensuality and luxury, and forgetting to feed the hungry with the superfluities of his table; these are the things for which he is censured. From whence we may learn, That pride and luxury, intemperance and sensuality, are such abuses of worldly riches, as worldly men are very prone and incident to. Rich men too often make their back and their belly their God: sacrificing and devoting all they have to the service of those idols. Observe, 3. That a

poor and mean condition is the lot of many good men, nay, perhaps, of the most in this world. 4. That a man may be poor and miserable in this world, and yet be very dear to God; the grace of sanctification is sometimes bestowed most eminently, where the gifts of Providence have been dispensed more sparingly: consequently, from the present state of men in this world, we can make no judgment of their future condition in the world to come.

22 And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Observe here, 1. That our Saviour represents all men, both good and bad, passing immediately out of this life into a state of happiness or misery; Lazarus "died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Thence note, 1. That the souls of men survive in sensibility and activity, after the dissolution of their bodies, and do not sleep with the body till the day of the resurrection. 2. That all holy souls, and amongst the rest the godly poor, are instantly after death, conveyed by angels to their place of rest and blessedness. "The rich man also died;" this is added, to let us know, that riches, for all men's confidence in them, will not deliver from death; the rich man might be surfeited by faring deliciously every day, whilst Lazarus was famished. "And was buried;" here is no mention of Lazarus' burial; probably he had none, but was flung out of the way into some hole or pit; or if he had a burial, a very mean one, which is passed over in silence: all the advantage which a rich man has by a great estate, after he is dead, is only to have a pompous funeral, which yet signifies nothing to him, because he is not sensible of it. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, &c." He feels at once, both his own misery, and sensibly perceives Lazarus' happiness. Thence note, That the souls of wicked men, whilst their bodies lie in the grave, are in a state of the greatest misery; which is aggravated by the sense they have at the same time of the saints' happiness. For probably the blessed shall see the torments of the damned, and the damned probably shall see the glory of the blessed.

24 And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Observe here, 1. The place where the rich man suffers, it is in hell; the souls of wicked men, when they leave their bodies, do certainly go into a place of torment, which is not only beyond expression, but our apprehension also; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, to conceive those dreadful

things which God hath prepared for them that hate him." Observe, 2. The sin for which he suffers, it is the sin of unmercifulness. Thence learn, That uncharitableness and unmercifulness to the poor is a very great sin, and such a sin as alone, and without any other guilt, is sufficient to ruin a man for ever; there is found in this sin great impiety towards God, and great inhumanity towards our own nature. Observe, 3. The nature and quality of his sufferings, they are exquisitely painful, and void of the least degree of comfort; not a drop of water is granted to cool an inflamed tongue. Learn thence, That the least refreshments are impatiently desired by damned souls in hell, but righteously denied and withheld from them: a drop of water was desired, but not granted. No cup of water, no bowls of wine in hell; there is but one full cup in hell, and that is the cup of God's wrath, without any mixture of mercy or pity. That throat will be for ever parched with thirst then, which is drenched and drowned with excess now: the songs of the drunkard here will be turned into howlings and lamentations there.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Observe, 1. The title given to the rich man by father Abraham, *Son*; he doth not revile him, though a very bad man; if we revile the good, we are unjust, they deserve it not; if we revile the bad, we are unwise, we shall get nothing by it: a wise man knows not what it is to give bad language. Observe, 2. The admonition given, "Remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things;" thy good things in which thou placedst all thy happiness; thy good things which thou lookedst upon thyself as the proprietor and not as the dispenser of; now remember what thou hadst, and what thou abusedst. Learn hence, That the outward blessings which are afforded to wicked men on earth, will be sadly remembered in hell: "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." 2. That no man ought to measure his happiness hereafter by his temporal felicity here; we may receive our good things here, and yet be tormented hereafter. 3. That no man ought to be excessively troubled if he meets with hardships here, because those for whom God designs good things hereafter, may have their evil things here; "Son, thou hadst thy good things, and also Lazarus evil things." 4. The word (*Remember*) implies that human souls, in their state of separation, do exercise memory, thought and reflection, on the past occurrences and actions of their lives; and consequently, that they do not sleep and fall into a state of insensibility and inactivity at death till the resurrection.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

The meaning is, there neither is nor can be any commerce or intercourse betwixt glorified saints and damned sinners; but the state of souls at death is unalterably fixed and stated. Learn, That the miserable condition of damned souls in the next world, and the blessed condition of glorified souls is unchangeably and unalterably such: the power of God is irresistible, and the will of God is invariable, and the oath of God is immutable: "I have sworn that they shall never enter into my rest."

27 Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Here the rich man is represented as retaining, even in hell, some tenderness for his relations on earth; yet others think, that the kindness intended, was rather to himself than to his relations; fearing that their sinning by his example should be an aggravation of his own torments. Note thence, That the presence of sinful relations and companions in hell, may be supposed to make a considerable addition to the miseries of the damned; the sight of those whom they have sinned with, is a fresh revival of their own guilt; all the circumstances of their past and profligate lives are, upon this occasion, continually in their remembrance. Note farther, This miserable wretch is convinced that he could not get out of hell, therefore desires that no friend of his might come in. He knew well enough that if they were once there, they would come out no more. Indeed, God will at the great day, send forth his writ to the grave, to bring out the bodies of the wicked that are shut up there; and will send out his writ to hell, to bring forth the spirits that are shut in there: but it is in order to this, that both soul and body together may receive an eternal sentence for an everlasting imprisonment with the devil and his angels, and there will be no more opening for ever.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

That is, they have the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets, which sufficiently declare the mind and will of God to mankind: and therefore it is unreasonable to expect any farther revelation. Learn thence, That a standing revelation of God is evidence sufficient for divine things; it is a more certain way of conveyance, and more secure from imposture. Secondly, That there is sufficient evidence that Moses and the prophets, or the writings of the holy scriptures, are of divine authority, and therefore to be read and heard, to be believed and assented to, *They have Moses, &c.*

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent.

As if he had said, they have always had Moses and the prophets in their hands, but yet their hearts remain impenitent; but if a special messenger be sent to them from the dead, this will not fail to awaken them, and bring them to repentance. Learn hence, How prone we are to dislike God's method and means which he has appointed to reclaim us from our sins; and imagine some methods of our own would be more successful. The scriptures read, the word preached, the sacraments administered; these are the ordinary means which the wisdom of God has appointed for man's conviction; and if we think a messenger from the dead would be a more conducive means, the next verse will confute us, and thoroughly satisfy us, that whom the scripture convinces not, probably nothing will; for thus it follows:

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

A very awakening text is this, which speaks dreadfully to persons sitting all their days under the ministry of the gospel, and yet find not their understandings enlightened, their judgments convinced, their wills subdued, and their lives reformed by it. Were it possible for such persons to see one come from the dead, yea, from the damned, with the flames of hell about his ears, wringing his hands, and gnashing his teeth, bewailing his misery, beseeching them to take warning by his example, and in time to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace; all this would have no farther effect upon them, than to move their passion a little for the present, whilst the dreadful sound is in their ears; the ordinances of God, and not his providences, are the instituted and appointed means for men's conversion and salvation. Note then, 1. That no visions or apparitions, no new revelations concerning eternal rewards and punishments, are to be expected from the other world, in order to men's conversion and salvation. Note, 2. That the word of God dispensed to us, and the ordinary means of grace enjoyed by us, are more conducive and effectual means to persuade men to repentance, than if one should arise from the dead and preach unto us. A messenger from the dead cannot bring with him either a more necessary doctrine, or a more certain and infallible doctrine, nor bring with him better arguments for our conviction, than what the scriptures do propound to our consideration: nor can we expect a greater co-operation of the Holy Spirit, or a greater concurrence of divine power, to render a message from the dead more effectual, than doth ordinarily attend the ministry of the word. Henceforward then, let us not wonder, if when a drunkard drops down dead upon the spot, the companions say one to another, "Drink on;" if sinners daily tumble one another into the grave, without considering the operation of God's hand; this to those that consider this text, will not seem strange; "For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be converted," though hundred of sinners, before their eyes drop down dead: nay, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one arose from the dead."

CHAPTER XVII.

THEN said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!

2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Two things are here observable: 1. The necessity of scandalous offences; *It must needs be that offences come*; if we consider men's corruptions, satan's malice, God's permission and just judgment. Observe, 2. The misery and mischief which comes by these scandals; "Woe unto the world because of offences:" woe to such as give the scandal, this is *rae indignantis*, the woe of one denouncing: and woe to such as stumble at offences given, this is *rae dolentis*, the woe of one lamenting. From the whole note, 1. That scandals or offensive actions in the church of Christ, will certainly happen, and frequently fall out, amongst those that profess religion and the name of Christ: "It is impossible but that offences will come." Secondly, That scandalous and offensive actions, from such as profess religion and the name of Christ, are baneful and fatal stumbling-blocks to wicked and worldly men. Thirdly, That the offences which wicked men take at the falls of the professors of religion, to the hardening of themselves in their wicked and sinful practices, is matter of just and great lamentation: "Woe unto the world because of offences." Mat. xviii. 7.

3 ¶ Take heed to yourselves; If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him.

The doctrine of forgiving an offending brother, is pressed upon us with many forcible arguments in the New Testament, which speaks it to be a duty of indispensable necessity. This place is to be understood of private offences, and personal wrongs and injuries, done by one man to another; which we must first reprove and then remit; and although it be said, "If he repent, forgive him" that is not to be understood, as if we needed not to pardon our brother, if he neglects to repent and asks forgiveness: but whether he acknowledges his offence or not to us, our hearts must stand ready to forgive the wrong done to us, and to pray for forgiveness on his behalf at the hands of God; laying aside all thoughts and desires of revenge in our own cause, and standing ready to do any office of love and service to our offending brother. Learn hence, 1. That to fall often into the same offence against our brother, is a great aggravation of our offence; "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day:" that is, very often. 2. That as the multiplication of offences is a great

aggravation of offences, so the multiplying the forgiveness is a great demonstration of a God-like temper in us: he that multiplieth sin, doth like satan, sin abundantly: and he that multiplieth pardon, doth like God, pardon abundantly.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

Observe here, 1. The supplicants, *The apostles*. 2. The person supplicated, *The Lord*. 3. The supplication itself, *Increase our Faith*. 4. The occasion of this supplication, our Saviour urging the duty of *forgiving injuries*. Learn, 1. That as all graces in general, so the grace of faith in particular, is weak and imperfect in the best of saints. 2. That the most eminent saints (apostles not excepted) are very sensible of the imperfection of their faith, and very importunate with God daily for the increase of it: *Lord, increase our faith*. 3. That faith strengthened enables the soul to the most difficult duties of obedience, and particularly helps to the practice of that hard duty of forgiving injuries. When our Saviour had preached the doctrine and duty of forgiveness, the apostles instantly pray, *Lord, increase our faith*.

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Here our Saviour tells his disciples, that if they have the smallest degree of true faith, lively operative faith, it will enable them to perform this difficult duty of forgiving injuries, and all other duties, with as much facility and ease as a miraculous faith would enable them to remove mountains and transplant trees. Learn, That there is nothing which may tend to the glory of God, or to our own good and comfort, but may be obtained of God by a firm exercise of faith in him; *all things are possible to him that believeth*.

7 But which of you, having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat.

8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink!

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are com-

(No. 20.)

manded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

The design and scope of this parable is to show, that Almighty God neither is nor can be a debtor to any of his creatures, for the best service which they are able to perform unto him; and that they are so far from meriting a reward of justice, that they do not deserve a return of thanks. Three arguments our Saviour makes use of to evidence and prove this: 1. In respect to God, who is our absolute Lord and Master; and the argument lies thus: if earthly masters do not owe so much as thanks to their servants, for doing that which is commanded them; how much less can God owe the reward of eternal life to his servants, when they are never able to do all that is commanded them, in a perfect and sinless manner? 2. In respect to ourselves, who are his bond servants, his ransomed slaves, and consequently we are not our own men, but his who hath redeemed us; and accordingly do owe him all that service, yea, more than all, that we are able to perform unto him: and therefore, whatever reward is either promised or given, it is wholly to be ascribed to the master's bounty, and not to the servant's merit. 3. To merit any thing by our good works is impossible, in regard to the works themselves; because all that we can do, although we do all that is commanded us, is but our duty. The argument runs thus: "To bounden duty belongs no reward of justice; but all the service we do perform, yea more than we can perform, to God, is bounden duty; therefore is due no reward of justice, but of free mercy." From the whole, note, 1. That we are wholly the Lord's both by right of creation, and redemption also. 2. That as his we are, so him we ought to serve, by doing all those things which he hath commanded us. 3. That when we have done all, we are to look for our reward, not of debt but of grace. 4. That were our service and obedience absolutely perfect, yet it could not merit any thing at the hand of justice: *When ye have done all, say, &c.*

11 ¶ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

Observe here, 1. Though the Samaritans were bitter enemies to the Jews, and had been guilty of great incivility towards our Saviour, in his journey to Jerusalem, he balks them not, but bestows the favor of a miracle upon them. Civil courtesy and respect ought to be paid to those that are the professed enemies of us, and our holy religion. Observe, 2. Though the leper by the law of God was to be separated from all other society (God thereby signifying to his people, that the society of those that are spiritually contagious,

ought to be avoided) yet, the law of God did not restrain them from conversing with one another: accordingly these ten lepers get together, and are company for themselves. Fellowship is that we all naturally affect, though even in leprosy, lepers will flock together; where shall we find one spiritual leper alone? Drunkards and profane persons will be sure to consort with one another! Why should not God's children delight in an holy communion, when the wicked join hand in hand? Observe, 3. Though Jews and Samaritans could not abide one another, yet here in leprosy they accord: here was one Samaritan leper with the Jewish: common sufferings had made them friends, whom religion had disjoined: O what virtue is there in affliction, to unite the most alienated and estranged hearts! Observe, 4. These lepers apply themselves to Christ, the great physician; they cry unto him for mercy, with respect to their afflictions: they jointly cry, they all lifted up their voices with fervent importunity. Teaching us our duty, to join our spiritual forces together, and set upon God by troops. O holy and happy violence, that is thus offered to heaven! How can we want blessings, when so many cords draw them down upon our heads?

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests: and it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Observe here, 1. The preventing grace and mercy of Christ; their disease is cured ere it can be complained of; *Go, show yourselves to the priests*, says Christ, and in their going they were cleansed, they were healed before they could come at the priests; that as the power that healed them was wholly Christ's so might the praise be also. Observe, 2. A twofold reason, why Christ commanded them to go to the priests. 1. In compliance with the ceremonial law, which required the leper to be brought to them, to judge whether healed or not; and if so, to receive the offering prescribed in token of thankfulness. 2. For the trial of their obedience: had they stood upon terms with Christ, and said, alas! to what purpose is it to show ourselves to the priests; what good can their eyes do us? We should be glad to see ourselves cured: but why should we go to them to see ourselves loathed? Had they thus expostulated, they had not been healed; what command soever we receive from Christ we must rather consider the authority of the commander, than the weight of the thing commanded, for God delights to try our obedience by small precepts; happy for these lepers, that in obedience to Christ, they went to the priests, *for as they went they were healed*.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And he fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Observe here, 1. All were healed, but only one was thankful; the cure was wrought upon the bodies of all. Thankfulness is found but in the heart of one; the will makes the difference in men, but he makes the difference in wills, who at first made the will. All these lepers were cured, all saw themselves cured; their sense was alike, their hearts were not alike. Observe, 2. The person that made this return of thankfulness to Christ, "He was a Samaritan:" that is, none of the Jewish nation, but one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; neither place nor parentage can block up the way, or stop the current of God's free mercy, which reaches the unworthy and ill-deserving. Observe, 3. How singly he returns his thanks; he gets away from his fellows, to make his acknowledgment; there are cases wherein singularity is not only lawful, but laudable; instead of subjecting ourselves to other's examples, it is sometimes our duty to resolve to set an example to others: for it is much better to go the right way alone, than to err with company. Observe, 4. How speedily he returns his thanks; no sooner doth he see his cure, but he hastes to acknowledge it; a noble pattern of thankfulness. What speed of retribution is here! late payments of our thankfulness savor of ingratitude; it were happy for us christians, did we learn our duty of this Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine.

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

In the face of these ten lepers, we may, as in a glass, behold the face and complexion of all mankind: how few are there, O Lord! scarce more than one in ten, who, after signal mercies, return suitable thanks. Men how! to God upon their beds, but run away from God as soon as they are raised up by him. Observe farther, What an exact account Christ keeps of his own dispensed favors; "Were there not ten cleansed?" He forgets our sins, but records his own mercies: it is one of his glorious titles, a God forgiving and forgetting iniquity, but his mercies are over all his works, and deserve everlasting remembrance. God keeps a register of his mercies towards us. O shall we not record the favors received from him, at once declare his bounty towards us, and our thankfulness towards him? Observe lastly, The thankful leper was a Samaritan, but the nine that were unthankful were Israelites. Learn thence, That the more we are bound to God, the more shameful is our ingratitude towards him; where God may justly expect the greatest returns of praise and service, he sometimes receiveth least. God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smoky cottage, than he has from some stately palaces.

20 ¶ And when he was demanded of the pharisees when the kingdom of God should come; he answered them, and said, The

kingdom of God cometh not with observation,

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The generality of the Jews, and particularly the pharisees, expected that the promised Messiah should be a temporal prince, and deliver them from the Roman yoke, under which they groaned. Accordingly the pharisees here demanded of our Saviour, *When the kingdom of God, of which he had so often spoken, should come?* Christ answers them, *That his kingdom cometh not with observation; that is, with pomp and splendor, which men may observe and gaze upon; but he tells them The kingdom of God was now among them, by the ministry of John the Baptist and himself: and was already set up in the hearts of his people, by the secret operations of his Holy Spirit. Learn hence, That the false notion which the Jews had of the Messiah and his kingdom—That he himself was to be a temporal prince, and his kingdom a secular kingdom, to be set up with a great deal of noise, pomp, and splendor, did hinder the generality of them from believing in him. Secondly, That the kingdom which Christ designed to set up in the world, was altogether spiritual, not obvious to human senses, but managed in the hearts of his people by the sceptre of his Spirit. “My kingdom cometh not with observation, but is within you.”*

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23 And they shall say to you, See here! or see there! go not after *them*, nor follow *them*.

24 For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in his day

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation,

In the remaining part of this chapter, our Saviour acquaints his disciples with what days of tribulation and distress were coming on the Jewish nation in general, and on Jerusalem in particular. “Days of suffering (as if our Saviour had said) are not far off, when you will wish for my bodily presence again among you, to support and comfort you; and when many seducers will rise up pretending to be deliverers; “but go not you after them;” for after this generation have rejected and crucified me, my coming (says Christ) to execute vengeance upon mine enemies and murderers at Jerusalem, by the Roman soldiers, will be sudden, and like the lightning that shines in an instant from one part of the heavens to the other.” From this coming of Christ to judge Jerusalem, which was an emblem of the final judgment, may we gather

this instruction: that the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the judging of wicked and impenitent sinners, will be a very certain, sudden, and unexpected appearance.

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, and they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded:

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

In these verses our Saviour declares, that Jerusalem's destruction, and the world's final desolation at the great day, would be like the destruction of the old world in the days of Noah; and like the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot, and that, both in regard of unexpectedness, and in regard of sensuality and security; as they before the flood were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, that is, wholly given up to sensuality and debauchery; and did not know, that is, did not consider the flood's coming, till it swept them away: thus was it before the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus it will be before the end of the world. Hence we learn, That as the world perished by infidelity, security, and sensuality, so will the same sins be prevailing before the destruction of this present world. “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man.”

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

Here our Saviour advises them, That when they shall see the judgments of God breaking out upon Jerusalem, that they make all possible speed to get out of it, as Lot and his family did out of Sodom; and to take heed of imitating Lot's wife, who looking back became a pillar of salt. Gen. xix. Where observe, 1. Her offence, “She looked back.” 2. The punishment of her offence, “She became a pillar of salt.” Her offence in looking behind her was manifest disobedience to the divine command, which said, “Look not behind thee;” and proceeded either from

carelessness, or from covetousness, or from curiosity, or from compassion to those that she left behind her, and was undoubtedly the effect of great infidelity, she not believing the truth of what the angel had declared, as touching the certainty and suddenness of Sodom's destruction. The punishment of her offence was exemplary, "She became a pillar of salt;" that is, a perpetual monument of divine severity for her infidelity and disobedience. Where note, 1. The suddenness of her punishment; the justice of God surprises in the very act of sin, with a present revenge. 2. The seeming disproportion betwixt the punishment and the offence, her offence was a forbidden look. From whence carnal reason may plead, "Was it not sufficient for her to lose her eyes, but must she lose her life?" But the easiness and reasonableness of the command aggravated her disobedience; and though her punishment may seem severe, it was not unjust. Now, says our Saviour, *Remember Lot's wife*; that is, let her example caution all of you against unbelief, disobedience, worldly mindedness, contempt of God's threatenings, and lingerings after the forbidden society of lewd and wicked persons.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

35 Two women shall be grinding together: the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.

In this hour, when judgment is come upon Jerusalem, Christ declares, That whosoever shall take any unchristian course to preserve his life, by denying him and his holy religion, he shall lose eternal life; but he that for Christ's sake shall lose his natural life, instead of a mortal, shall enjoy an immortal life in bliss and glory. Here we learn, 1. That the love of temporal life is a great temptation to men, to deny Christ and his holy religion, in a day of trial. 2. That the surest way to attain eternal life, is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honor of religion requires it of us. Christ farther adds, That in this terrible night of Jerusalem's calamity, when destruction comes upon her, the providence of God will remarkably distinguish between one person and another; true believers, and constant professors, shall be delivered, and none else; such shall escape the danger, others shall fall by it.

37 And they answered, and said unto him, Where Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The disciples hearing our Saviour speak of such tremendous calamities, inquire, Where these judgments should fall? He answers them figuratively, and by a proverbial speech,

That "where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together;" signifying, that Jerusalem and the obdurate nation of the Jews, was the carcass which the Roman armies, whose ensign was the eagle, would quickly find out and feed upon; and that Judea in general, and Jerusalem in particular, would be the theatre and stage of those tragical calamities. Learn thence, That the appointed messengers of God's wrath, and the instruments of his vengeance, will suddenly gather together, certainly find out, and severely punish an impenitent people, devoted to destruction. *Where the carcass is*, (that is, the body of the Jewish nation) *there will the eagles* (that is, the Roman soldiers) *be gathered together*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

2 Saying, there was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man;

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

There is no duty in christianity, the practice of which our Saviour presseth upon us more frequently, than this duty of prayer. To encourage his disciples (and us in them) to fervency, importunity, and perseverance in this duty, he propounds here the parable of an unjust judge, who was overcome by an importunate widow, to do her justice contrary to his own inclinations: from whence our Saviour argues, That if importunity will prevail with a sinful man, to grant petitions offered to him; how much more prevalent will such importunity be with the infinitely good God, to relieve the necessities of such as devoutly implore his help? And the force of the argument lies thus:—"The judge in the parable was an inferior and subordinate judge, was an unrighteous and unjust judge,

was a merciless and hard-hearted judge; and yet, upon her importunity, he avenged her; how much more will the sovereign and supreme judge, the holy and righteous, the merciful and compassionate judge of all the earth, hear and help his praying people, and be the just Avenger of those that fear him?" From the whole note, 1. That prayer, or a liberty of making our requests known to God, is an inestimable favor and privilege. He that considers the nature of God, and the nature of man, cannot question it; God is a being of infinite fulness and perfection; a self-sufficient, and an all-sufficient good; and man an indigent, helpless, dependant creature, full of want, and obnoxious to dangers. 2. That prayer is not only an inestimable privilege, but an indispensable duty. So solicitous is God for our welfare and happiness, that he makes our privilege our duty, by the authority of his command; so that we are at once ungrateful to God and unjust to ourselves, in the most exalted degree, if we do not pray unto him, and spread our wants before him. 3. That this duty of prayer is not an occasional, but a constant duty; *Men ought always to pray*; that is, 1. At all seasonable times and fit opportunities: we are said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably: now the seasons for prayer are morning and evening. As the morning and evening sacrifice was constant among the Jews, and the fire was always upon the altar, and never went out; so he that prays morning and evening, may be said to be "instant in prayer, and to pray without ceasing." 2. Always to pray, is an endeavour always to keep the heart in a praying frame, and to be very frequent in offering up pious ejaculations, and short mental prayers to God, as occasion shall offer: when in the field, in the shop, in the bed, when sleep departs, in the journey, when alone, this may be done advantageously without loss of time, and acceptably without danger of hypocrisy, which too often mingles itself with our more set prayers. Observe, 4. We must not only pray constantly, but pray fervently; yea, importunately, if we would pray successfully; we must cry to God, as the widow to the judge; vehemency and importunity are both helps and ornaments to prayer; they both fortify and beautify our prayers; they pierce the heavens, and offer an holy violence to God: *Oratio vincit invincibilem & ligat omnipotentem hæc vis Deo grata est*, says Tertullian, "God delights in such importunity, 8.—"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" If by the Son of man's coming, we understand Christ's coming in judgment against Jerusalem, then the sense is this: "That when he comes to take vengeance on the obstinate Jews, and to destroy their city, he will find but little faith, and patient waiting for help from God in the land of Judea, and consequently little importuning him, with incessant cries and supplications, as this poor widow did the unjust judge." 2. If by the Son of man's coming we understand Christ's coming to judge the world at the last day, then the sense is, "When he cometh, he will find but few faithful ones, comparatively speaking; he will find but few sincere and serious christians in whom the genuine effects and fruits are found." Learn, That when Christ shall come to judgment, he will find comparatively very few whose hearts have not fainted; and very many, who, through the power that temptation has upon the frailty of human nature, are fallen away: "When the Son of man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?" Verily, but little faith, and few faithful ones.

(No. 20.)

9 ¶ And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others;

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The design and scope of our Saviour, in this parable, is to reprove and condemn the pharisees, and in them all other self justiciaries, who having an high opinion of, and trusting in their own righteousness, despised others, as vile persons, whose religion is not accompanied with ostentation, and who pretend not to such extraordinary degrees of sanctity as themselves. And the parable further shows, than an humble, self-condemned sinner, who, though he has been wicked, is now sensible of it, and with shame and sorrow confesses it before God, is more acceptable than he that vaunts of his virtue, and rests in the outward duties of religion; his pride and exaltation of himself shall abase him, while the other's humility shall exalt him. This is the general scope of the parable; the particular observations from it are these: 1. The pharisee and the publican both pray, they both pray together, *apud se*, with and within themselves. Where the duty and action is the same, there may be a vast difference in the purpose and intention; doth an humble saint pray? so may an haughty hypocrite; Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a pharisee, and the other a publican." Observe, 2. The pharisee's prayer, "He stood and prayed with himself, God I thank thee, &c. Where note, his gesture; *He stood and prayed*; standing and kneeling are praying gesture, but sitting is a rude indecency, except in case of necessity. "In prayer," says pious Bishop Hall, "I will either stand as a servant to my Master, or kneel as a subject to my Prince." Note farther, It is said, *He prayed*: but there is not one petition, but thanksgiving; *God, I thank thee, &c.* Whence learn. That thanksgiving is a part of prayer; Hannah's prayer, as it is called, I Sam.

ii. is a canticle, or a song of praise: we then pray best, when we praise God most. Again, see the pharisee's pride in this his prayer: this proud beggar shows not his wounds, but his worth; not his rags, but his robes; not his misery, but his bravery; he brings God Almighty in a reckoning of his services; "I fast twice a week, I give alms of all that I possess;" and thanks God more that others were bad, than that himself was good. Had the pharisee with an humble mind thanked God for his retaining grace, that though he was not so good as he should be, that yet he was not so vile and bad as some others, this had been no fault; but when he comes before God with a proud and scornful mind, inwardly pleased that others were so bad, and so much worse than himself; giving thanks rather for others' badness, than his own goodness; this is a wickedness incident to none but devilish dispositions. Learn hence; That whatsoever shows of goodness an hypocrite may make, yet he is inwardly glad of, and takes a secret delight in others' badness. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as this publican;" which was a kind of triumph and proud insultation over the poor publican: he would seem to thank God he was not so bad as the publican, when indeed he was glad that the publican was not so good as himself. Observe, 3. The publican's behaviour; in an humble sight and sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, *he stood afar off*, probably in the court of the Gentiles, where all sorts of sinners might come: acknowledging thereby that he was unworthy to come near the holy Majesty of God: not presuming to *lift up his eyes to heaven*, that place of perfect holiness and purity; but, like a true, self-condemned penitent, smote upon his breast, and, in bitter remorse of soul, said, *God, be merciful to me a sinner*.—Hence learn, That a truly humble temper of mind well becomes us in all our approaches and addresses to God, and is more acceptable to him than all pompous performances whatsoever. For, observe lastly, The publican, being thus condemned of himself, departs justified by God; "He went down to his house justified rather than the pharisee;" the pharisee justified himself, but the publican was justified by God. Thence learn, That a penitent sinner, who is indeed poor in spirit, is far more esteemed of God than he that makes long prayers, fasts often, tithes all his substance, and prides himself in all this. Without humility all is vain glory and hypocrisy: and the seeming most sanctified person, that has it not, is like a painted sepulchre, beautiful without, but full of rottenness within.

15 ¶ And they brought unto him also infants; that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

Observe here, 1. A solemn action performed; children, infants, sucking children, as the word signifies, are brought to Christ, that he might bless them; the parents, looking upon Christ as a prophet, as a great and extraordinary prophet, persuade themselves, that by his prayers, and laying his hands on their children, they should be preserved from bodily diseases and from satan's power, and that he would confer upon them all needful blessings. Learn, 1. That infants are capable of benefit by Jesus Christ. 2. That it is the best office that parents can perform unto their children, to bring them unto Christ, that they may be made partakers of that benefit. 3. That if infants are capable of benefit by Christ, if capable of his blessing on earth, and presence in heaven, if they be subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs of his kingdom of glory, then may they be baptized; for they that are within the covenant, Acts ii. 39, have a right to the privileges of the covenant, and to baptism, the seal of the covenant; and if Christ denies not infants the kingdom of heaven, which is the greater; what reason have his ministers to deny them the benefit of baptism, which is the less? Learn, 4. That Christ will have all his disciples and followers to resemble little children in such properties wherein they may be patterns to them, viz. in humility and innocence, in freedom from malice and revenge, in docility and teachableness in cleaving to, and depending upon, their parents, and in contentedness with their condition; "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein."

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

We have here a considerable person, a ruler, coming to Christ, with an important question in his mouth, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* Where note, 1. He believes the certainty of a future state. 2. He professes a desire of an eternal happiness in that state. 3. He declares his readiness and willingness to do some good thing in order to the obtaining of that happiness. Hence learn, That the light of nature or natural religion, teaches men, that good works are necessary to salvation: or that some good thing must be done by them, who at death expect eternal life; it is not talking well and professing well, but living well, that entitles us to heaven and eternal life.

19 And Jesus said unto him, Whom callest thou me good? none is good save one, that is God.

Our Saviour here reproves this person for calling himself good, when he did not own him to be God; saying, *Thou art in none good*; that is, essentially and originally good, absolutely and immutably good, *but God only*: nor any derivatively good, but he that receives his goodness from God also.

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Note here, That the duties directed to by our Saviour, are the duties of the second table; nothing being a better evidence of our unfeigned love to God, than a sincere performance of our duty to our neighbour: love to man is a fruit and testimony of our love to God. Learn thence, That such as are defective in the duties of the second table, charity and justice towards man, do make but a counterfeit show of religion, though they pretend to the highest degree of holiness and love towards God.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

This assertion might be very true, according to the pharisee's sense and interpretation of the law, which condemned only the gross outward act, not the inward lusts and motions of the heart. An external obedience to the letter of the law this man might possibly have performed; this made him think well of himself, and conclude the goodness of his own condition. Learn hence, How prone men are to think the best of themselves, and to have too high an opinion of their own goodness and righteousness before God; this is very natural, but dangerous and fatal.

22 Now, when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Here observe, 1. Our Lord's admonition, "Yet lackest thou one thing;" which was true self-denial, in renouncing the sin of covetousness, and the inordinate love of worldly wealth. We ought, in the midst of our abundance, to maintain a readiness of disposition, to part with all for God's sake, that is dear unto us in this world. Observe, 2. Our Lord's injunction, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This was not a common, but a special precept, given particularly to this rich man for trial; like that given to Abraham, Gen. xxii. and to convince him of his corrupt confidence in riches; yet is the precept thus far of general use to us all, to teach us so to contemn worldly possessions, as to be willing to part with them all at God's pleasure, and when they prejudice our salvation.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich.

Here note, The effect which our Saviour's admonition had upon this person, "He was sorrowful." Learn thence, That carnal men are exceeding sorrowful when they cannot win heaven in their own way. 2. That such as are wedded to the world, will renounce Christ rather than the world,

when the world and Christ stand in competition. "He went away sorrowful (St. Mark x. 22.) for he was very rich."

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.

Our holy Lord takes occasion from the rich man's departure from him, to discourse concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulties that attend rich men in their way to heaven: From whence we may collect and gather, 1. That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven than other men; it is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their riches, and to depend entirely upon God in a rich condition; "For the rich man's wealth is his strong tower." 2. That the reposing their confidence in riches, renders their salvation difficult, if not an impossibility. 3. Our Saviour's proverbial speech of "a camel's going through the eye of a needle," implies thus much, That it is not only a great difficulty, but impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth, and place their confidence therein, to be saved, without an extraordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for God to make a rich man happy, because he thinks himself happy without God. 4. That as difficult and impossible as this may seem to men, yet nothing is impossible with God; he can change the heart of the rich, by the rich and powerful influences of his holy spirit. "That which is impossible with men, is possible with God."

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all and followed thee.

It was well done, and wisely done of Peter, to leave all and follow Christ; it was the best bargain he ever made in all his life. But observe, How he magnifies that little he had left for Christ, and ushers it in with a note of admiration; "Lo! we have left all and followed thee." Learn hence, That though it be very little that we suffer for Christ, and have to forsake upon his account, yet we are prone to magnify and admire it, as if it were some great matter. "Lord," says Peter, "we have left all." "What all, man, hadst thou to leave? A few ragged nets and a tattered fisher-boat; a great all indeed, next to nothing at all, scarce worth mentioning, and yet how is it magnified!" "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee."

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake.

30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Observe here, The lenity and kindness of our Lord's gracious answer; he tells his disciples, That they who had left all and followed him, should be no losers by him; that is, in this world they shall receive manifold. St. Mark, chap. x. 30. says, "An hundred fold;" But how so? *Non formaliter, sed eminenter; non in specie, sed in valore*: Not in kind but in equivalency; not an hundred brethren, and sisters, and possessions, in kind; but he shall enjoy all that in God, which all creatures would be to him, if they were multiplied an hundred times. O the sanctifying gifts and saving graces, the supporting comforts and ravishing consolations of the Holy Spirit, are a sufficient compensation for any thing, for all, yea, for more than all, that we can part with for the sake of Christ.

31 ¶ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on;

33 And they shall scourge him and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken.

We find our blessed Saviour very frequently acquainting his disciples with his approaching sufferings to prevent the offence that they might take at them, when the providence of God brought them on: his design was to arm them with expectation of his sufferings; and to quicken them to preparation for their own; yet it is here said, "That the disciples understood none of these sayings;" Why so? were not the words easy enough to be understood? Yes, but they could not reconcile them to the notion of the Messiah, which they had drank in; they concluded he should be a temporal prince, and subdue their temporal enemies, but could not conceive how he that should redeem Israel, should die, and be thus barbarously used. We had great need to consider well what notions we have concerning the things of God, before we entertain them; for false notions, once taken up, are not without great difficulty laid down.

35 ¶ And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant?

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passed by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and, when he was come near, he asked him,

41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? and he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

This chapter concludes with the recital of a famous miracle, wrought by our Saviour upon a blind man, whom St. Mark calls Bartimeus. Where we have observable, 1. The blind man's faith in acknowledging Christ to be the Messiah; for so much the title of *Son of David* did import. 2. Observe his fervency as well as his faith; he cried to Christ for the mercy of healing, "Have mercy on me, thou Son of David." A true sense of want, either bodily or spiritual, will cause a soul to cry to Christ with earnestness and importunity. Observe, 3. The great compassion and condescension of Christ towards this blind man; "he stood still, he called him, and enlightened his eyes." Observe, 4. Before Christ would restore the blind man to sight, he must sensibly complain of the want of sight, and cry unto him for it. Christ knows all his creatures' wants, but takes no notice of them, till they make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 5. How much Christ magnifies faith; what he attributes to it, and how he rewards the least exercise of it; "Jesus said, thy faith hath saved thee." Christ himself was the efficient cause of the blind man's healing, but he exerted his divine power upon the exercise of the blind man's faith; and accordingly says, "thy faith hath saved thee." Note, 6. In what way and manner the blind man doth express his thankfulness to Christ for his recovered sight, "he followed him glorifying God." Mercy received from Christ is then well improved, when it engages us to follow Christ; this should be the effect of all salvations wrought for us. He praises God best,

that serveth him most. The life of thankfulness consists in the holiness of the life.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, *there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

The history which relates the calling and conversion of Zaccheus the publican, is ushered in with a note of wonder: *Behold, there was a man named Zaccheus!* It is both great and good news to hear of a soul converted unto God: especially such a remarkable sinner as Zaccheus was; For, 1. He was by profession, a publican; a calling that carried extortion in its face, and bade defiance to his conversion; yet, behold, from the toll-booth is Zaccheus called to be a disciple, and Matthew an apostle; such is the freeness of divine grace, that it often calls the greatest sinners, and triumphs in their powerful conversion. 2. He was a chief publican, and probably one of the chief of sinners; yet behold him among the chief of saints. Lord! what penitent need despair of thy mercy, when he sees a publican, nay the chief of publicans, go to heaven? 3. It is added as a further circumstance, *that he was rich*; his trade was not a greater obstacle to his conversion than his wealth; not that there is any malignity in riches, considered in themselves, but they become a snare, through the corruption of our natures. Zaccheus had not been so famous a convert, if he had not been rich; if more difficulty, yet was there more glory in the conversion of rich Zaccheus. To all these might be added a fourth circumstance, namely, that Zaccheus was converted in his old age, after a long habit of sin contracted. Such instances, though few, has God left upon record in scripture, Abraham and Manasse in the Old Testament, Zaccheus and Paul in the New.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

Zaccheus desired to see Jesus; this was a sight that few rich men desire to see; the sight of Cesar's face upon their coin is more pleasing to them than to see the face of Christ in his ordinances: yet it was not faith, but fancy and curiosity, that made Zaccheus climb the sycamore to see Jesus; but the curiosity of the eye gave occasion for the belief of the heart; he that desires to see Jesus is in the way to enjoy him. It is good to be near the place where Christ is, whatever principles bring us thither.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto
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him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

What an instance is here of Christ's preventing grace and mercy! Zaccheus climbs up into the sycamore to see Jesus: Jesus first sees him; little did Zaccheus think that Jesus should cast up his eyes to him; Christ's looks are converting looks; there went a divine power along with them, to change the heart of him whom he looked upon; he that could heal a disease by the hem of his garment, could change an heart with the glance of his eye. Observe farther, Christ doth not only note, but name Zaccheus; "He bids him come down, for he must abide at his house; what sweet familiarity was here! Though the distance be infinitely great betwixt our Saviour and ourselves, yet he treats us not with a majestic stateliness, but with a gracious affability. Some note, that Zaccheus was the first man we read of, to whose house Christ invited himself. Observe lastly, With what speed Zaccheus hastens down, and with what alacrity he entertains our blessed Saviour—most joyfully: but alas! it was but for a few hours. Lord! how great is the happiness of that man who receives and entertains thee, not for a day or a year, or for millions of years, but for everlasting ages? O let us welcome thee into our hearts by faith whilst we are here on earth, and then thou wilt make us welcome with thyself everlastingly in thy kingdom.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

That is, the pharisees who were here, were highly discontented that Christ went to a publican's house, whom they looked upon as the worst of men; their eyes were evil; because Christ's was good. Withers should the physician go, but to the sick? The whole need him not. However, the envious pharisees censure and condemn him for it. Lord! who can hope to escape the aspersions of censorious tongues, whilst spotless innocence, and perfect holiness, falls under the lash of them? It is sufficient for the servant to be as the master.

8 And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* four-fold.

Two things are here observable. The greatness of his charity, and the justness of his restitution. As to his charity, Observe, 1. the freeness of it; not *I lend*, but *I give*. 2. The readiness of it: not *I will*, but *I do give*. 3. The justness and honesty of it; *my goods*, not *my spoils*; what is my own, and not rent from others by rapine or extortion. 4. The largeness and extensiveness of his charity. *Half of my goods*, not an inconsiderable pittance. 5. The fitness of

his charity, *To the poor*, not to the rich; not to his rich heirs, but to his poor neighbours. Again, as his charity was large, so his restitution was just; as he gave half to the poor, so he *restored four-fold to the wronged*. What an evidence was here of a true penitent! confession and satisfaction are both found with him. Whenever repentance is sincere and saving, there is not only an hatred of former sins, but a vigorous exercise of graces contrary to those sins.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is the son of Abraham.

That which Zaccheus gave to the poor, was nothing to what Christ gave to him; it was but dross he gave to them, it was salvation Christ gave to him. Where is the man that can say, God is in his debt for acts of charity and mercy? Where is he that will not own God the best and quickest paymaster? "This day is salvation come to thine house," it is thine in title, and ere long it shall be thine in possession: "Forasmuch as he also is the son of Abraham;" that is, either a natural son of Abraham, a Jew; or a spiritual son, a believer; the heir of Abraham's faith, which was also imputed to him for righteousness. O happy Zaccheus! thou hast climbed up from thy sycamore to heaven, and by thy charity and justice hast purchased to thyself a kingdom that fadeth not away.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Observe here, 1. A description of man's deplorable state, and undone condition; he is *lost*. 2. The care of Christ to seek and recover man out of that lost state; "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Learn, 1. That man's condition is a lost condition, and every unregenerate man is a lost man; he has lost his God, his soul, his happiness, his excellency, his liberty, his ability. 2. The great errand that Christ came into the world upon; it was to seek and to save lost sinners; this he does by his blood, by his word, by his spirit, and by his rod.

11 ¶ And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because, they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said, therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that, when he was returned, having received the king-

dom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here* is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin;

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath, shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

For the better understanding of this parable, we must, 1. Consider the occasion of it; 2. The design and scope of

it: 3. The lessons of instruction which our Saviour intended us by it. As to the former, the occasion of our Saviour's uttering this parable seems to be this; he was now going up to Jerusalem to die; some of the company were of opinion, that he would immediately enter upon his kingdom, and act as a temporal prince, delivering them from the Romans, and destroying his and their enemies; he lets them understand the quite contrary; that he must die and rise again, and ascend into heaven, and then return again and receive the kingdom; and that he was now taking his last journey to Jerusalem in order to that end. The design and scope of the parable, together with the interpretation of it, is this; *The nobleman* here mentioned is our Saviour himself, who in his state of great humiliation was but like a nobleman; *his going into a far country*, signifies his return from earth to heaven; *his coming back again*, signifies his coming to judgment; *his calling his servants, and delivering them their talents*, intimates to us, the various gifts which he bestows upon the sons of men, all of which are to be employed in his service, and improved to his glory; his "calling his servants to an account," plainly signifies, that when Christ comes to judgment, he will have an account of every individual person, how they used the gifts, and improved the talents, entrusted with them; and that they may expect to be impartially rewarded according to their works; for God will appear a righteous God, and will condemn sinners out of their own mouths, and a most certain and final ruin will be their portion, whilst those that were faithful in his service, shall be crowned with his reward. Now, from the whole we may learn these lessons of instruction: 1. That our Lord's state of humiliation and great abasement on earth being passed over, a glorious state of exaltation he is now arrived at in heaven. God has exalted him with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven, 2. That, clothed with infinite majesty and power, and attended with an innumerable host of glorious angels and saints, this exalted Saviour will come to judge angels and men. 3. That, in the mean time, Christ variously dispenses to his servants particular talents, to be employed and improved for his own glory and his church's good. 4. That there will most certainly be a reckoning-day, or a time when our Lord will take an account of men's improving those gifts and graces, which were given them as so many talents to be improved by them. 5. That there will be degrees of happiness and misery in the other world, according to men's degrees of faithfulness or negligence in this. 6. That it is abominably false and impious to charge God as being rigid and severe with men, and requiring impossibilities at their hands; "For out of their mouths will God condemn them." Lastly, That the condition of God's faithful servants will be unspeakably happy; and that of the unprofitable servants intolerably miserable, both in this world, and in the next. The righteous shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and be confirmed therein, with an utter impossibility of losing that happiness; the wicked, who would not submit to Christ's authority, shall not be able to resist his power. They that would not suffer Christ to reign over them, shall, at the last day, be brought forth and slain before him; "Those mine enemies, that would not that I, &c."

28 ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at

the mount called *the mount of Olives*, he sent two of his disciples,

30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat; loose him, and bring *him* hither.

31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And, as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, the Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus; and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen,

38 Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the pharisees, from among the multitude, said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Our Lord (as is noticed before) was now upon his last journey to Jerusalem, where he was to shed his blood, and lay down his life, for the redemption and salvation of a lost world; and it is observable, what a double demonstration he gives of his great willingness and forwardness to go up to Jerusalem, there to die. 1. Both St. Luke here, and St. Mark, chap. x. 32, tells us, That "he went before" the company, leading the way, when he went to suffer: Lord! with what alacrity and holy cheerfulness didst thou manage the great work of man's redemption! None ever went so willingly to a crown, as thou to thy cross. 2. Our Saviour, who all his life travelled like a poor man

on foot, now he goes up to Jerusalem to die for us, he will ride, to show his great forwardness to lay down his life for us; but what was the beast he rode upon? An ass' colt: to fulfil that prophecy, Zech. ix. 9. *Tell ye the daughter of Sion; behold thy king cometh, riding upon an ass; yea, it was a colt upon which never man rode before: to let us see, how the most unruly and untamed creatures become obedient and obsequious to Christ, and render themselves serviceable to him at his pleasure. It was also a borrowed ass, whereby our Saviour's right to all the creatures was manifested; and accordingly he bids his disciples to tell the owner, That the Lord hath need of him; not your lord, or our lord, but the Lord, that is, he that is Lord of all the earth, whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills.* Here note, what a clear and full demonstration Christ gave of his divine nature: of his omniscency in foreseeing and foretelling the event; of his omnipotency in inclining the heart, and overruling the will of the owner to let the colt go; and of his sovereignty, that as he was Lord of the creatures, he could command and call for their service whenever he needed them. The colt being brought, and our Saviour set thereon: Observe next, The actions of the multitude in acknowledging Christ to be our king; they spread their clothes in the way, casting their garments on the ground for him to ride upon, according to the custom of princes when they ride in state: yea, the multitude do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamations, and loud hosannas, wishing all manner of prosperity to their meek, but mighty prince. In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. O how far was our holy Lord from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur; he despised that glory, which worldly hearts fondly admire; yet, because he was King, he would be proclaimed such; and have his kingdom confessed, applauded, and blessed; but that it might appear, that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence. O glorious, yet homely pomp! O meek and mighty Prince! Observe lastly, The peevish envy of the wicked pharisees, who were then in company; they grudge our Saviour this poor honor, they envy him this small triumph of coming into the city upon an ass' colt, attended by a company of poor people, strewing the way with boughs of trees, with hosannas and joyful acclamations in their mouths; these poor people's mouths they would have stopped; *Master, rebuke thy disciples; they did not like the music.* Christ tells them, that they labor in vain to suppress the testimony given him by his disciples, for *if they should be silent, the stones would cry out:* yea, cry out shame of them for neglecting their duty; as if Christ had said, The speechless stone will speak, and give witness to me if men will not. Learn hence, They that are owned of God, shall not want ownings and witnessings from man at one time or other, in one way or other; though the envy and malice of men do ever so much gainsay and oppose it.

41 ¶ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

No sooner did our Saviour come within the sight and view of the city of Jerusalem, but he burst out into tears, at the consideration of their obstinacy, and wilful rejecting of the offers of grace and salvation made unto them; and also he

wept to consider the dreadful judgments that hung over their heads for those sins, even the utter ruin and destruction of their city and temple. Learn hence, 1. That good men ever have been, and are, men of tender and compassionate dispositions, sorrowing not only for their own sufferings, but others calamities. 2. That Christ shed tears as well as blood for the lost world; *Christ wept over Jerusalem,* as well as bled for her. 3. That Christ was infinitely more concerned for the salvation of poor sinners, than for his death and sufferings; not the sight of his own cross, but Jerusalem's calamities made him weep.

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

By the things belonging to their peace, we are to understand the presence of Christ amongst them, the preaching of the gospel to them? *She did not know,* that is, she did not consider, she did not prize and improve her privileges, as she ought, but stopped her ears against the word of Christ, and closed her eyes against the miraculous works of Christ, till at last they were hidden from her eyes. Learn hence, 1. That the time of a people's enjoying the light and liberty of the gospel, is a limited day, it is a short day. *If thou hadst known in this thy day.* 2. That it is the sad and usual lot of the gospel, not to be embraced and entertained by a people to whom it is in mercy sent, till it be too late, and the time of their visitation be past and over: *O that thou hadst known, but now thou shalt never know, now they are hid from thine eyes.* But how hid? Was there no more preaching in Jerusalem; no public ministry of that day? Yes, behold the patience and mercy of Christ in waiting upon this people. After this, Christ sent the whole college of apostles, and they preached there the things belonging to their temporal and eternal peace; but they wanted hearts to consider, and their ruin was unavoidable.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side;

44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Here we have a prophetic prediction of the total and final destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, who girt the city round, burnt the temple, starved the people, and brought such ruin and destruction upon the place, as no history could ever parallel: the reason is assigned, *because they knew not the time of their*

visitation; that is, the time when God visited them with his gospel—first by the ministry of John, then by the preaching of Christ himself, and afterwards by his disciples and apostles. Hence learn, 1. That when God gives his gospel to a people, he gives that people a merciful and a gracious visitation. 2. That for a people not to know, but neglect the time of their gracious visitation, is a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin: *Because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation, therefore the time shall come, that thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and not leave one stone upon another*; which, history tells us, was literally fulfilled, when Turnus Rufus, with his plough, ploughed up the very foundation-stones upon which the temple stood. Lord! how has sin laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms.

45 ¶ And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought.

46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47 And he taught daily in the temple, But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him;

48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

No sooner had our blessed Saviour entered Jerusalem, but his first walk was to the temple, and his first work was to purge and reform it from abuses, not to ruin and destroy it, because it had been abused. But what was the profanation of the temple, that so offended our Saviour? *Ans.* In the court of the gentiles, the outward court of the temple, there was a public mart or market kept, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, for sacrifice, which otherwise the people must have brought up along with them from their houses: as a pretended ease, therefore, to the people, the priests ordered these things to be sold hard by the altar; but our blessed Saviour, being justly offended at this profanation of his Father's house, cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple.—Teaching us, that there is a special reverence due to God's house, both for the owner's sake, and the service sake; nothing but holiness can become the place where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness: the reason is added, *My house is the house of prayer*: where, by prayer, is to be understood, the whole worship and service of God, of which prayer is an eminent and principal part. That which gives denomination to an house, is most certainly the chief work to be done in that house; now God's house being called *an house of prayer*, implies that prayer is a chief and principal work to be performed in this house, yet take we heed, that we set not the ordinances of God at variance one with another: we must not idolize one ordinance, and vilify another, but reverence them all, and pay an awful respect to all divine institutions. Our blessed Saviour here, in his house of prayer, preached daily to the people, as well as prayed with them;

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and all the people were as attentive to hear his sermons, as he was constant at their prayers. Prayer sanctifies the word, and the word fits us for prayer. If we would glorify God and edify ourselves, we must put honor upon all the ordinances of God, and diligently attend them upon all occasions.

CHAPTER XX.

AND it came to pass that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders:

2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing: and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

6 But and if we say, Of men: all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, That they could not tell whence *it was*.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The pharisees having often quarrelled at our Saviour's doctrine before, they call in question his mission and authority now; although they might easily have understood his divine mission by his divine miracles: for Almighty God never empowered any to work miracles that were not sent by him. Our blessed Saviour, understanding their design, gives them no direct answer, but replies to their question, by asking them another; *The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?* that is, was it of divine institution, or of human invention? plainly implying, That the calling of them who call themselves the ministers of God, ought to be from God: *No man ought to take that honor upon him, but he that is called of God; as was Aaron*, Heb. v. 8. The pharisees reply, That they could not tell whence John had his mission and authority: which was a manifest untruth; they knew it, but durst not own it. By refusing to tell the truth, they fall into a lie against the truth: thus one sin ensnares and draws men on to the commission of more; such as will

not speak exact truth, according to their knowledge, they fall into the sin of lying against their knowledge and their conscience. Our Saviour answers them, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.* He doth not say, I cannot, or I will not tell you, but I do not, I need not tell you: because the miracles which I work before you, are a sufficient demonstration of my divine commission; that I am sent of God among you; because God never set the seal of his omnipotency to a lie, nor empowered any impostor to work real miracles.

9 ¶ Then began he to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

10 And at the season, he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent the third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the Lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

19 ¶ And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands

on him: and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

In the parable before us, the Jewish church is compared to a vineyard, God the Father to an householder, his pruning and fencing his vineyard, denotes his care to furnish his church with all needful helps and means to make it fruitful; his letting it out to husbandmen, signifies the committing the care of his church to the priests and Levites, the public pastors and governors of his church; his servants, are the prophets and apostles, whom he sent from time to time, to admonish them to bring forth fruits answerable to the cost which God had expended on them: his son is Jesus Christ, whom the rulers of the Jewish church slew and murdered. So that the design and scope of the parable is, to discover to the Jews, particularly to the pharisees, their obstinate impenitency under all the means of grace, their bloody cruelty towards the prophets of God, their tremendous guilt in crucifying the Son of God; for all which God would unchurch them finally, ruin their nation, and set up a church among the Gentiles, that should bring forth much better fruit than the Jewish church ever did. From the whole note, 1. That the church is God's vineyard; a vineyard is a place inclosed, a place well planted, well fruited, and exceeding dear and precious to the planter, and the owner of it. 2. That as dear as God's vineyard is unto him, in case of barrenness and unfruitfulness, it is in great danger of being destroyed and laid waste by him. 3. That the only way and course to engage God's care over his vineyard, and to prevent its being given to other husbandmen, is to give him the fruits of it; it is but a vineyard that God lets out; it is no inheritance; no people ever had so many promises of God's favor as the Jews; nor ever enjoyed so many privileges, whilst they continued in his favor, as they did; but for rejecting Christ and his holy doctrine, they are a despised, scattered people, throughout the world. See the note on Matt. xxi. 39, 44.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cesar, or no?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Show me a penny: whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which be Cesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, That these spies, sent forth to ensnare our Saviour about paying tribute to Cesar, were the pharisees and Herodians; the former were against paying tribute, looking upon the Roman emperor as an usurper; the latter were for it: these two opposite parties concluded, That, let our Saviour answer how he would, they should entrap him; if, to please the pharisees, he denied paying tribute, then he is accused of sedition; if, to gratify the Herodians, he voted for paying tribute, he then is pronounced an enemy to the liberty of his country, and exposed to popular odium. But observe, with what wisdom and caution our Lord answers them; he calls for the Roman penny, and asks them, Whose superscription it bare? they answer, *Cesar's*: then says he, *Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*; as if he had said, "Your admitting the Roman coin amongst you, is an evidence that you are under subjection to the Roman emperor; because the coining and imposing of money is an act of sovereign authority; therefore, you having owned Cesar's authority over you, by accepting of his coin amongst you, give unto him his just dues, and *render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's*." Learn hence, 1. That our Saviour was no enemy to magistracy and civil government; there was no truer paymaster of the king's dues, than he that was the King of kings; he preached it, and he practised it, Matthew xvii. 27. 2. Where a kingdom is in subjection to a temporal prince, whether by descent, election, or conquest, he derives the title, the subjects ought, from a principle of conscience, to pay tribute to him. 3. That as Christ is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, and his religion exempts none from paying their civil dues, so princes should be as careful not to rob him of his divine honor, as he is not to wrong them of their civil rights. Christ requires all his followers to *render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*, &c.

27 ¶ Then came to him certain of the sadducees (which deny that there is any resurrection), and they asked him,

28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.

34 And Jesus, answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.

36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

Our blessed Saviour having put the pharisees and Herodians to silence in the foregoing verses, here the sadducees encounter him; this sect denied the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and as an objection against both, they propound a case to our Saviour, of a woman that had seven husbands; they demanded whose wife of the seven this woman shall be at the resurrection? As if they had said, "If there be a resurrection of bodies at the great day, surely there will be a resurrection of relations too, and the other world will be like this, in which men will marry as they do here; and if so, *Whose wife of the seven shall this woman be?*" they all having an equal claim to her." Now our Saviour, for resolving of this question, first shows the different state of men in this and the other world: *The children of this world*, says Christ, *marry, and are given in marriage*; but in the resurrection they do neither: as if our Lord had said, "After men have lived a while in this world, they die, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world, men shall become immortal, and live for ever; and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease: for when men can die no more, there will be no need of any new supplies of mankind." Secondly, Our Saviour having got clear of the sadducees' objection, by taking away the ground and foundation of it, produces an argument for the proof of the soul's immortality, and the body's resurrection, thus: "Those to whom Almighty God pronounces himself a God, are alive; but God pronounces himself a God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

many hundred years after their bodies were dead ; therefore their souls are yet alive, otherwise God could not be their God." *For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* From the whole note, 1. That there is no opinion so absurd, no error so monstrous, that having had a mother, will die for lack of a nurse : the beastly opinion of the mortality of the soul, and of the annihilation of the body, finds sadducees to profess and propagate it. Learn, 2. The certainty of another life after this, in which men shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, accordingly as they behave themselves here ; though some men live like beasts, they shall not die like them, neither shall their last end be like theirs. Note, 3. The glorified saints, in the morning of the resurrection, shall be like unto the glorious angels ; not like them in essence and nature, but like them in their properties and qualities, namely, in holiness and purity, in immortality and incorruptibility ; and also like them in their way and manner of living. They shall no more stand in need of meat or drink than the angels do ; but shall live the same heavenly and immortal lives that the angels live. Note, 4. That all those that are in covenant with God, whose God the Lord is, their souls immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, at the resurrection, shall be sharers in the same happiness with their souls. If God be just, the soul must live, and the body must rise ; for good men must be rewarded, and wicked men punished. God will most certainly, one time or other, plentifully reward the righteous, and punish the evil doers : but this being not always done in this life, the justice of God requires it to be done in the next.

39 ¶ Then certain of the scribes answering, said, Master, thou hast well said.

40 And after that, they durst not ask him any question at all.

41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son.

42 And David himself saith, in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand.

43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son ?

The design of our blessed Saviour, in propounding this question to the pharisees (how Christ could be David's Son, when David by inspiration called him Lord) was two-fold : 1. To confute the people's erroneous opinion, touching the person of the Messiah, who they thought should be a mere man, in the stock and lineage of David only, and not the Son of God. 2. To strengthen the faith of his disciples, touching his godhead, against the time that they should see him suffer and rise again : the place Christ alludes to, is psalm cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand. The Lord, that is, God the Father, said to my*

Lord, that is, to God the Son, who was to be incarnate, whom David calleth his Lord, both as God, and as Mediator, his Lord by a right of creation and redemption also : now the question our Saviour puts to the pharisees is this, How Christ could be both David's Lord and David's son ? no son being Lord of his own father ; therefore, if Christ were David's sovereign, he must be more than man, more than David's son. As man, he was David's son ; as God-man, he was David's Lord. Note hence, 1. Though Christ was truly and really man, yet he was more than a mere man ; he was Lord unto, and the salvation of, his own forefathers. Note, 2. That the only way to reconcile the scriptures which speak concerning Christ, is to believe and acknowledge him to be both God and man in one person. The Messiah, as man, was to come forth out of David's loins ; but as God-man, was David's Lord, his Sovereign, and Saviour ; as man, he was David's son ; as God-man, he was Lord of his own father.

45 ¶ Then in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples,

46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts :

47 Which devour widow's houses, and for a show make long prayers ; the same shall receive greater damnation.

Observe here, What it is that our Saviour condemns : not civil salutations in the market-place, not the chief seats in the synagogues, not the uppermost rooms at feasts ; but their fond affecting of these things, and their ambitious aspiring after them : it was not their taking, but their loving the uppermost rooms at feasts, which our Saviour condemns. God is the God of order ; there may and ought to be a precedency among persons ; God commands us to give honor to whom honor is due ; but pride and ambition are detestable and hateful vices, especially in such as are teachers, and ought to be patterns of humility. Observe, 2. How our Saviour condemns the pharisees for their gross hypocrisy, and coloring over their abominable covetousness with a specious pretence of religion, making long prayers in the temple and synagogues for widows, and thereupon persuading them to give bountifully to corban, that is, the common treasury for the temple ; some part of which was employed for their maintenance. Whence we learn, That it is no new thing for designing hypocrites to cover the foulest transgressions with the cloak of religion ; thus the pharisees made their prayers a cloak and cover for their covetousness.

CHAPTER XXI.

AND he looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury,

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow, casting in thither two mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.

4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

At the door of the temple, through which all the people passed in and out, who came up three times a year at the solemn feasts, to worship Almighty God in his own house, there was a chest set (like the poor man's box in some of our churches) into which all persons cast their free-will offerings and oblations, which were employed either for the use of the poor, or for the service of the temple; and what was thus given, our Saviour calls an offering to God, ver. 4. *These of their abundance have cast in unto the offerings of God.* Thence learn, 1. That what we rightly give to the relief of the poor, or for the service, and towards the support of God's public worship, is consecrated to God; and as such is accepted of him, and ought to be esteemed by us. Observe, 2. with what pleasure and satisfaction our Saviour sets himself to view those offerings; *He beheld the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.* Thence note, That our Saviour sees with pleasure, and beholds with delight, whatever we have hearts to give unto him: whether for the relief of his members, or for the support of his service. O blessed Saviour, while now thou sittest at thy Father's right hand in glory, thou seest every hand that is stretched forth for the relief of thy poor members here on earth. Ver 2. *But a certain poor woman cast in two mites.* Several circumstances relating both to the person and the action are here observable: as, 1. The person that offered was a widow: the married woman is under the careful provision of her husband; if she spends, he earns; but the widow has no hands but her own to work for her. 2. She was a poor widow; poverty added to the sorrow of her widowhood, she had no rich jointure to live upon; it is some alleviation of the sorrow that attends widowhood, when the hand is left fall, though the bed is left empty; this widow was needy and desolate, but yet gives; some in her circumstances would have looked upon themselves as having right to receive what was given by others, rather than to give any thing themselves. Observe, 3. Her bounty and munificence in giving, *Her two mites* are proclaimed by Christ to be more than all the rich men's talents; more in respect to the mind and affection of the giver; more with respect to the proportion of the gift; a mite to her being more than pounds to others. Pounds were little to them; two mites were all to her, she leaves herself nothing; so that the poor woman gave not only more than any of them all, but more than they all. Christ's eye looked at once into the bottom of her purse, and into the bottom of her heart, and judged of the offering, rather by the mind of the giver, than by the value of the gift. From this instance we learn, 1. That the poorer, yea, the poorest sort of people, are not exempted from good works; but even they must and ought to exercise

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charity according to their ability. This poor widow, that had not a pound, nay, not a penny, presents God with a farthing. 2. That in all works of pious charity which we perform, God looks at the heart, the will, and the affection of the giver, more than at the largeness and liberality of the gift. It is not said, The Lord loveth a liberal giver; but a cheerful giver; *He accepteth the gift according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* O our God, the poorest of us thy servants have our two mites also, a soul and a body; persuade and enable us to offer them both unto thee, though they are thine own already, yet thou wilt graciously accept them; and O how happy shall we be in thy acceptance.

5 ¶ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts, he said,

6 *As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another; which shall not be thrown down.*

Our blessed Saviour being now ready to depart from the temple, never more after this entering into it, and his disciples showing him with wonder and admiration, the magnificent structures and buildings thereof, apprehending that in regard of its invincible strength it could not be destroyed; not considering, that sin will determine and blow up the most magnificent and famous structures; for sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, to their end. *Not one stone,* says Christ, *shall be left upon another;* which threatening was exactly fulfilled after Christ's death, when Titus the Roman emperor destroyed the city, burnt the temple, and Turnus Rufus, the general of his army, ploughed up the very foundation on which the temple stood; thus was the threatening of God fulfilled, Jer. xxvi. 18. *Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become an heap.* Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities, and kingdoms; Jerusalem, the glory of the world, is here by sin threatened to be made a desolation. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. It is neither the temple's strength nor beauty, that can oppose or withstand God's power.

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass?

A double question is here propounded to our Saviour; namely, When the destruction of Jerusalem should be? and, What would be the signs of it? From whence learn, What an itching curiosity there is in the best of men, to know futurities, and to understand things that shall come to pass hereafter; and when that hereafter will come to pass. O how happy were it, if we were as forward to obey the

declarations of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the hidden counsels of his secret will; *Tell us, say the disciples, when shall these things be?*

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

9 But when ye shall hear of wars, and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by.

10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Observe here, Christ does not gratify his disciples' curiosity, but acquaints them with their present duty; namely, to watch against deceivers and seducers, who should have the impudence to affirm themselves to be Christ, *saying, I am Christ*; some Christ personal, or the Messiah; others Christ doctrinal, affirming their erroneous opinions to be Christ's mind and doctrine: *Take heed that ye be not deceived, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ.* Observe farther, the signs which our Saviour gives of Jerusalem's approaching destruction; namely, the many broils and commotions, the civil disorders and dissensions, that should be found amongst the Jews immediately before; *Ye shall hear of wars and commotions, and see fearful sights, and great signs from heaven.* Josephus declares, That there appeared in the air chariots and horsemen skirmishing, and that a blazing star in fashion of a sword hung over the city for a year together. Hence learn, That war, pestilence, and famine, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel grace. *Ye shall hear of war, famine, and pestilence.*

12 But before all these they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before, what ye shall answer.

15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist.

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death.

17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

Our Saviour here goes on in giving farther signs of Jerusalem's destruction. He declares, 1. The sharp persecution that should fall upon the apostles themselves; *They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you.* Learn thence, That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned upon the ambassadors of Christ, and falls heaviest on the ministers of God. He acquaints them, 2. That for preaching his holy doctrine, they should be brought before kings and rulers; but advises them not to be anxiously thoughtful, or exceedingly solicitous what they should say, for it should be suggested to them by the holy Ghost, what they should say in that hour. Learn thence, That though the truth of Christ may be opposed, yet the defenders of it shall never be ashamed; for rather than they shall want a tongue to plead for it, God himself will prompt them by his Holy Spirit, and suggest such arguments to them, as all their enemies shall not be able to gainsay: *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.* Observe 3. How he describes the bitter enmity of the world against the preachers of the gospel, to be such as would overcome and extinguish even the natural affection of nearest relations; *ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren:* grace teaches us to lay down our lives for the brethren; but corruption in general, and enmity to the gospel in particular, will put brother upon taking away the life of brother, and cause parents to hate and persecute their own bowels. Observe lastly, our Saviour's admonition, *In your patience possess ye your souls.* There are three degrees of christian patience; the first consists in a silent submission to God's will; the second in a thankful acceptance of God's fatherly rod; the third in serious cheerfulness under sorrowful dispensations, rejoicing in tribulation, and counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations; by this patience we possess our souls; as faith gives us the possession of Christ, so patience gives us the possession of ourselves; an impatient man is not in his own hand, for what title soever we have to our own souls, we have no possession of them without patience: *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains: and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries, enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

25 ¶ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.

The sense is this: "As soon as ye shall see the Roman army appear before the city of Jerusalem (called by St. Matthew and St. Mark, *The Abomination of Desolation*, that is, the army, which is such an abomination to you, and the occasion of such desolation wherever it goes) then let every one that values his own safety, fly as far and as fast as he can, as Lot fled from the flames of Sodom; and be glad, if by flight he can save his life, though he lose all besides." Learn thence, That when Almighty God is pouring forth his fury upon a sinful people, it is both a lawful and a necessary duty, by flight, to endeavour to shelter ourselves from the approaching calamity and desolation. *When ye see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, flee to the mountains.* Observe farther, The dreadful relation that our Saviour here gives of those desolating calamities which were coming upon Jerusalem, partly from the Roman army without, and partly from the seditions and factions of the zealots within, who committed such outrages and slaughters, that there were no less than eleven hundred thousand Jews slain, and ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners. They that bought our Saviour for thirty pence, where now themselves sold thirty for a penny. Now did the temple itself become a sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, and was consumed to ashes. Observe lastly, What encouragement Christ gives to all his faithful disciples and followers; he bids them

look up, and lift up their heads, when these calamities came upon others; look up with confidence and joy, for your redemption, salvation, and deliverance, then approacheth. God had a remnant which he designed should survive that destruction, to be an holy seed; these are called upon to look up with cheerfulness and joy, when the hearts of others were failing them for fear. And thus shall it be at the general day of judgment (of which Jerusalem's visitation was a type.) Lord, how will the glory and terror of that day dazzle the eyes, and terrify the hearts, of all the enemies of Christ; but delight the eyes, and rejoice the hearts of all that love and fear him, that serve and obey him; then may the friends of Christ look up, and lift up their heads, for their full redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees:

30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

33 Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

In these words, our Saviour declares the certainty of his coming to visit Jerusalem, for all her barbarous and bloody cruelty towards himself, his prophets, and apostles; he is pleased to set forth this by the similitude of the fig-tree, whose beginning to bud, declares the summer at hand; thus our Saviour tells them, That when they should see the fore-mentioned signs, they might conclude the destruction of their city and temple to be nigh at hand; and accordingly some of that generation then living did see these predictions fulfilled. Learn, That God is no less punctual in the execution of his threatenings upon incorrigible sinners, than he is faithful in the performance of his promises towards his own people; the truth and veracity of God is as much concerned to execute his threatenings, as it is to fulfil his promises.

34 ¶ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Here our Lord cautions his disciples against such a disposition and indisposition of mind, as may render them unfit and unready for his coming and appearance; and to take heed of two dangerous sins, namely, voluptuousness and earthly-mindedness, which above any other sins will indispose us for the duty of watchfulness. There is a threefold reason why our Saviour forewarns us of these sins, with reference to the day of judgment: 1. Because they are *peccata præcurrentia*, certain prognostics of the day of judgment approaching; *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.* 2. Because they are *peccata accelerantia*, they do not only foretel, but hasten the coming of Christ. To see the world drowned in voluptuousness and earthly-mindedness, in security and sensuality, is not only a sign to foretel, but a sin that hastens judgment, and pulls down vengeance upon a wicked world. 3. Christ bids us beware of these sins with reference to the day of judgment, because these sins are *derisoria judicii*, they beget in men a profane spirit of scoffing and deriding at the notices of Christ's appearing to judgment, 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. *In the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?* Our Saviour having thus warned them of these sins, he next exhorts them to watchfulness, *Watch ye therefore, for as a snare that day will come upon you:* that is, very suddenly, and very unexpectedly; as a snare has a threefold property, to catch suddenly, to hold sure, to destroy certainly. Our Lord's coming to Jerusalem was very unexpected, and his coming to us by death and judgment will steal upon us, if we be not watchful. Watch we then, for our Lord will come; at what hour he will come cannot certainly be known; there is no time in which we can promise or assure ourselves, that our Lord will not come: the time of our whole life is little enough to prepare for his coming. Our preparation for, will be no acceleration or hastening of, our Lord's coming. And oh! how dreadful will his coming be, if we be found off our watch, and altogether unready for his appearance? We must appear in judgment, but shall not be able to stand in the judgment: we shall see Christ as a judge, but not behold him as a Redeemer.

37 And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Our Lord has exhorted his disciples in the foregoing verses to diligence and prayer; here he set an example of both before them. Busying himself in God's service all the day, and at night spending much time in prayer; in the day time he was in the temple preaching, in the evening he was on the mount of Olives praying. Lord! what an example of indefatigable zeal and diligence hast thou set before thy ministers and members! O that, when our master comes, we may be found working, our people watching, and both they and we waiting for the joyful coming of our Lord and Saviour! *Amen.*

CHAPTER XXII.

NOW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him: for they feared the people.

This chapter gives a sad and sorrowful relation of the chief priests' conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour, in which we have three particulars observable. 1. The persons making this conspiracy, *the chief priests, scribes, and elders*, that is, the whole Jewish sanhedrim, or general council; they all lay their malicious heads together, to contrive the destruction of the holy and innocent Jesus. Thence learn, That general councils have erred, and may err fundamentally, both in matters of doctrine and practice: so did this general council at Jerusalem, consisting of chief priests, doctors, and elders, with the highpriest, their president; they did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, after all the miracles wrought before their eyes, but ignominiously put him to death. Observe, 2. The manner of this conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour; it was clandestine, secret, and subtle. *They consulted how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.* Learn hence, That satan makes use of the subtlety of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power, for his own purposes and designs: the devil never sends a fool on his errand. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time when this conspiracy was managed, *at the feast of the passover.* It was a custom among the Jews to execute malefactors at their solemn feasts, at which time all the Jews came up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, and then put the malefactor to death, that all Israel might see and fear, and not do so wickedly. Accordingly, the feast of the passover was waited for by the Jews, as a fit opportunity to put our Saviour to death. The only objection was, that it might occasion a tumult and uproar amongst the people, there being such a mighty concourse at that time in Jerusalem; but Judas making them a proffer, they readily comply with the motion, and resolve to take the first opportunity to put our Saviour to death.

3 ¶ Then entered satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Observe here, 1. The person betraying our blessed Saviour, Judas; Judas, a professor, Judas, a preacher, Judas, an apostle, and one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of the world to be his dearest friend, one of his family and household: shall we wonder to find friends unfriendly or unfaithful to us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own family! Observe, 2. The heinous nature of Judas's sin; he betrayed Jesus; Jesus, his Maker and Master. It is no strange or uncommon thing for the vilest of sins, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness and religion. Observe, 3. What was the occasion that led Judas to the commission of this sin; it was his inordinate love of money. I do not find that Judas had any particular malice, spite, or ill-will, against our Saviour, but a base and unworthy spirit of covetousness possessed by him, and this made him sell his Master. Covetousness is the root of sin; an eager and insatiable thirst after the world is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins; for which reason our Saviour doubles his caution, Luke xii. 15. "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" it shows us both the great danger of the sin, and the great care that we ought to take to preserve ourselves from it.

7 ¶ Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

11 And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready.

13 And they went and found as he had said unto them; and they made ready the passover.

The time for the celebration of the passover being now at hand, Christ sends two of his disciples, Peter and John, to Jerusalem, to prepare what was needful in order thereunto: and here we have observable, 1. An eminent proof and evidence of Christ's divinity, in foretelling to his disciples all the particular occurrences and circumstances which they should meet with in the city, as, *a man bearing a pitcher of water, &c.* Observe, 2. How readily the heart of the householder was disposed to receive our Saviour and his disciples, and to accommodate them with all things needful upon this

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occasion. Our blessed Saviour had not a lamb of his own, and peradventure no money, wherewith to purchase one; yet he finds a more agreeable accommodation in this poor man's house, than if he had dwelt in Ahab's ivory palace, and had the provisions of Solomon's table. When Christ has a passover to celebrate, he will dispose the hearts of his children and servants to a free reception of himself. The room that Christ will enter into must be a large room, an upper room, a room furnished and prepared; *a large room* is the emblem of an enlarged heart, enlarged with love, with joy, and thankfulness; *an upper room* is a heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly meditations; and *a room furnished* is a soul adorned with all the graces of the Holy Spirit: into such a heart doth Christ enter, and there delight to dwell; *Here is my rest for ever*, says Christ, *here will I dwell, for I have a delight herein.*

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 ¶ And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 ¶ But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.

23 And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

Observe here, 1. What ardency of desire, and vehemency of affection, our holy Lord expresses to celebrate the passover with his disciples, and to administer the sacramental supper to them before he left them; *With desire*

I have desired to eat with you before I suffer. Thence learn, That it is very necessary, when sufferings do appear, especially when death doth approach, to have immediate recourse to the table of the Lord, which affords both an antidote against fear, and is a restorative to our faith. Christ, the night before he suffered, communicated with his disciples. Observe, 2. The unexampled boldness of the impudent traitor Judas; though he had sold his Master, he presumes to sit down at the table with him, and with the other disciples: had the presence of Judas polluted this ordinance to any but himself, doubtless our Saviour would not have suffered him to approach unto it. It teaches us, That although nothing be more ordinary than for unholy persons to press into the holy ordinances of God, which they have no right (whilst such) to approach unto, yet their presence pollutes the ordinances only to themselves. Holy persons are not polluted by their sins, therefore ought not to be discouraged from coming, by their presence. Observe, 3. Christ did not name Judas, and say, O thou perfidious traitor; but, *Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* Doubtless Christ did not name him, because he would not drive him to despair, but wished to draw him to repentance. But, Lord, thou knowest us; when thou namest us not: O how sad is it for any of thy family, who pretend friendship with thee, to conspire against thee! and after they have eat of thy bread, to lift up the heel against thee! Observe, 4. That though Judas was not named, yet he saw himself pointed at by our Saviour; *Behold, the hand that betrayeth me is on the table:* and Judas' heart told him whose hand that was; yea, though Judas heard that dreadful sentence denounced against him, *Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed,* yet he is no more blanked than innocency itself: this shameless man had the impudence to say to our blessed Saviour, *Master, is it I?* Though St. Luke says it not, the other Evangelists tell us, That Christ answered him, *Thou sayest it.* Did not Judas (think we) blush extremely, and hang down his guilty head, at so gallant an intimation? Nothing less; we read not of any thing like it. Lord! how does obstinacy in sinning steel the brow, and render it incapable of all relenting impressions? Immediately after the celebration of the passover, followed the institution of the Lord's supper; where we have observable, The author, the time, the elements, and the ministerial actions. Observe, 1. The author of this new sacrament, *Jesus took bread.* Learn thence, that to institute a sacrament is the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ; the church has no power to make new sacraments; it is only her duty to celebrate those which our Saviour has made. 2. The time of the institution, the night before the passion: *The night in which he was betrayed, he took bread.* 3. The sacramental elements, *bread and wine;* bread representing the body, and wine the blood of our Redeemer: bread being an absolutely necessary food, a common and obvious food, a strengthening and refreshing food; and wine being the most excellent drink, the most pleasant and delightful, the most cordial and restorative: for these reasons amongst others, did Christ consecrate and set these creatures apart, for those holy purposes for which he designed them. 4. The ministerial actions, breaking of the bread, and blessing of the cup; *Jesus took bread;* that is, separated it, and set it apart from common use, for holy purposes; *He blessed it,* that is, he prayed for a blessing upon, and *broke it,* thereby shadowing forth his body broken upon the cross:

and he gave it to his disciples, saying, This broken bread signifies my body, which is suddenly to be broken upon the cross, for the redemption and salvation of a lost world; *Do you likewise this in remembrance of my death.* As to the cup, Christ having set it apart, by prayer and thanksgiving, he commands his disciples to drink all of it; *For,* says he, *this cup is the New Testament in my blood;* that is, the wine in this cup doth represent the shedding of my blood, by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified and confirmed. *Drink ye all of this,* says our Saviour: whence we gather, That every communicant has as undoubted a right to the cup, as he has to the bread, in the Lord's supper; therefore, for the church of Rome to deny the cup to the common people is sacrilege, and directly contrary to Christ's institution.

24 ¶ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors.

26 But ye *shall* not be so: but he that is the greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth,

If these words be not placed out of order by St. Luke here, it may seem very strange, that the apostles, immediately after the receiving the sacrament, should entertain their minds with thoughts of precedence and superiority; and much stranger yet, that they should discourse openly of such a subject as this, especially considering what our Saviour had just before told them, that *he was betrayed into the hands of sinners.* But whether at this time or not, it is most certain, at some time or other, a strife was found amongst them, *which should be the greatest.* Now, that our Saviour might effectually quench those unhappy sparks of ambition which were kindled in his apostles' minds, he tells them, that supremacy and dominion belong to secular princes, not to evangelical pastors, who ought to carry themselves with humility and condescension one towards another. Not that Christ, directs to a parity and equality amongst his ministers, or forbids the pre-eminency of some over others; but the affecting of superiority is that which our Saviour disalloweth. Learn, 1. That so far ought the ministers of Christ to be from affecting a dominion and superiority of power over their fellow-brethren, that in

imitation of Christ, their Lord and Master, they ought to account themselves fellow-servants; *I am among you as one that serveth*. 2. That such ministers as do love and affect pre-eminency and superiority, are most unfit for it: and they deserve it best that seek it least. 3. That the dignity and honor which the ministers of Christ should chiefly and only affect, is in another world; and the way to be the greatest and highest there, is to be low and humble here: mean in our own eyes, and little in our own esteem: *Whosoever is chief, says Christ, let him be your servant*.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations,

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me:

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Observe here, What an honorable acknowledgement Christ makes of the constancy of his disciples' love and affection towards him; *Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations*: that is in my afflictions, and sufferings. It is an easy matter to abide with Christ in days of peace, in times of consolation: but when we are under afflictions, temptations, and troubles, then we abide and keep close to Christ, is the proof of love and friendship; and as Christ makes an honorable mention of their constancy towards him, so he presently assures them of an honorable reward; *I appoint unto you a kingdom*. Learn thence, That such as are sharers with Christ in his sufferings, shall certainly communicate with him in his glory; *If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him*; and whereas our Saviour promises his apostles, *To sit upon thrones with him, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*; we may gather, that such ministers as do most service for Christ, and forsake most to follow him, and continue in temptation and tribulation with him, shall in his kingdom partake of most honor and dignity with him and from him; *You shall eat and drink in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*; possibly, the apostles, and all the zealous, faithful, and laborious ministers of Jesus Christ, shall be nearer his throne in heaven than either saints or angels; nearer than the angels, because, by Christ's assuming the human nature, they are more nearly allied to him; he is their friend, but our brother: and nearer than other saints, as having done more eminent service for Christ, and brought more honor and glory to him, by a laborious diligence in their place and station. Dan. xii. 3. *They that turn many to righteousness shall shine, &c.*

31 ¶ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat;

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy

faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Here I shall give, 1. The general sense of the words. 2. The particular matters contained in them. 3. The special observations from them. The sense of the words is this: As for you, my disciples in general, for thee, Peter, in particular, I must tell thee, that satan hath accused you all before God, and desires that he may have the sifting of you all by his winnowing winds of temptation and persecution, that he may shake your faith, and weaken your confidence: but I have prayed for you all, and particularly for thyself, who art in greatest danger of falling, because so confident of thine own strength and standing, that thy faith, though severely shaken, may not utterly fail; and when, by repentance, thou art recovered from thy fall, be careful to confirm and strengthen others, that they fall not in like manner. The particular matters contained in these words, are three: a christian's danger, a christian's safety, and a christian's duty. 1. A christian's danger; *Satan hath a desire to sift you*. Where observe, 1. The person particularly warned of the danger, *Simon, Simon*; the doubling of the word, doubtless, carries a special intimation with it; it denotes the greatness and nearness of Peter's danger, his own security and insensibleness of that danger, and the great affection of Christ, his monitor, to give him warning of his danger. Observe, 2. The warning itself, and that is of a devilish conspiracy against himself, and all his apostles, *satan hath desired to have you*; to have you for his own, if it might be; to have you, as believers, rather than other men; to have you as eminent believers, rather than other christians: and to have you as apostles and ministers, rather than other eminent believers. And as satan has desired to have you, so to sift you too, to winnow you as wheat; not to fetch out the chaff, but to make thee chaff. Here note, That satan has his winnowing winds of temptation, and his tempestuous winds of persecution, for the sifting of God's children. Note farther, That it is the wheat, the good corn, that satan winnows; not chaff, nor dross; sinners, that are all chaff, and nothing but dross, satan will not be at the pains to sift and winnow them; but what is this sifting? *Answer*, In sifting, two things are performed: 1. The agitation, shaking, and tossing of the corn from side to side. 2. The separation of the corn from the chaff and dust; satan intends the former, God effects the latter; *cribratione non perditur, sed purgatur frumentum; the corn is improved, not impaired, by winnowing*. The saints of God shall be no losers in the end by satan's temptations, how many and strong soever they may be in the way. Observe, 2. The christian's safety; *But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*. Where note, 1. The care that Christ had of Peter, and in him of all believers; *I have prayed for thee*; for thee as a believing christian, and for thee as a tempted christian: and it is not said, I will pray for thee, but I have prayed for thee. Christ prayed for Peter before Peter understood that he had need of Christ's prayer; Christ prayed for Peter, as soon as ever satan desired to sift Peter: our Intercessor is full as nimble and speedy in his suit for us, as satan is in his accusations against us: he has desired, but I have prayed; he is a potent assailant, but thou hast a powerful assistant. Observe, 2. The subject-matter prayed for. *That thy faith fail not*; not that thy faith be not assaulted, not that thy faith be not

shaken, but that thy faith may not fail by an absolute and total deficiency. The third particular is, the christian's duty; *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*—When converted, that is, when recovered from thy fall, when restored upon thy repentance to the divine favor. This conversion is not from a state of sin; Peter was so converted before; but it was from an act of sin, into which he should lapse and relapse; *Strengthen thy brethren*; that is, establish others in the faith, from which thou art shamefully fallen thyself: now the lessons of instruction from the whole are these:—1. That temptations are like siftings; God sifts, to purge away our dust and dross; satan sifts, not to get out the chaff, but to bolt out the flour; his temptations are levelled against our faith. 2. That satan has a continual desire to be sifting and winnowing God's flour; satan's own children are all bran, all chaff; these he sifts not: God's children have flour mixed with bran, good wheat mixed with chaff; these he desires to sift, winnow, and fan: not to separate the bran and dross, but to destroy the flour—Learn, 3. That the intercession of Christ gives security, satisfaction, and encouragement, to all believers; that though their faith may by temptations, be shaken and assaulted, yet, that it shall never be finally vanquished and overcome: *I have prayed that thy faith fail not*. 4. That lapsed christians, when recovered and restored, ought to endeavour to restore and recover, to strengthen and establish others: *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

St. Peter's resolution to accompany Christ, both to prison and to death, was holy and good: but his too confident opinion of his own strength and ability so to do, without a divine aid and assistance, was his failing and infirmity.—Self-confidence is a sin too incident to the holiest and best of men. Little did St. Peter think what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if once God left him to himself and to satan's assaults. Learn farther, How hard a matter it is for a christian to excel in gifts, and not to be over-confident and conceited. To see a man eminent in gifts, and yet exemplary in humility, is a rare sight: if we stand in the evil day, it is an humble fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

36 Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

As if our Lord had said, "Hitherto I have been with you, and you have had my special protection and careful provision, though you went without purse, scrip, or sword: but the time is now at hand when I must leave you; when your friends will be few, and your enemies many; therefore make such provision for yourselves, as prudence shall direct.—Indeed, my sufferings will be first; I must be numbered with the transgressors, and all things that are written of me must be accomplished, and will suddenly be fulfilled; and after me you will next come upon the stage, therefore prepare and provide for it." Learn, That Christ having forewarned his members, but especially his ministers, of the dangers, distresses, and difficulties, that they are to conflict and encounter with; it is their duty, by faith and patience, with courage and christian resolution, to be well armed and prepared against them.

39 ¶ And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.

42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.

46 And he said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Our blessed Saviour being now come to the mount of Olives, and having entered with his disciples into the garden near it, whither he used to retire and pray; in this place he falls into a bitter and bloody agony, in which he prayed with wonderful fervor and importunity; his sufferings were now coming on a great pace, and he meets them upon his knees, and would be found in a praying posture. Learn thence, That prayer is the best preparative for, as well as the most powerful support under the heaviest sufferings that can befall us. As to this prayer of our Saviour, in his agony, many particulars are very observable. As, 1. The time when he prayed thus extraordinarily, it was the evening before he suffered, just before Judas, with his black guard, came to apprehend him; and when he did come, he found him in a praying posture; our Lord teaching us by his example, that when imminent dangers are before us, especially when death is apprehended by us, it is our duty to be very much in prayer to God, and very fervent in our wrestlings with him. Observe, 2. The subject-matter of our Lord's prayer. *That, if possible, the cup might pass from him*; that is, That he might escape the dreadful wrath, at the which he was so sore amazed. But what! did Christ now begin to repent of his undertaking for sinners? Did he shrink and give back, when he came to the pinch? No, nothing like this; but as he had two natures, being God and man, so he had two distinct wills; as man, he feared and shunned death; as God-man, he willingly submitted to it. The divine nature, and the human spirit of Christ, did now assault each other with disagreeing interests: Again, This prayer was not absolute, but conditional; *Father, if it may be, if thou wilt, if it please thee, let the cup pass: if not, I will drink it.* The cup of sufferings, we see, is a very bitter and distasteful cup, a cup which human nature abhors; yet doth God oftentimes put this bitter cup of affliction into the hands of those whom he does sincerely love; and when he doth so, it is their duty to drink it with silence and submission, as here their Lord did before them. Observe, 3. The manner of our Lord's prayer in this his agony; and here we may remark, 1. It was a solitary prayer; he went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best and dearest friends is not always seasonable; there are times and seasons when a christian would not be willing that the most intimate friend he has in the world should be with him, to hear what passes in secret betwixt him and his God. Again, 2. It was a humble prayer; that appears by the postures in which he casts himself, sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate upon his face; he lies in the very dust, and lower he could not lie, and his heart was as low as his body. 3. It was a vehement, fervent, and importunate prayer; such was the fervor of his spirit, that he prayed himself into an agony. O let us blush to think how unlike our praying frame of spirit is to Christ's! Lord, what coldness, deadness, drowsiness, formality, and laziness, is found in our prayers! How often do our lips move, when our hearts stand still! Observe, 4. The posture which the disciples were found in; when our Lord was praying, in his agony, they were fast asleep. Good God! Could they possibly sleep at such a time as this! when Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful, could their eyes be thus heavy? Learn thence, That the very best of Christ's disciples may be, and oftentimes are, overtaken with great infirmities, when the most important duties are performing; *Then cometh he to his disciples, and findeth them sleeping.*

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Observe, 5. The mild, meek, and gentle rebuke, which he gives his disciples for their sleeping: he said unto them, *Why sleep ye? Could ye not watch with me one hour?* "What, not watch when your Master was in such danger! Could you not watch with me when I am going to lay down my life for you? What, not one hour, and that the parting hour too." Learn hence, That the holiest and best resolved christians, who have willing spirits for Christ and his service, yet in regard of the weakness of the flesh, and the frailty of human nature, it is their duty to watch and pray, and thereby guard themselves against temptations. *Rise and pray, lest ye enter into, &c.*

47 ¶ And while he yet spake, behold, a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord shall we smite with the sword?

50 ¶ And one of them smote the servant of the highpriest, and cut off his right ear.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

It was the lot and portion of our blessed Saviour here, we find, to be betrayed into the hands of his mortal enemies, by the treachery of a false and dissembling friend: and in this sad relation before us we have observable, The traitor, the treason, the manner how, and the time when, this treasonable design was executed. Observe, 1. The traitor, *Judas*; all the Evangelists carefully describe him by his name, *Judas*, *Judas Iscariot*, lest he should be mistaken for Jude, the brother of James; and by his office one of the twelve. Lord! how ought the greatest professors to look well to themselves, and to the grounds and principles of their profession! for a profession begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostasy. Observe, 2. The occasion of the treason, covetousness, or the inordinate love of worldly wealth; and accordingly, the devil lays a temptation before him exactly suited to his temper and inclination, and it instantly overcame him. Learn

hence, That persons are never in such imminent danger of falling into sin, as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master lusts. O, pray we, that God would keep us from temptations suited to our predominant lust and corruption. Observe, 3. The treason of Judas; He led on an armed multitude to the place where Christ was, gave them a signal to discover him by, and bids them *lay hands upon him, and hold him fast*; which treason of Judas was attended with these black and hellish aggravations; he had been a witness of our Saviour's miracles and hearer of our Lord's doctrines: what he did was not by solicitation; the chief priests did not send to him, but *he went to them*. Lord! how dangerous it is to allow ourselves in any secret sin. None can say, how far that one sin may in time lead us. Should any one have told Judas, that his covetousness would at last make him deny his Lord, and sell his Saviour; he would have said, with Hazael, *Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?* Observe, 4. The endeavour made by the disciples for their Master's rescue. One of them (St. Matthew says it was St. Peter) *drew a sword, and cut off the ear of Malchus*: but why not the ear of Judas rather? Because, though Judas was most faulty, yet Malchus might be most forward to arrest and carry off our Saviour. O how does a pious breast boil with indignation at the sight of any open affront offered to its Saviour! Yet, though St. Peter's heart was sincere, his hand was too rash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions; and accordingly, Christ, who accepted the affection, reproved the action. To resist authority, even in Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel. Peter did well to ask his Master, *If he should smite with the sword?* but he ought to have stayed his hand till Christ had given him his answer: However, Peter's sin occasioned a miracle from our Saviour; Christ heals that ear miraculously, which Peter cut off unwarrantably; yet the sight of this miracle converted none. O how insufficient are all outward means of conversion, without the Spirit's inward operation!

54 ¶ Then they took him, and led him, and brought him into the highpriest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, this man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord; how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

This paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of the fall and rising of Peter: of his sin in denying his Master, and of his recovery by repentance; both must be considered distinctly. First, Touching his sin and fall; there are four particulars observable relating thereunto; namely, the sin itself, the occasion of that sin, the reiteration and repetition of it, and the aggravating circumstances attending it. Observe, 1. The sin itself, the denial of Christ Jesus, his Lord and Master, *I know not the man*; and this backed with an oath, he sware that he knew him not. Lord! how may the slavish fear of suffering drive the holiest and best of men to commit the foulest and worst of sins! Observe, 2. The occasions leading to this sin, and they were these: First, His following Christ afar off; to follow Christ was the effect of Peter's faith, but to follow him afar off at this time, was the fruit of fear, and the effect of frailty. Woe unto us when temptation comes, if we be far from Christ's gracious presence and assistance. 2. His being in bad company, amongst Christ's enemies: would we escape temptation to sin, we must decline such company as would allure and draw us into sin. Peter had better have been a cold by himself alone, than warming himself at a fire, which was encompassed in with the blasphemies of the multitude, where his conscience, though not seared, was yet made hard. Another grand occasion of Peter's falling was a presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing: *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*. O Lord! to presume upon ourselves is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves; if ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling must enable us to stand. We soon fall, if we believe it impossible to fall. Observe, 3. The reiteration and repetition of this sin, he denied Christ again and again; he denies him first with a lie, then with an oath, and next with a curse. Lord! how dangerous is it not to resist the first beginnings of sin! If we yield to one temptation, Satan will assault us with more and stronger. Peter proceeded from a denial to a lie; from a lie to an oath; from an oath to an imprecation and curse. It is our wisdom vigorously to resist sin at the beginning: for then have we most power, and sin has least. Observe, 4. The heinous and aggravating circumstances of St. Peter's sin, and they are these: 1. The character of his person, a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle, a special favorite, who, with James and John, had the special honor to be with Christ at his transfiguration: yet he denies Christ. 2. The person whom he denies, his Master, his Saviour and Redeemer. He that in great humility had washed Peter's feet, had ate the passover with Peter, had given but just before the holy sacrament to

Peter, yet is this kind and condescending Saviour denied by Peter. 3. Consider the persons before whom he denied Christ; the chief priest's servants. O how surprising, and yet very pleasing, was it to them, to see one disciple betray and sell his Master, and another disown and deny him! 4. Consider the time when he denied him: it was but a few hours after he had received the holy sacrament from Christ's own hands; how unreasonable then is their objecting against coming to the Lord's table—that some who go to it, dishonor Christ as soon as they come from it; such examples ought not to discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but should excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, that our after-deportment may be suitable to the solemnity of a sacramental table. Observe, 5. That a small temptation he lay under thus shamefully to deny his Lord and Master: a damsel only, at first, spake to him. Had a band of armed soldiers appeared to him, and apprehended him; had he been bound and led away to the judgment-hall, and there threatened with the sentence of an ignominious death, some excuse might have been made better for him: but to disown his relation to Christ, upon a word spoken by a sorry maid that kept the door, the smallness of the temptation was a high aggravation of the crime. Ah, Peter, how little didst thou answer thy name at this time! Thou art not now a rock, but a reed, a pillar blown down by a woman's breath. O frail humanity, whose strength is weakness and infirmity! Note here, That in most of the saints' falls recorded in scripture, the first inticers to sin, or the accidental occasions of it, were women; witness (besides the first fall, that of Adam's, where the woman was first in the transgression) the fall of Lot, Samson, David, Solomon, and Peter; these are sad instances of the truth of what I speak. A weak creature may be a strong tempter; nothing is too impotent or useless for the devil's service; it was a great aggravation of Peter's sin, that the voice of a poor maid that kept the door, should be of more force to overcome him, than his faith in Jesus to sustain him. But what shall we say! small things are sufficient to cast us down, if God doth not hold us up; we sink under any burthen, if God sustains us not; and yield to the least temptation, if he leaves us to ourselves; a damsel shall then make a disciple shriek; and a door-keeper shall be able to drive an apostle before her. This is the account, in short, of St. Peter's fall, considered in itself, and with the circumstances relating to it. Now follows his recovery and rising again by repentance; and here we have observable, The suddenness, the means, and the manner of his repentance. Observe, 1. The suddenness of St. Peter's repentance; as his sin was sad, so was his repentance speedy; sin committed by surprise, and through the prevalence of a temptation that suddenly assaults us, is much sooner repented of, than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. David's murder and adultery were deliberate acts of sin, in which he lay almost twelve months, without any solemn repentance for them. St. Peter's denial was hasty and sudden, under a violent pang and passion of fear, and he takes the warning of the cock's crowing, to go forth speedily and weep for his transgression.

Observe, 2. The means of his repentance, which was twofold; the less principal means, was the crowing of the cock; the more principal means, were *Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ.*

1. The less principal means of St. Peter's rising and recovering by repentance, "the crowing of the cock;" as the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of the cock occasioned him to reflect. That God who always can work without means, can ever, when he pleases, work by weak and contemptible means, and open the mouth of a bird or a beast for the conversion of a man. But why doth our Lord make use of the crowing of a cock, as a means of bringing St. Peter to repentance? There is ever some mystery in Christ's institutions and instruments; the cock was a preacher, to call St. Peter to his duty, there being something of emblem between a cock and a preacher; the preacher ought to have the wings of a cock, to rouse himself from drowsiness and security, and to awaken others to a sense of their duty; he must have the watchfulness of the cock, to be ever ready to discover and forewarn of danger: he must have the voice of a cock, to cry aloud, to tell Israel of their sin, to terrify the roaring lion of hell, and make him tremble, as they say the natural lion does; in a word, he must observe the hours of the cock, to crow at all seasons; to preach the word in season and out of season. Again, 2. The more principal means of St. Peter's recovery were, *Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ.* 1. *Christ's looking upon Peter:* our Saviour looked upon Peter before either Peter looked upon our Saviour, or upon himself. O wonderful act of love and grace towards this fallen disciple! Christ was now upon his trial for his life (a time when our thoughts would have been wholly taken up about ourselves) but even then did Christ find leisure to think upon Peter, to remember his disconsolate disciple, to turn himself about, and give him a pitiful, but piercing look, even a look that melted and dissolved him into tears. We never begin to lament our sins till we are first lamented by our Saviour; *Jesus looked upon Peter*, that was the first more principal means of his repentance. But, 2. The other means was Peter's remembering the words of the Lord, *Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me.* Now this remembrance was an applicative and feeling remembrance; he remembered the prediction of Christ, and applied it sensibly to himself; teaching us, That the efficacy of Christ's word, in order to sound repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. Observe, 3. The manner of St. Peter's repentance; it was secret, it was sincere, it was lasting, and abiding. 1. It was secret; he went out and wept, *Vere dolet, qui sine teste dolet*; he sought a place of retirement, where he might mourn in secret; solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit; yet must I add, that as St. Peter's sorrow, so probably his shame, might cause him to go forth and weep. Christ looked upon him, and how ashamed must he be to look upon Christ, seeing he had so lately denied he had ever seen him? 2. St. Peter's repentance was sincere: *he wept bitterly*; his grief was extraordinary, and tears abundant; there is always a weeping that must follow sin; sin must cost the soul sorrow, either here or in hell; we must now either mourn awhile, or lament for ever. Doubtless St. Peter's tears were joined with hearty confessions of sin to God, and smart reflections upon himself, after this manner; "Lord! what have I done? I, a disciple, I, as

apostle, I that did so lately acknowledge my Master to be Christ the Lord, I that spoke with so much assurance—*Though all men deny thee, yet will not I*; I that promised to lay down my life for his sake; yet have I denied him, yet have I, with oaths and imprecations, disowned him, and this at the voice of a damsel, not at the sight of a drawn sword presented at my breast. Lord! what weakness, what wickedness, what unfaithfulness, have I been guilty of! O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep all my days for the fault of this one night!"—Thus may we suppose our lapsed apostle to have bemoaned himself; and happy was it for him, that he did so; for blessed are the tears of a converted revolter, and happy is the misery of a mourning offender. Observe, 3. St. Peter's repentance was not only secret and sincere, but lasting and abiding; he retained a very quick sense and lively remembrance of this sin upon his mind all his life after. Ecclesiastical history reports, that ever after, when St. Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he fell upon his knees and wept: others say, that he has wont to rise at midnight, and spent his time in prayer and humiliation, between cock-crowing and day-light: and the papists, who delight to turn every thing into folly and superstition, first began that practice of setting up what we call weather-cocks, upon towers and steeples, to put people in mind of St. Peter's fall and repentance by that signal. Lastly, St. Peter's repentance was an extraordinary zeal and forwardness for the service of Christ, to the end of his days. He had a burning love towards the holy Jesus ever after, which is now improved into a seraphic flame; *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee*, says he himself, John xxi. 17. And as an evidence of it, he fed Christ's sheep; for, in the Acts of the Apostles, we read of his extraordinary diligence to spread the gospel, and his travels in order thereunto are computed by some to be nine hundred and fifty miles. To end all, Have any of us fallen with Peter, though not with a formal abjuration, yet by a practical denying of him? let us go forth and weep with him; let us be more vigilant and watchful over ourselves for the time to come; let us express more fervent love and zeal for Christ, more diligence in his service, more concernedness for his honor and glory: this would be a happy improvement of his example: God grant it may have that blessed effect!

63 ¶ And the men that held Jesus, mocked him, and smote *him*.

64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

Observe here, The vile affronts, the horrid abuses, the injuries and indignities, which were put upon the holy and innocent Jesus in the day of his suffering; the rude officers and servants spit in his face, blindfolded his eyes, smote him with their hands, and, in contempt and scorn, bid him

prophecy who it was that smote him. Verily, there is no degree of contempt, no mark of shame, no kind of suffering, which we ought to decline for Christ's sake, who hid not his face from shame and spitting, upon our account.

66 ¶ And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes, came together, and led him into their council.

67 Saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe:

68 And if I also ask *you*, you will not answer me, nor let *me* go.

69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

Observe here, 1. Christ was judged and tried before a court that had no authority to judge or try him, ver, 66 *They led him into their council*. This was their great sanhedrim, or ecclesiastical court, which, according to its first constitution, was to consist of seventy grave, honorable, and learned men, who were to judge impartially for God, according to Numb. xi. 16. But this alas! consisted of a malicious pack of scribes and pharisees, men full of malice and revenge, and over these Caiaphas now presided; a head fit for such a body: but though there was, at our Saviour's trial, a face of a court amongst them, yet their power was much abridged by the Romans; so that they could not hear nor determine, neither judge nor condemn, in capital matters. Observe next, The indictment of blasphemy is brought in against him; *What need we any further witness? we have heard his blasphemy*. Abominable wickedness! It is not in the power of the greatest and most unspotted innocence to protect from slander and false accusation. Observe farther, The great meekness of our Saviour under all these ill suggestions, and false accusations: as a lamb before the shearer, so is he dumb, and opened not his mouth. Learn thence, That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and false accusations of men, with a silent and submissive spirit, is an excellent and Christ-like temper. Though a trial for his innocent life was now managed most maliciously and illegally against him, yet, *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not*. O may the same meek and humble mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, instead of reviling his accusers, prayed for his murderers, and offered up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it!

Lord Jesus, help us to set up thy instructive example continually before us, and to be daily correcting and reforming our lives by that blessed pattern. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, we found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ, a king.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? and he answered him, and said, thou sayest it.

4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests, and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

5 And they were the more fierce, saying, he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself was also at Jerusalem at that time.

8 ¶ And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him: and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

12 ¶ And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

(No. 22.)

In this chapter we have a relation of the blackest and saddest tragedy that ever was acted upon the stage of the world, namely, the barbarous and bloody murder of the holy and innocent Jesus, by the Jews, his own countrymen; the best of kings put to death by his own subjects. And the first step towards it is his arraignment before Pilate and Herod; they post him from one to another; Pilate sends him to Herod; and Herod having made sufficient sport with him remands him to Pilate; neither of them would release him. Here observe, that our Saviour, being before Pilate, answers him readily and cautiously; *Art thou the king of the Jews?* says Pilate. *Thou sayest it,* says our Saviour. *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* He replied, *I am.* Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 13. "That Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." Teaching us that though we may, and sometimes ought, to hold our peace, when our reputation is concerned, yet we must never be silent, when the honor of God and his truth may be effectually promoted by a free and full confession; yet it is farther observable, that our Saviour being before Herod, would neither answer him to any question, nor work any miracle before him. This was an instance and evidence of our Lord's great humility, in refusing to work miracles before Herod, who desired it only to gratify his curiosity. Thus do vile men abuse the power of God, desiring to see it exerted for admiration and pastime; not to be convinced or converted by it, but only to please their foolish fancy. And as admirable was the patience and humility of Christ, and his present silence, who neither at Herod's request, nor at the Jews' importunity and false accusations, could be moved to answer any thing. Observe farther, That though Herod had murdered Christ's forerunner John the Baptist, and our Saviour's own life was in danger by Herod heretofore, yet now he has him in his hands, he lets him go; only he first abuses him, and mocks him, and arrays him in a gorgeous robe, like a mock-king. Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable put upon our dear Redeemer; yet all this jeering and sportful shame did our Lord undergo, to show what was due unto us for our sins; and also to give us an example to bear all the shame and reproach imaginable for his sake; who, "for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame." Heb. xii. 2. Observe lastly, The wicked accusation brought in against our blessed Redeemer; "We found (say they) this fellow-perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." O hellish untruth! how directly contrary to the whole course and tenor of Christ's life was this accusation! By his doctrine he preached up subjection to governors and government; saying, *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* And by his practice he confirmed his own doctrine, working a miracle to pay tribute to Cæsar. Satan could help them to draw up an indictment as black as hell against the innocent Jesus, but all the powers of hell and darkness could not prove a tittle of it.

13 ¶ And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people.

14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the

people : and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof you accuse him :

15 No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him ; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him :

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas :

19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison :)

20 Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify *him*.

22 And he said unto them, the third time, Why what evil hath he done ? I have found no cause of death in him ; I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go.

23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified : and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired : but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Observe here, 1. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be an instrument of our Saviour's death ; one while he expostulates with the chief priests, saying, *What evil hath he done ?* Nay, St. Luke declares, Pilate came forth three several times, professing that he found no fault in him. Where note, How much more justice and equity Christ met with from Pilate, an heathen, than from the chief priests and people of the Jews, professing the true religion ! O how desperate is the hatred that grows upon the roof of religion ! Learn hence, That hypocrites within the church may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of infidels and pagans

without the church may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 2. How Pilate at last suffers himself to be overcome with the importunity of the Jews, and delivers the holy and innocent Jesus, contrary to his judgment and conscience, to the will of his murderers. It is a vain apology for sin when persons pretend that they are not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others ; for such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that none can make a person wicked without his own consent ; it was no extenuation of Pilate's sin, no alleviation of his punishment, that, to please the people, he delivered our Saviour, contrary to the directions of his own conscience, to be crucified. Observe, 3. The person whose life the wicked Jews preferred before the life of the holy Jesus, Barabbas : " We will that thou release Barabbas, and deliver Jesus." Mark these hypocritical highpriests, who pretended such zeal for God and religion ; they prefer the life of a person guilty of the highest immoralities and debaucheries, even murder and sedition, before the best man that ever lived in the world. But whence sprang the malice and hatred of the highpriests and of the Jews against our Saviour ? Why plainly from hence, Christ interpreted the law of God more strictly than their lusts can bear ; and he lived a more holy, useful, and excellent life, than they could endure. Now, nothing enrages the men of the world more against the professors, but especially the preachers of the gospel, than holiness of doctrine, and strictness of life and conversation. Such as preach and live well, let them expect such enmity and opposition, such malice and persecution, such sufferings and trials, as will shock an ordinary patience and constancy of mind. Our Master met with it, let his zealous ministers prepare for it.

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear *it* after Jesus.

The sentence of death being passed by Pilate, who can with dry eyes behold the sad pomp of our Saviour's execution ? Forth comes the blessed Jesus out of Pilate's gates, bearing that cross which soon after was to bear him. With his cross on his shoulder, he marches towards Golgotha ; and when they see he can go no faster, they compel Simon of Cyrenia, not out of compassion, but indignation to bear his cross : this Cyrenian being a Gentile who bore Christ's cross, some think thereby was signified, that the Gentiles should have a part in Christ, as well as the Jews, and be sharers with them in the benefits of the cross.

27 ¶ And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

29 For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us: and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

There were four sorts of persons which attended our Saviour at his crucifixion; the executioners that tormented him, the Jews that mocked him, the spectators and lookers on that marked him, and sympathizing friends which lamented him; these last Christ thus bespoke, *Weep not for me, but for yourselves*; that is, Weep rather upon your own account than mine: reserve your sorrows for the calamities coming upon yourselves and your children. It is very probable, that the tears and lamentations of many of these mourners were but the fruits of tender nature, not the effects of faith, and flowing from a principle of grace. Learn thence, that melting affections and sorrows, even from the sense of Christ's sufferings, are not infallible marks of grace. The history of Christ's sufferings is very tragical and pathetic, and may melt ingenuous nature, where there is no renewed principle of grace. These motions of the affections may rather be a fit and mood, than the very frame and temper of the soul.— There are times and seasons when the roughest and most obdurate hearts may be pensive and tender: but that is not its temper and frame, but only a fit, a pang, a transient passion. There is no inferring or concluding then a work of grace upon the heart, simply and barely from the movings or meltings of the affections. Nature will have its good moods, but grace is steady. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me," says Christ,

32 And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors: one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Here we see the infamous company that our holy Lord suffered with, *two thieves*; it had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Saviour, to be sorted with the best of men; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts: this was designed by the Jews to dishonor and disgrace our Saviour the more; and to persuade the world, that he was the greatest of offenders; but God overruled this, for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messiah. Isa. liii. 12. "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

34 ¶ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Christ had often preached the doctrine of forgiving enemies, and praying for them; he practises it here himself in a most exemplary manner. Where note, 1. The mercy desired and prayed for; and that is, *Forgiveness*. 2. The person desiring that mercy, Christ, the dying Jesus. 3. The persons for whom it is desired, his bloody murderers: *Father, forgive them*. 4. The argument used, or motive urged, to procure this mercy; *Forgive them, for they know not what they do*. Learn hence, 1. That ignorance is the usual cause of enmity against Christ. 2. That there is forgiveness with God for such as oppose, yea persecute Christ out of ignorance. 3. That to forgive enemies, and to beg forgiveness for them, is an evidence of a Christ-like frame of Spirit; *Father, forgive them*; not that the gospel requires of us an insensibility of wrongs and injuries: that allows us a sense of offered evils, though it forbids us to revenge them; yet the more tender our resentments are, the more excellent our forgiveness is; so that a forgiving spirit doth not exclude the sense of injuries; but the sense of injuries graces the forgiveness of them; neither doth the gospel require us, under the notion of forgiving injuries, to deliver up our rights and properties to the lusts of every one that will invade them, but meekly to receive evil, and readily to return good.

35 And the people stood beholding: and the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar.

37 And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS**.

Observe here, 1. A mighty aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross; namely, the mocking derision which he met with in his dying moments. As he endured the pain, so he despised the shame; cruel mockings was our Lord tried with, both from the common people and from the chief priests; yet the common people's reviling him, and wagging their heads at him, was not so much to be taken notice of, as the chief priests, who were men of age and gravity, and the ministers of religion; for them barbarously to mock him in his misery, and, which was worse, atheistically to jeer and scoff at his faith and assurance in God, saying, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, if he will have him." This was such an indignity as confounds our thoughts. But from hence we learn, 1. That persecutors are generally atheistical scoffers; the chief priests and elders, who persecuted Christ, do blaspheme God; they mock at his power, and deride his providence, which was as wicked as to deny his being. 2. We learn from this example, that such as minister to God in holy things, by way of

office, if they be not the best, they are generally the worst of men; no such bitter enemies to the power of godliness, as such preachers who were never experimentally acquainted with the efficacy and power of it upon their own hearts and lives. Observe, 2. The inscription wrote by Pilate over our suffering Saviour, *This is Jesus the King of the Jews*. It was the custom of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters, placed over the head of the person. Now it is observable, how wonderfully the wisdom of God overruled the heart and pen of Pilate, to draw this title, which was truly honorable, and fix it to his cross. Pilate is Christ's herald, and proclaims him *King of the Jews*. Learn hence, That the kingship and regal dignity of Christ was proclaimed by an enemy, and that in a time of his greatest sufferings and reproaches. Pilate, without his knowledge, did our Saviour an eminent piece of service; verily, he did that for Christ which none of his own disciples durst do; not that he did it designedly, and with an intent to put honor upon Christ, but from the special overruling providence of God; no thanks to Pilate for all this, because the highest services performed for Christ undesignedly, shall never be accepted nor rewarded by him.

39 ¶ And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us.

40 But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Here we have a farther aggravation of our Lord's sufferings upon the cross, from the company he suffered with, the two thieves, who reviled him with the rest. St. Matthew and St. Mark say, They both reviled him; St. Luke says, one of them reviled; possibly both of them might do it at first, and one of them repent; which, if so, increases the wonder of the penitent thief's conversion. From the impenitent thief's reviling of Christ, when he was at the very point of death, and even in the suburbs of hell, we learn, that neither shame nor pain will change the mind of a resolute sinner; but even then, when he is in the suburbs of hell, will he blaspheme. From the penitent thief's confession of Christ, and praying to him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," we learn, both the efficacy and freeness of divine grace. 1. The efficacious power of it: O how powerful must that grace be, which wrought such a change in an instant, which supplied that heart in a moment, which had been hardening in sin for so many years! 2. The freeness of it; which takes hold

his heart, when he was at the height of sin, and was not only void of grace, but seemed past grace. O the powerful efficacy, and adorable freeness, of the heart-changing grace of God in this vile person! it disposed him to own his sin, to confess the justness of his punishment, to justify Christ's innocency, to reprove his fellow companion, to pray to a crucified Christ, and to intercede with him, not for present deliverance from death, but for a place in Christ's kingdom. Where we learn, 1. That true conversion is never too late for obtaining mercy and salvation. 2. That true conversion, how late soever, will have its fruits; the fore-mentioned fruits of faith and repentance were found with this penitent thief; yet must not this extraordinary case be drawn into example; this extraordinary and miraculous grace of God is not to be expected ordinarily: we have no warrant to expect an overpowering degree of God's grace, to turn our hearts in an instant at the hour of death, when we have lived in forgetfulness of God, and in a supine neglect of our soul's concerns, all the days of our life; for it is evident as to this case of the penitent thief's conversion at the last hour. 1. It is an example without a promise. 2. It is but a single example. 3. It is an example recorded but by one Evangelist; the Spirit of God foreseeing what an ill use some would make of this instance, leaves one example upon record, that none might despair; and but one, that none might presume. 4. This thief probably had never any knowledge of Christ before. 5. This thief improved his time at last as never did any before or after: for he believed Christ to be the Saviour of the world, when one disciple had betrayed, another denied him, and all had forsaken him; he owned him to be the Son of God, the Lord of Life, when he was suffering the pains of death, and seemingly deserted by his Father; he proclaims him Lord of Paradise, and Disposer of the kingdom of heaven, when the Jews had condemned him, and the Gentiles crucified him, as the vilest of impostors. He feared God, owned the justice of his punishment, was solicitous, not for the preservation of his body, but for the salvation of his soul; yea, not of his own only, but of his brother's that suffered with him; so that he glorified Christ more at the moment of his death, than some do in the whole course of their lives. 6. This was a miracle, with the glory whereof Christ would honor the ignominy of his cross; so that we have no more ground to expect such another conversion, than we have to expect a second crucifixion. This converted person was the first-fruits of the blood of the cross.— From whence we may learn, That God can, and sometimes doth, though very seldom, prepare men for glory, immediately before their dissolution by death. His grace is his own, he may dispense it how, and when, where, and to whom he pleases; yet this is no more warrant to neglect the ordinary, because God doth sometimes manifest his grace in an extraordinary way. True, in this conversion we have a pattern of what free grace can do; but it is a pattern without a promise; where we have not a promise to encourage our hope, our hope is nothing but presumption.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

These words are our Saviour's gracious answer to the penitent thief's humble prayer, *Lord, remember me in thy kingdom*, says the thief; *To-day shalt thou be with me in my kingdom*, says our Saviour: where note, 1. The immortality of the souls of men is without all doubt; our desires after and hopes for immortality do prove our souls immortal, and capable of that state. The souls of men die with their bodies, but remain in a state of sensibility. 2. That there is a future and eternal state, into which souls pass at death. Death is our passage out of the swift river of time, into the boundless and bottomless ocean of eternity. 3. That the souls of all the righteous at death are immediately received into a state of happiness and glory; *This day shalt thou be with me*; not after thy resurrection, but immediately after thy dissolution. That man's soul is asleep, or worse, that dreams of the soul's sleeping till the resurrection; for why should the believers' happiness be deferred, when they are immediately capable of enjoying it? Why should their salvation slumber, when the wicked's damnation slumbereth not? How do such delays consist with Christ's ardent desires, and his people's vehement longing to be together?

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 ¶ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the Ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things.

Observe here, 1. What prodigies in nature happened and fell out at the crucifixion of our Saviour; the sun was darkened at the setting of the Sun of Righteousness; and the veil of the temple was rent; signifying that God was now about to forsake his temple; that the ceremonial law was now abolishing, and the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile being now pulled down, all may have access to God through the blood of a mediator. Observe, 2. The last prayer of our Saviour before his death, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*; they are words full of faith and comfort, fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul in this world.—Learn, hence, That dying believers are both warranted and encouraged by Christ's example, belie-

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vingly to commend their precious souls into the hands of God, as a gracious Father, *Father, into thy hands*. Observe, 3. What influence our Saviour's death had upon the Centurion. *He glorified God, saying, Verily this was a righteous man*. Here note, That Christ had a testimony of his innocence and righteousness given unto him from all sorts of persons whatsoever; Pilate and Herod pronounced him innocent; Pilate's wife proclaimed him a righteous person; Judas, the traitor, declared it was innocent blood; the thief on the cross affirmed he had done nothing amiss; and the centurion owned him to be a righteous man: yea, the Son of God, Mark xv. 39. Only the pharisees and chief priests, which were teachers of others; not ignorance, but obstinacy and malice, blinded and hardened them to their ruin and destruction: instead of owning and receiving him for their Saviour, they ignominiously put him to death as the vilest impostor.

50 ¶ And behold, *there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor, and he was a good man, and a just*;

51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them) *he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews (who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.)*

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments: and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

The circumstances of our Lord's funeral and honorable interment are here recorded by our Evangelist; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged.—Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried; the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power and at the disposal of the judge that condemns them. Observe, 2. The person that begged his body, and bestowed a decent and honorable burial upon it; Joseph of Arimathea, a worthy, though a close disciple. Grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is; but as there is much secret treasure in the bowels of the earth, though unseen, so is there much

grace in the hearts of some saints, which the world takes little notice of. Observe, 2. The mourners that followed our Saviour's hearse to the grave; the women which came out of Galilee; a poor train of mourners: the apostles, who should have been most officious to bear his holy body to the ground, were some time since all scattered, afraid to own their Master, either dying or dead. Funeral pomp had been no way suitable, either to the end or manner of our Lord's death, and accordingly here is nothing like it. Observe, 4. The grave or sepulchre in which our holy Lord lay; it was in a sepulchre *hewn out of a rock*; that so his enemies might have no occasion to say, that his disciples stole him away by secret holes, and unseen passages under ground; it was in a new sepulchre, *wherein never man was laid before*, lest his adversaries should say, it was another that was risen who was buried there before him. And he was buried in a garden: as, by the sin of the first Adam, we were driven out of the garden of pleasure, the earthly paradise, so by the sufferings of the second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. Observe, 5. The manner of our Lord's funeral: it was hasty, open, and decent. Hasty, because of the preparation for the sabbath: open, that all persons might be spectators, and none might say, he was buried before he was dead; decent, being wrapt up in fine linen, and perfumed with spices. Observe, 6. The reason why our Lord was thus buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls; doubtless it was to declare the certainty of his death, to fulfil the types and prophecies which went before him; "As Jonah's being three days and three nights in the whale's belly." He was also buried to complete his humiliation: this was the lowest step to which he could descend in his abased state. In a word, Christ descended into the grave, that he might conquer death in its own territories and dominions. Observe, 7. Of what use our Lord's burial is to his followers: it shows us the amazing depths of his humiliation; from what, and to what, his love brought him, even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. It may comfort us against the fears of death, and the terrors of the grave: the grave could not long keep Christ, it shall not always keep christians; it was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now; he whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave. Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The last chapter of St. Luke's gospel contains the history of our Saviour's resurrection, and gives us an account of what he did upon earth, between the time of his glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension.

NOW upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with him.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments.

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen, Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words;

9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The Lord of life, who was put to death upon the Friday, was buried on the evening of the same day; and his holy body rested in the silent grave all the next day, being the Jewish sabbath, and some part of the morning following. Thus rose he again the third day, according to the scriptures, neither sooner nor later; not sooner, lest the truth of his death should have been questioned, that he did not die at all: nor later, lest the faith of his disciples should have failed. Accordingly, when the sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene getting the other women together, she and they set out very early in the morning, to visit the holy sepulchre, and about sun-rising they got to it, intending with their spices and odors farther to embalm their Lord's body. Observe here, 1. That although the hearts of these holy women did burn with an ardent zeal and affection to their crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath are not omitted by them; they keep close, and silently spend that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope. A good pattern of sabbath-sanctification, and worthy of our imitation. Observe,

2. These holy women go, but not empty-handed; she that had bestowed a costly alabaster upon Christ, whilst alive, prepares no less precious odors for him now dead: thereby paying their last homage to our Saviour's corpse. But what need of odors to perfume a precious body, which could not see corruption? True, his holy body did not want them, but the love and affection of his friends could not withhold them. Observe, 3. How great a tribute of respect and honor is due and payable to the memory of these holy women, for their great magnanimity and courage: they followed Christ when his cowardly disciples left him: they accompanied him to his cross, they attended his hearse to the grave, when his disciples did not, durst not appear; and now, very early in the morning, they visit his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen, though a band of rude soldiers. Learn hence, that courage and resolution is the special gift of God: if he gives it to the feebler sex, even to timorous and fearful women, it shall not be in the power of armed men to make them afraid. But to a close consideration of the several circumstances relating to the resurrection of our holy Lord: Note, 1. With what pomp and triumph our holy Lord arises: two men, that is, two angels in the shape of men, ver. 4, "are sent from heaven to roll away the stone." But could not Christ have risen then without the angels' help? Yes, doubtless; he that raised himself, could easily have rolled away the stone himself; but God thinks fit to send an officer from heaven to open the prison door of the grave; and by setting our surely at liberty, proclaims our debt to the Divine Justice fully satisfied. Besides it was fit, that the angels, who had been witnesses of our Saviour's passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection. Note, 2. Our Lord's resurrection declared, *He is risen, he is not here*. Almighty God never intended that the darling of his soul should be left in an obscure sepulchre. *He is not here*, said the angels, where you laid, where you left him; death has lost its prey, and the grave has lost its prisoner. Note, 3. It is not said, *He is not here*, for he is raised; but, *he is risen*, ver. 6. The original word imports the active power of Christ, or the self-quickening principle by which Christ raised himself from the dead, Acts i. 3. "He showed himself alive after his passion." Hence learn, That it was the divine nature, or god-head of Christ, which raised the human nature from death to life; others were raised from the grave by Christ's power, but he raised himself by his own power. Note, 4. The persons to whom our Lord's resurrection was first declared and made known: to women, to the two Marys. But why to women? And why to these women? To women first, because God sometimes makes choice of weak means for producing great effects, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honor of the agent. In the whole dispensation of the gospel, God intermixes divine power with human weakness; thus the conception of Christ was by the power of the Holy Ghost, but his mother, a poor woman, a carpenter's spouse: so the crucifixion of Christ was in much meanness and outward baseness, being crucified between two thieves; but the powers of heaven and earth trembling, the rocks rending, the graves opening, showed a mixture of divine power. Thus here, God selects women to declare that he will honor what instruments he pleases for the accomplishment of his own purposes. But why to these women, the two Marys, is the first discovery made of our Lord's resurrection? Possibly it was a reward

for their magnanimity and masculine courage. These women clave to Christ, when the apostles forsook him; they assisted at his cross, they attended at his funeral, they waited at his sepulchre; these women had more courage than the apostles, therefore God makes them apostles to the apostles. This was a tacit rebuke, a secret check, given to the apostles, that they should be thus outdone by women; these holy women went before the apostles in the last services that were done for Christ, and therefore the apostles here come after them in their rewards and comforts. Note, 5. The quick message which these holy women carry to the disconsolate disciples, of the joyful news of our Saviour's resurrection; they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, ver. 9. And the other Evangelists say, That they were sent and bidden to go to the apostles, with the notices of the resurrection: *Go tell the disciples*, says the angel, Mat. xxviii. 7. *Go tell my brethren*, says Christ, ver. 10. a most endearing expression: Christ might have said, "Go tell my apostate apostles, my cowardly disciples, that left me in my danger, and durst not own me in the highpriest's hall, that durst not come within the shadow of my cross, nor within the sight of my sepulchre." But not one word of all this, by way of upbraiding them for their late shameful cowardice, but all words of divine indulgence, and of endearing kindness, *Go tell my brethren*. Where mark, That Christ calls them brethren after his resurrection and exaltation, thereby showing, that the change of his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples: but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his humiliation and abasement, are so still, after his exaltation and advancement: *Go tell my brethren*. One thing more must be noted with reference to our Lord's resurrection, and that is, why he did not first choose to appear to the Virgin Mary, his disconsolate mother, whose soul was pierced with a quick and lively sight and sense of her son's sufferings, but to Mary Magdalene, who had been a grievous sinner? Doubtless this was for the comfort of all true penitents, and administers great consolation to them; as the angels in heaven rejoice, much more doth Christ, in the recovery of one repenting sinner, than in multitudes of holy and just persons (such was the blessed virgin) who need no repentance: for the same reason did our Saviour particularly name Peter, *Go tell my disciples, and Peter*: he being, for his denial of Christ, swelled up with sorrow, and standing in most need of consolation; therefore speak particularly to Peter: as if Christ had said, "Be sure that his sad heart be comforted with this joyful news, that I am risen; and let him know that I am friends with him, notwithstanding his late cowardice."

13 ¶ And behold two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that while they communed *together*, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre:

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

Here we have observable, 1. The journey which two of the disciples took to Emmaus, a village not far from Jerusalem: the occasion of their journey is not told us, but the scripture acquaints us with their discourse in their journey, and as they were walking by the way: it was holy and useful, pious and profitable discourse; that they entertained one another with as they walked; they discoursed of Christ's death and resurrection: a good pattern for our imitation, when providentially cast into such company as will bear it; "That our tips drop as the honeycomb, and our tongue be as choice silver." Observe, 2. How our holy Lord presently made one in the company; when they were discoursing seriously about the matters of religion, he overtook them and joined himself to them: the way to have Christ's presence

and company with us, is to be discoursing of Christ and the things of Christ. Observe, 3. Though Christ came to them, it was *incognito*; he was not known to them, for their eyes were holden by the power of God, their sight was restrained, that they could not discern who he was, but took him for another person, though his body had the same dimensions that he had before. Whence we learn, the influence which God has upon all our powers and faculties, upon all our members and senses, and how much we depend upon God for the use and exercise of our faculties and members. "Their eyes were holden that they could not know him." Observe, 4. That the notion of the Messiah being a temporal Saviour was so deeply rooted in the minds of the disciples, that it remained here with them even after he was risen from the dead. They here own and acknowledge him "to be a prophet mighty in deed and in word;" but they question whether he were the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel; they could not reconcile the ignominy of his death with the grandeur of his office; nor conceive how the infamy of a cross was consistent with the glory of a king; "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." As if they had said, "We were full of hopes, that this had been the Messiah long expected by us; but, this being the third day since he died, we fear we shall find ourselves mistaken."

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went; and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him: and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scripture?

Observe, 1. Our Saviour reproves, and then instructs them: he reproves them for being ignorant of the sense of scripture; they thought the death of the Messiah a sufficient ground to question the truth of his office, when it was an argument to confirm and establish it: "O fools, ought not Christ to suffer?" As if he had said, "Do you not find that the person described by the prophets in the Old Testament to be the Messiah, was to wade to his glory through a sea of blood? Why then do you think yourselves deceived in the person that suffered three days ago, when his death doth agree so well with the predictions of the prophets, who foretold, that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself, and be smitten for the iniquities of his people?" Here we may observe, the great wisdom and grace of God, who makes sometimes the diffidence of his people an occasion of farther clearing of the choicest fruits unto them: never did these disciples hear so excellent an exposition of Moses and the prophets, concerning the Messiah, as now, when their sinful distrust had so far prevailed over them. Observe, 2. The doctrines which Christ instructs his disciples in, namely, in the necessity of his death and passion, and of his glory and exaltation! "Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter into his glory?" Learn, 1. That with respect to God's decree, and with relation to man's guilt, the death of Christ was necessary and indispensable. 2. That his resurrection and exaltation were as necessary as his passion. 3. That there was a meritorious connexion between Christ's sufferings and his glory; his exaltation was merited by his passion. "He was to drink of the brook in the way, and then he should lift up his head." Observe, 4. Christ did not only put light into these his apostles' heads, but heat also into their hearts, which burned all the while he communed with them: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?" Oh what an efficacious power is there in the word of Christ, when set home upon the hearts of men by the Spirit of Christ!

33 And they arose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

36 ¶ And, as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you.*

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

39 Behold my hands and my feet that

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it is I myself: Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his hands and his feet.*

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb.

43 And he took *it*, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and *in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.*

Observe, 1. That these two disciples, at Emmaus, being fully satisfied in the truth of Christ's resurrection, by his appearing to them in breaking of bread, they arose presently, and went from Emmaus to Jerusalem; it must needs be late at night, being after supper, and seven miles distant; yet, considering the sorrow that the disciples were under, these two leave all their private affairs, and hasten to comfort them with the glad tidings of our Lord's resurrection. Teaching us, that all secular affairs, all private and particular business, must give place to the glory of God, and the comfort and salvation of souls. Observe, 2. The great endeavours which our Saviour used to confirm his disciples' faith in the doctrine of the resurrection; "he comes and stands in the midst of them," and says, *Peace be unto you*; next, "he shows them his pierced hands, side, and feet," with the scars and marks, which he yet retained, that they might see it was their crucified Master; after all this, "he eats before them a piece of a broiled fish and honey-comb;" not that he needed *it*, his body being now become immortal; but to assure them that it was his own person, and that he had still the same body: yet so slack and backward were they to believe that Christ was risen, that all the predictions of the scripture, all the assurances they had from our Saviour's mouth, and the several appearances of Christ unto them, were little enough to establish and confirm their faith in the resurrection of our Saviour. Observe, 3. The highest and fullest evidence which our Saviour offers to evince and prove the certainty of his resurrection, namely, by appealing to their senses; *Handle me, and see*: Christ admits the testimony of our senses, to assure it to be his real body. And if the church of Rome will not allow us to believe our senses, we shall lose the best external evidence we can have to prove the truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles of Christ; for how can I know that those miracles were true, but by the judgment of my senses? Now as our senses tell us that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure us, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is false

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day :

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witness of these things.

It is one thing to open the scriptures themselves, or to explain them, and another to open their understandings to perceive them : Christ did the latter. Whence note, That the opening of the mind and heart effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ ; " Then opened he their understandings ; " namely, by the illuminations of his Holy Spirit. One of the greatest miseries under which lapsed nature labors, is spiritual blindness ; Christ has the only eye-salve which can heal and cure it. Rev. iii. 18. And there is no worse cloud to obscure the light of the Spirit, than a proud conceit of our own knowledge. Observe, 2. The special charge given by our Saviour to his apostles, " to preach repentance, and remission of sins ; " to preach it in Christ's name, to preach it to all nations, beginning first at Jerusalem." Where note, The astonishing mercy of Jesus Christ ; although Jerusalem was the place where he lost his life, the city that barbarously butchered, and inhumanly murdered him, yet there he will hear the doctrine of repentance preached ; nay, first preached ; there the gospel combination must first begin, " That repentance and remission of sins be preached, beginning at Jerusalem." Lord ! how unwilling art thou that any should perish, when thou not only prayedst for thy murderers, and offeredst up thy blood to God in the behalf of them that shed it, but requiredst thy ambassadors to make Jerusalem the first tender of remission, upon condition of repentance ! " That repentance and remission of sins shall be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

49 ¶ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

50 ¶ And he led them out as far as to Bethany : and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ;

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. *Amen.*

Our Saviour being now about to leave his disciples, comforts them with the promise of his Holy Spirit, which should supply the want of his bodily presence ; and bids them tarry at Jerusalem till they should, at the feast of pentecost, be made partakers of this invaluable blessing. Observe, 2. Our Lord having blessed his disciples, he takes his leave of them, and goes up into heaven. As he raised himself out of his grave, so did he ascend into heaven by his own power, there to appear in the presence of God for us ; and as our forerunner, to give us an assurance, that in due time we shall ascend after him. " Whither our forerunner is for us entered," Heb. vi. 20. Observe lastly, The act of homage and adoration which the apostles perform to the Lord Jesus ; how they worshipped him, that is, as God, the eternal Son of God, being so declared by the resurrection from the dead, and by his ascension into heaven before their eyes, from whence he will certainly come, at the end of the world, to judge both the quick and the dead. For which solemn hour, God Almighty prepare all mankind, by a solemn frame of heart, and a religious course of life : and then, " Come, Lord Jesus, to judgment, come quickly." *Amen.*

THE END OF SAINT LUKE'S GOSPEL.

THE
HOLY GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
SAINT JOHN.

The fourth and last of the holy gospels falls now under consideration: namely, that which was written by the evangelist St. John; concerning which we have observable, the writer, the occasion, the design and scope of this sublime book. Observe, 1. the writer of it; St. John, the beloved disciple, that lay in the bosom of Christ; he that lay in Christ's bosom, reveals the secrets of Christ's heart. John, saith St. Austin, drew out of the bosom of Christ, the very heart of Christ, and made it known to a lost world. Observe, 2. The occasion of St John writing this gospel: and that was the heresy of Ebion and Cerinthus, which denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. When God suffers heretics to vent their blasphemous opinions, he takes occasion from thence to make a clearer discovery of divine truth. We had perhaps wanted St. John's gospel, if Ebion and Cerinthus had not broached their heresy against Christ's divinity. Observe, 3. The design and scope of this gospel; which is, to describe the person of Christ in his two natures, divine and human, as the object of our faith. This he doth in a sublime and lofty manner: upon which account he was compared by the ancients to the eagle that soars aloft, and maketh her nest on high; and was also called John the Divine. Observe, lastly, The difference between this and the other gospels. The other Evangelists insist chiefly on the humanity of Christ, and prove him to be truly man, the son of the Virgin Mary: this Evangelist proves him to be God as well as man; God from eternity, and man in the fulness of time. The other three writers relate what Christ did; St. John reports what Christ said. They recount his miracles; he records his sermons and prayers. In short, the profound mysteries of our holy religion are here unfolded by the beloved disciple; and particularly the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

CHAPTER I.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Jesus Christ, under the name of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word." Because God speaks to us by him, and makes

known his will to us by Christ, as we make known our minds to one another by our words. Again, as our words are the conception and image of our minds, so Christ is the express image of his Father's person, and was begotten of the Father, even as our words are begotten of our minds; for these reasons he is so often styled *the Word*. Observe, 2. What the Evangelist here asserts concerning the Word, Christ Jesus, even three particulars; namely, his eternal existence, his personal co-existence, and his divine essence. 1. His eternal existence: "In the beginning was the Word;" in the beginning, when all things received their being, then the Word was, and did actually subsist, even from all eternity. Not in the beginning of the gospel state, but in the beginning of the

creation, as appears from the following words, "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Which plainly shows that the Evangelist is here speaking of the creation, rise, or beginning of all things created. Learn hence, that Jesus Christ, not only antecedent to his incarnation, but even before all time, and the beginning of all things, had an actual being and existence. 2. His personal co-existence with the Father; *the word was with God*: that is, eternally and inseparably with him, in the same essence and nature, being in the Father as well as with him, so that the Father never was without him, Prov. viii. 23. "I was by him, as one that was brought up with him." I was by his side, says the Chaldee interpreter—Learn hence, that the Son is a person distinct from the Father; but of the same nature and essence with the Father: he is God of God, very God of very God; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made:—*The word was with God*. 3. His divine essence; *The word was God*. Here St. John declares the divinity, as he did before the eternity of our blessed Saviour. He was with God, and existed in him: therefore he must be God, and a person distinct from the Father. The word was God, say the Socinians, that is, a God by office, not by nature, as being God's ambassador; but the word *God* is used eleven times in this chapter in its proper sense; and it is not reasonable to conceive, that it should be here used in an improper sense; in which this word in the singular number is never used throughout the whole New Testament.—*Dr. Whitby*. Learn hence, that the eternity, the personality, and the divinity of Christ, are of necessity to be believed, if we will worship him aright. Christ tells us, John v. 23. "That we must worship the Son, even as we worship the Father." Now, unless we acknowledge the eternity and divinity of Christ, the second person, as well as of God the Father, the first person, we must honor neither the Father nor the Son. There is this difference between natural things and supernatural. Natural things are first understood, and then believed; but supernatural mysteries must be first believed, and then will be better understood. If we will first set reason to work, and believe no more than we can comprehend, this will hinder faith; but, if, after we have assented to gospel-mysteries, we set reason on work, this will help faith.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Observe here, the argument which St. John used to prove Christ to be God; it is taken from the work of creation. He that made all things, is truly and really God; but Christ made all things, and nothing was made without him; therefore is Christ truly and really God. Here observe, 1. An affirmation of as large and vast an extent as the whole world. *All things* were made by him; not this or that particular being, but *all* created beings received their existence and being from Christ. Observe, 2. That to prevent the least imagination of any thing's having another author than Christ, here is the most positive and particular negation that can be.—That without him was not any thing made that was made; not without him as an instrument, but without him as an agent, Christ being a co-worker with the Father and the

Spirit in the work of creation. He was the author of the creation, not an instrument in creating. Learn hence, That Christ, as God, being the Creator and Maker of all things himself, is excluded from being a creature, or any thing that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

Here we have a farther proof of Christ's divinity, and an evidence that he had a being as God, before his incarnation; forasmuch as all life is centered in him, communicated by him, and derived from him. In him was life. *Formaliter & casualiter*. Life was formally in Christ, as the subject of it; and also casually in him, as the fountain of it. Learn 1. That Christ is the author and dispenser of all life unto his creatures. He is the original life in the order of nature, because by him man was created, Gen. i. 26. He is spiritual life in the order of grace. John xiv. 6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He is eternal life in the order of glory. 1 John v. 20. "This is the true God and eternal life." Learn, 2. That all creatures receiving light and life of Christ, not as an instrument, but as the fountain from whence it floweth, and in which it is preserved, is an evident proof of his divinity, and an argument that he is truly and really God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

6 ¶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John:

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.

9 That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Here the Evangelist proceeds in declaring Christ to be really God, because he was that original, that essential light, which had no beginning, suffers no decay, but is so diffusive, as, in some kind, and in some measure or other, to enlighten every man that cometh into the world. Some of the Jews had a conceit, that John the Baptist was the promised Messiah, as appears by Luke iii. 15. "The people were in expectation, and all men wondered in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not."

Here therefore, to deceive the Jews, the Evangelists add, that John was not that light. John was a great light, a burning and a shining light, but not such a light as the Messiah was to be. John was a light instrumentally, Christ efficiently; John was a light enlightened, Christ was a light enlightening; John's light was by derivation

and participation, Christ's was essential and original: John's light was as the light of a candle in a private house, in and among the Jews only; but Christ's light was as the light of the sun, spreading over the face of the whole earth. "This is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world:" that is, he enlightens all mankind with the light of reason, and is the author of all spiritual illumination in them that receive it. Christ is called a light in regard of his office, which was to manifest and declare that salvation to his church, which lay hid before in the purpose of God: and he is called the *true light*; not so much in opposition to all false lights, but as opposed to the types and shadows of the Mosical dispensation. Learn, 1. That every man and woman that comes into the world is enlightened by Christ in some kind and measure or other. All are 'enlightened with the light of reason and natural conscience: some with the light of grace and supernatural illumination. Learn, 2. That Christ being the essential, original, and eternal light, enlightening and enlivening the whole creation, is an evident and undeniable demonstration that he is truly and really God.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

He was in the world, that is, he that was God from eternity made himself visible to the world in the fulness of time. The Evangelist repeats it again, that *the world was made by him*, to show his omnipotency and divinity; and then adds, *the world knew him not*, as an evidence of the world's blindness and ingratitude. Learn hence, That notwithstanding the eternal Son of God appeared in the world, and the world was made and created by him: yet the generality of the world did not know him; that is, did not own and acknowledge him, did not receive and obey him. They neither knew him as Creator, nor accepted of him as Mediator: yea, *he came to his own*; that is, his own kindred and country, the church and people of the Jews: but the generality of them gave him cold entertainment. It was the sin of the Jewish nation, that though they were Christ's own peculiar people, his own by choice, his own by purchase, his own by covenant, by kindred, yet the generality of them did reject him, and would not own him for the true and promised Messias. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ met with manifest and shameful rejection, even at the hands of those that were nearest to him by flesh and nature. John xi. 5. "Neither did his brethren believe on him."

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.

(No. 23.)

That is, although multitudes rejected him, yet some received and owned him for the true Messias; and those that did so, he advanced to the high dignity of adoption and sonship, giving them power, that is, right or privilege, to become the sons of God. Here note, 1. The nature of justifying faith declared; *As many as received him*. Now this receiving of Christ implies these three things. 1. The assent of the understanding to that divine testimony which the scriptures give of Christ. 2. The consent of the will to submit to this Jesus as Lord and King. 3. The affiance and trust of the heart in Christ alone for salvation; for faith is not a bare credence, but a divine affiance, and such an affiance in Christ, and reliance upon him, as is the parent and principle of obedience to him. Note, 2. That it is the high and honorable privilege of all such as receive Christ by faith, to become the sons of God by adoption. This is a precious privilege, a free privilege, an honorable privilege, an abiding privilege, and calls for all possible returns of gratitude and thankfulness, of love and service, duty and obedience, of submission and self-renunciation.

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Because the bragging Jews did much boast of their natural birth and descent from Abraham, as being his blood and offspring, therefore it is here asserted, That men become not the children of God by natural propagation, but by spiritual regeneration: *They are not born of blood*. Grace runs not in blood, piety is not hereditary. Religious parents propagate corruption, not regeneration. Were the conveyances of grace natural, good parents would not be so ill suited with children as sometimes they are. No person then whatsoever has the gracious privilege of adoption by the first birth. "They are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man;" that is, no man, by the utmost improvement of nature, can raise himself up to this privilege of adoption, and be the author and efficient cause of his own regeneration. Learn hence, That man in all his capacities is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself. They, says Dr. Hammond, who, by the influence of the highest rational principles, live most exactly according to the rule of rational nature, that is, of unregenerate morality, are the persons here described. Learn, 2. That God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration. He works upon the understanding by illumination, and upon the will by sanctification. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

The Evangelist having asserted the divinity of Christ in the foregoing verses, comes now to speak of his humanity and manifestation in our nature. *The word was made of flesh*, Where note, 1. Our Saviour's incarnation for us. 2. His

life and conversation here among us. *He dwelt*, or tabernacled, for a season with us. In the incarnation, or assumption of our nature, observe, 1. The person assuming, *The Word*, that is, the second person subsisting in the glorious Godhead. Observe, 2. The nature assumed, flesh; that is, the human nature, consisting of soul and body. But why is it not said, *The Word was made man*: but, *The Word was made flesh*? *Answer*, To denote and set forth the wonderful abasement and condescension of Christ; there being more of vileness and weakness, and opposition to spirit, in the word *flesh*, than in the word *man*: Christ's taking flesh implies, that he did not only take upon him the human nature, but all the weaknesses and infirmities of that nature; also, (sinful infirmities, and personal infirmities excepted) he had nothing to do with our sinful flesh: though Christ loved souls with an infinite and insuperable love, yet he would not sin to save a soul. And he took no personal infirmities upon him, but such as are common to the whole nature, as hunger, thirst, weariness. Observe, 3. The assumption itself, *He was made flesh*: that is, he assumed the human nature into an union with his godhead, and so became a true and real man by that assumption. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal union, which is divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person for ever. O blessed union; O thrice happy conjunction; as man, Christ has an experimental sense of our infirmities and wants. As God, he can support and supply them all. Note farther, 2. As our Saviour's incarnation for us, so his life and conversation among us. *He dwelt*, or tabernacled amongst us. The tabernacle was a type of Christ's human nature. 1. As the outside of the tabernacle was mean, made of ordinary materials, but its inside glorious; so was the Son of God. 2. God's special presence was in the tabernacle; there he dwelt, for he had a delight therein. In like manner dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily in Christ; and the glory of his divinity shined forth to the eye and view of his disciples; for "they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;" that is, whilst Christ appeared as a man amongst us, he gave great and glorious testimonies of his being the son of God. Learn hence, That in the day of our Saviour's incarnation, the divinity of his person did shine forth through the veil of his flesh, and was seen by all them that had a spiritual eye to behold it, and a mind disposed to consider it. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

15 ¶ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was before me,

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Here we have John Baptist's first testimony concerning Christ, the promised Messiah: and it consists of four parts. 1. John prefers Christ before himself as being surpassingly above himself. "He that cometh after me, is preferred before me;" that is, in the dignity of his person, and in the eminency of his office, as being the eternal God; "Now amongst them that were born of women, there was not a greater than John the Baptist;" if Christ then was greater than John, it was in regard of his being God. He is therefore "preferred before him, because he was before him," from all eternity. Learn hence, That the dignity and eternity of Christ's person as God, sets him up above all his ministers; yea, above all creatures, how excellent soever.—*He that cometh after me, in time, is preferred before me in dignity; for he was before me, even from all eternity.* 2. John prefers Christ before all believers, in point of fulness and sufficiency of divine grace: *Of his fulness do they receive.* They have their failings, Christ has his fulness: theirs is the fulness of a vessel, his is the fulness of a fountain; their fulness is derivative, his fulness is original, yet also ministerial, on purpose in him to give out to us, that we may receive *grace for grace*: that is, grace answerable for kind and quality, though not for measure and degree. As a child in generation receives from its parents member for member, or as the paper in the printing-press receives letter for letter, and the wax under the seal receives print for print, so in the work of regeneration, whatever grace is in Christ, there is the like for kind stamped upon the christian's soul: all the members of Christ being made plentiful partakers of his spiritual endowments. Learn hence, That all fulness of grace, by way of supply for believers, is treasured up in Christ, and communicated by him, as their wants and necessities do require: his fulness is inexhaustible, it can never be drawn low, how much less drawn dry: "Of his fulness do we receive grace for grace;" that is, grace freely, grace plentifully: God grant that none of us may receive the grace of Christ in vain. 3. John prefers Christ before Moses, whom the Jews doted so much upon. *The law was given by Moses*, not as the author, but as the dispenser of it.—Moses was God's minister, by whom the law, which reveals wrath, was given to the Jews, but *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* *Grace*, in opposition to the condemnatory curse and sentence of the law; and *truth*, in opposition to the types, shadows, and ceremonies of the legal administration. Learn hence, That all grace for the remission of sin, and for the performance of duty, is given from Christ the fountain of grace; *Grace came by Jesus Christ.*

The grace of pardon and reconciliation; the grace of holiness and sanctification; the grace of love and adoption, even all that grace that fits us for service here, and glory hereafter, Christ is both the dispenser and the author of it. *Grace came by Jesus Christ.* Again, 4. John the Baptist here (ver. 18.) doth not only prefer Christ before himself, before Moses, before all believers, but even before all persons whatsoever, in point of knowing and revealing the mind of God. *No man hath seen God at any time*; that is, no mere man hath ever seen God in his essence, whilst he was in this mortal state. Here God's invisibility is asserted: next Christ's intimacy with the Father is declared. *The only begotten Son, that is in the*

bosom of the Father. This expression implies three things, 1. Unity of natures; the bosom is the child's place, who is part of ourselves, and of the same nature with ourselves. 2. Dearness of affection. None lie in the bosom, that are not dear to us. A bosom friend is the dearest of friends. 3. It implies communication of secrets, Christ's lying in his Father's bosom intimates his being conscious to all his Father's secrets, to know all his counsels, and to understand his whole will and pleasure. Now as Christ's lying in the Father's bosom implies unity of nature, it teaches us to give the same worship to Christ, which we give to God the Father, because he is of the same nature with the Father; as it implies dearness of affection betwixt the Father and the Son, it teaches us to place our chief love upon Christ the Son, because God the Father doth so: he, who is the Son of God's love, should be the object of our love: as God hath a bosom for Christ, so should we have also: the noblest object challenges the highest affection. Again, as Christ's lying in the Father's bosom, implies the knowledge of his mind and will, it teaches us to apply ourselves to Christ, to his Word and Spirit, for illumination. Whither should we go for instruction, but to this great prophet: for direction, but to this wonderful counsellor? We can never be made wise unto salvation, if Christ, the wisdom of the Father, doth not make us so.

19 ¶ And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? and he answered, No.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us; what sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

24 And they which were sent were of the pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

In these verses we have a second testimony which John the Baptist gave of our Saviour Jesus Christ. "The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, saying, Who art thou? That is, the Sanhedrim, or great council at Jerusalem, to whom it belonged to judge who were true prophets, sent messengers to the Baptist to know, whether he was the Messiah or not? John refuses to take this honor to himself, but tells them plainly, he was his harbinger and forerunner, and that the Messiah himself was just at hand. From hence note, How very cautious, and exceeding careful this messenger of Christ was, and all the ministers of Christ ought to be, that they do not assume or arrogate to themselves any part of that honor which is due to Christ; but set the crown of praise upon Christ's own head, acknowledging him to be All in All. 1 Cor. iii. 5. "Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos? but ministers by whom ye believed." Observe farther, in this testimony of John the Baptist, these two things: 1. A negative declaration, who he was not; *I am not*, says he, *the Messiah*, whom you look for, *nor Elias*, nor that prophet you expect; not Elias, that is, in your sense, not Elias the Tishbite; not Elias for identity of person, but Elias for similitude of gifts, office, and calling. John came, though not in the person, yet in the power and spirit of Elias. He denies farther, that he was *that prophet*; that prophet which Moses spake of, Deut. xviii. 15. nor any of the old prophets risen from the dead; nay, strictly speaking, he was not any prophet at all; *but more than a prophet*: The Old Testament prophet prophesied of Christ to come; but John pointed at, showed, and declared a Christ already come; and in this sense he was no mere prophet, but more than a prophet. 2. We have here the Baptist's positive affirmation, who he was; namely, Christ's herald in the wilderness, his usher, his forerunner, to prepare the people for the receiving of the Messiah, and to make them ready for the entertaining of the gospel, by preaching the doctrine of repentance to them. From hence learn, That the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is indispensably necessary, in order to the preparing of the hearts of sinners for the receiving of Jesus Christ. Observe lastly, the great and exemplary humility of the holy Baptist, the mean and lowly opinion he had of himself. Although John was the greatest among them that were born of a woman, and so much esteemed by the Jews, and had the honor to go before Christ in the exercise and office of his ministry; yet he judges himself unworthy to carry Christ's shoes after him. "He that cometh after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." Learn hence, That the more eminent gifts ministers of the gospel have, and the more ready men are to honor and esteem them, the more will they abuse themselves, if they be truly gracious, and account themselves highly honored in doing the meanest offices of love and service for Jesus Christ. Thus doth the holy Baptist here. "His shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

29 ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me : for he was before me.

This is John the Baptist's third testimony concerning Christ; in which he points out Christ as the true sacrifice for the expiation of sin: *Behold the Lamb of God*: the Lamb of God's appointing to be an expiatory sacrifice; the Lamb of God's election; the Lamb of God's affection; the Lamb of God's acceptance; the Lamb of God's exaltation; who, by the sacrifice of his death, *has taken away the sin of the world*. The sin, not the sins, in the plural number, to denote original sin, as some think; or, as others, to show that Christ hath universally taken upon himself the whole burden of our sin and guilt. And there seems to be a secret antithesis in the word *world*. In the Levitical sacrifices, only the sins of the Jews were laid upon the sacrificed beasts; but this Lamb takes away the sin of the Jew and Gentile. "The Lord hath caused to meet on him the iniquity of us all." And the verb, *taketh away*, being in the present tense, denotes a continued act, and it intimates to us thus much, viz. That it is the daily office of Christ to take away our sin, by presenting to the Father the memorials of his death. Christ takes away from all believers the guilt and punishment of their sins, the filth and pollution of them; the power and dominion that is in them; and as St. John called upon the Jews, to behold this Lamb of God with an eye of observation; so it is our duty to behold him now with an eye of admiration, with an eye of gratulation; but especially with an eye of faith and dependence, improving the fruit of his death to our own consolation and salvation, Isa. xlv. 22.—*Look unto me, and be saved, &c.*

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I am baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

Observe here, 1. That though John the Baptist was a near kinsman of Christ according to the flesh, yet the pro-

vidence of God so ordered it, that for thirty years together they did not know one another, nor converse with each other; therefore he could not know him to be the Messiah. —This, no doubt, was overruled by the wisdom of God, to prevent all suspicion, as if John and Christ had compacted together to give one another credit: that the world might suspect nothing of the truth of John's testimony concerning Christ, nor have the least jealousy, that what he said of Christ was from any bias of mind to his person; therefore he repeats it a second time, ver. 31, and 33, *I knew him not*. Hence we may learn, that a corporeal sight of Christ, and an outward personal acquaintance with him, is not simply needful, and absolutely necessary for enabling a minister to set him forth and represent him savingly to the world. Observe, 2. The means declared by which John came to know Christ to be the true Messiah; it was by a sign from heaven, namely, the Holy Ghost descending like a dove upon our Saviour.—"He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is he." Learn hence, 1. That Christ, taking upon him our nature, did so cover his glory with the veil of our flesh and common infirmities, that he could not be known by bodily sight from another man. Till John had a divine revelation, and an evident sign from heaven, that Christ was the Son of God, *he knew him not*. Learn, 2. That Christ, in his solemn entry upon his office, as Mediator, was sealed upon the work by the descending of the Holy Ghost upon him; he was sealed by the Holy Ghost's descending, and the Father's testifying, that this was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Now it was, that God gave not of the Spirit to Christ by measure, for the effectual administration of his mediatorial office, now *it pleased the Father, that in Christ shall all fulness dwell*. He was filled extensively with all kinds of grace, and filled intensively with all degrees of grace, in the day of his inauguration, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

35 ¶ Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples:

36 And looking upon Jesus, as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.

It is evident that John's disciples were never very willing to acknowledge Jesus for the Messiah, because they thought he did shadow and cloud their Master. See therefore the sincerity of the holy Baptist: he takes every opportunity to draw off the eyes of his own disciples from himself, and to fix them upon Christ; he saith to two of his disciples, *Behold the Lamb of God*; as if he had said, "Turn your eyes from me to Christ; take less notice of me, his minister: but behold your and my Lord and Master, *Behold the Lamb of God*." Learn hence, That the great design of Christ's faithful ministers is to set people upon admiring of Christ, and not magnifying themselves. O! it is their great ambition and desire, that such as love and respect them, and honor their ministry, may be led by them to Christ; to behold and admire him, to accept of him, and to submit unto him; John said to his disciples, *Behold the Lamb of God*,

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour:

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah; which is, being interpreted, The Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the Son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas: which is, by interpretation, A stone.

43 ¶ The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

This latter part of the chapter acquaints us with the calling of five disciples: not to the apostleship, for that was afterwards; nor yet simply by conversion, for some of them were John's disciples already, and believed in the Messiah to come; but they are here called to own and acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the true and promised Messiah. The disciples here called, were Andrew, Peter, and Philip, mean obscure persons, poor fishermen, not any of the learned rabbies and doctors among the Jews. Hereby Christ showed at once the freeness of his grace, in passing by the knowing men of the age; the greatness of his power, who by such weak instruments could effect such mighty things; and the glory of his wisdom, in choosing such instruments as should not carry away the glory of the work from him; but cause the entire honour and glory of all their great successes to redound to Christ. As Christ can do, so he chooses to do great things by weak means, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of the agent; for these persons, called now to be disciples, were afterwards sent forth by Christ as his apostles, to convert the world to christianity. Observe farther, The order according to which the disciples were called; first Andrew, then Peter: which may make the

(No. 23.)

church of Rome ashamed of the weakness of their argument for Peter's supremacy, that he was first called; whereas Andrew was before him, and Peter was brought to Jesus by him. *Andrew findeth his own brother Simon*, and brought him to Jesus. Such as have gotten any knowledge of Christ themselves, and are let into acquaintance with him, will be very diligent to invite, and industrious to bring in, others to him. Peter being brought to Christ, our Saviour names him *Cephas*, which signifies *a stone, a rock*; to intimate to him his duty to be firm and steady in the christian profession, full of courage and constancy. *Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.*

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

The last person mentioned in this chapter, who was called to own and embrace Christ for a Messiah, is Nathanael; who this Nathanael was, doth not certainly appear; but, it is evident, he was a sincere, good man, though prejudiced for the present against Christ, because of the place of his supposed birth and residence, Nazareth. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* That is, can any worthy or excellent person, much less the promised and long expected Messias, come out of such an obscure place as Nazareth is? Whereas Almighty God when he pleases, can raise worthy persons out of contemptible places. Observe farther, How mercifully and meekly Christ passes over the mistakes and failings, the prepossessions and prejudices of Nathanael: but takes notice of, and publicly proclaims, his sincerity: *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* It being only true of Christ, in a strict and absolute sense, that there was no guile found in his lips; but in a qualified sense, it is true of Nathanael, and every upright man; they are true Israelites, like their father Jacob, plain men: men of great sincerity and uprightness of heart, both in the sight of God and man. And whereas our Saviour speaks of him with a sort of admiration, *Behold an Israelite, in whom there is no guile.* We learn, That a person of great sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man, a true Nathanael and Israelite indeed, is a rare and worthy sight; *Behold an Israelite indeed.*—Learn, 2. That such indeed as are Nathanaels, need not commend themselves, Christ will be sure to do it for them. Nathanael conceals his own worth; Christ publishes and proclaims it, and calls upon others to take notice of it, *Behold, &c.*

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered, and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee; when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered, and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered, and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

Observe here, How Nathanael wondereth that Christ should know him, having as (he thought) never seen him. Christ gives him to understand, that by his all-seeing eye he had seen him, when he was not seen by him, *When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.* Christ's all-seeing eye is an infallible proof of his deity and godhead. Christ seeth us wherever we are, and whatever we do, though we see not him: he seeth the sincerity of our hearts, and will own it, and bear witness to it, if we are upright in his sight. Observe farther, How Christ's omnipresence and omniscience convince Nathanael that he was more than man, even the Messiah, God and man in two distinct natures and one person: *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God.* Philip calls Christ the Son of Joseph; Nathanael calls him the Son of God. Such as believe Christ's omniscience, will never call in question his divinity. Observe lastly, How Christ encourages the faith of his new disciple Nathanael, by promising him that he shall enjoy farther helps and means for the confirmation of his faith, than ever yet he had. All that Christ said to him was only this, that he *saw him under the fig-tree, before Philip called him.* How ready art thou, O Lord! to encourage the beginnings of faith in the hearts of thy people, and to furnish them with farther means of knowledge, when they wisely improve what they have received? Never wilt thou be wanting, either in means or mercy, to us, if we be not wanting to thee and ourselves.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

The heavens were open to Christ, and the angels attended upon him, first at his baptism, Mat. iii. ult. then at his ascension, Acts i. 9. Whether Christ alludes to the one or the other, or to both, I shall not positively say, but gather this note, That the ministry and attendance of the holy angels upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in the time of his humiliation, was very remarkable; an angel foretels his conception to the virgin, Luke i. 31; an angel publishes his birth to the shepherds, Luke ii. 14; in his temptations in the wilderness, the angels came and ministered unto him, Mat. iv. 11; in his agony in the garden, an angel is sent to comfort him, Luke xxii. 42; at his resurrection an angel rolls away the stone, and proclaims him risen, to the women that sought for him, Mat. xxviii. 6; at his ascension, the angels attended upon him, and bare him company to heaven; and at the day of judgment, he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. Now, thus officious are the holy angels on

blessed Saviour, and thus subservient to him upon all occasions. 1. In point of affection and singular love to Christ. 2. In point of duty and special obligation to Christ. There is no such cheerful and delightful service of love. Such is the angels' service to Christ for the services he has done them, he being an head of confirmation to them: for, that they are established in that holy and glorious state in which they were at first created, is owing to the special grace of the Redeemer; *Glorify him then all ye his angels, and praise him all his host.*

CHAPTER II.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with the first miracle which our Saviour wrought, in turning water into wine: the occasion of it was, his being invited to a marriage-feast. Here note, 1. That whenever our Saviour was invited to a public entertainment, he never refused the invitation, but constantly went: not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good, which was meat and drink unto him. Note, 2. What honor Christ put upon the ordinance of marriage: he honors it with his presence and first miracle. Some think it was St. John that was now the bridegroom; others, that it was some near relation of the virgin mother's; but, whoever it might be, doubtless Christ's design was rather to put honor upon the ordinance than upon the person. How bold is the church of Rome in spitting upon the face of this ordinance, by denying its lawfulness to the ministers of religion? When the apostle, Heb. xiii. 4. affirms, that *Marriage is honorable among all.* Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New (St. Peter himself not excepted) did abhor the marriage-bed, or judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. Note, 3. That it is an ancient and laudable institution, that the rites of marriage should not want a solemn celebration. Feasting with friends upon such an occasion is both lawful and commendable provided the rules of sobriety and charity, modesty, and decency, be observed, and no sinful liberty assumed. But it must be said, that feasting in general, and marriage-feasts in particular, are some of those lawful things which are difficultly managed without sin. Note, 4. That our Saviour's working a miracle, when he was at the marriage-feast, should teach us, by his example, that in our cheerful and free times, when we indulge a little more than ordinary mirth amongst our friends, we should still be mindful of God's honor and glory, and lay hold upon an occasion of doing all the good we can. Note lastly, As Christ was personally invited to, and bodily present at this marriage-feast, when here upon earth: so he will not refuse now in heaven to be spiritually present at his people's marriages:

they want his presence with them upon that great occasion, they desire and seek it: he is acquainted with it: and invited to it, whoever is neglected; and where Christ is made acquainted with the match, he will certainly make one at the marriage. Happy is that wedding where Christ and his friends (as here) are the invited, expected, and enjoyed guests.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

This want of wine was probably so disposed by the providence of God, to give our Saviour an opportunity to manifest his divine power in working a miracle to supply it. Observe here, 1. How the virgin inquires into the family's wants, and then makes them known to Christ. Learn hence, That it is an argument of piety, and an evidence of christian love, to inquire into the wants, and to recommend the necessities of others to Christ's care and consideration; whose bounty and munificence can readily and abundantly supply them. Thus far the virgin's action was good; she laid open the case to Christ: "They have no wine:" but Christ, who discerned the thoughts of Mary's heart, finds her guilty of presumption; she thought by her motherly authority she might have expected, if not commanded, a miracle from him; whereas Christ was subject to her as man during his private life; but now being entered upon the office as a Mediator, as God-man, he gives her to understand she had no power over him, nor any motherly authority in the business of his public office; therefore he says to her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? He that charges his angels with folly, will not be taught when and how to act, by poor, crawling dust and ashes! Observe therefore, 2. Christ calls the virgin *woman*, not *mother*, but this was not out of any contempt, but to prevent her being thought more than a woman, above, or beyond a woman, having brought forth the Son of God. *Woman*, says Christ, not *goddess*, as the papists would make her, and proclaim her free from sin, even from venial sin; but Christ's reproving her, shows that she was not faultless. Observe, 3. Christ would not bear with the virgin's commanding on earth, will he then endure her intercession in heaven? must she not meddle with matters appertaining to his office here below, and will it be endured by Christ, or endeavoured by her to interpose in the work of mediation above? No, no; were it possible for her so far to forget herself in heaven; she would receive that answer from Christ she had on earth, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? or thou with me, in my mediatorial office? but instead of this she returns answer from heaven to her idolatrous petitioners here on earth, "What have I to do with you? get you to my Son, go you to Christ, he that was the Mediator of redemption; he, and only he continues the Mediator of intercession." O how foolish as well as impious is it to think, that she who had not so much power as to direct the working of one miracle on earth, should have now lodged in her hands all the power of heaven!

6 And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a piece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.

In this miracle of our Saviour's turning water into wine observe, 1. The reality of the miracle, and the sincerity of Christ in the working of it. To evidence there was no deceit in the miracle, not wine-casks, but water-pots, are called for; wine-vessels, in which some lees were remaining; might have given both a vinous color and taste to the water; but stone pots could contribute nothing of this nature; and being open pots, there was no stealing wine into them without observation. Again, our Saviour's employing the servants, and not his disciples, takes off any suspicion of collusion; and his sending it to the ruler or governor of the feast, was an evidence that the miracle would bear examination. Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial; they were obvious to sense, not lying wonders, not fictitious miracles, which the jugglers in the church of Rome cheat the people with: the greatest miracle which they boast of, *transubstantiation*, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it contradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with. Observe, 2. Though Christ wrought a real miracle, yet he would not work more of miracles than needed; he would not create wine out of nothing, but turned water into wine. Thus he multiplied the bread, changed the water, restored withered limbs, raised dead bodies, still working upon that which was, and not

creating that which was not; Christ never wrought a miracle but when needful, and then wrought no more of miracle than he needed. Observe, 3. The liberality and bounty of Christ in the miracle here wrought; six water-pots are filled with wine; enough, say some writers, for an hundred and fifty men: had he turned but one of those large vessels into wine, it had been a sufficient proof of his power; but to fill so many, was an instance both of his power and mercy. The Lord of the family furnishes his household not barely for necessity, but for delight, giving richly all things to enjoy. And as the bounty of Christ appeared in the quantity, so in the excellency, of the wine; *thou hast kept the best wine till now*, says the governor of the feast. It was fit that Christ's miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural. But, Oh! blessed Saviour, how delicate and delicious shall that wine be, which we shall drink, ere long, with thee in thy Father's kingdom! Let thy Holy Spirit fill the vessel of my heart with water (with godly sorrow and contrition) and thou wilt turn it into wine. For *blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*. Observe, 4. The double effects of this miracle; Christ, hereby manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him. 1. He manifested forth his glory, that is, the glory of his Godhead, doing this by his own power. Here shineth forth his omnipotence, his bounty and liberality, every thing that might bespeak him both the great and the good God. The second effect of this miracle was, that the disciples believed on him. The great end of miracles is the confirmation of faith; God never sets the seal of his omnipotency to a lie; all the miracles then that Christ and his apostles did, were so many seals that the doctrine of the gospel is true. *If you believe not me*, says Christ, *believe the works which I do, for they bear witness of me*. John v, 36.

12 ¶ After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and they continued there not many days.

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting :

15 And, when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence : make not my Father's house a house of merchandize.

Observe here, 1. How obedient in all things Christ was to the ceremonial law. He was not naturally subject to the law, but to fulfil all righteousness, he kept the passover yearly, according to the command of God, Exod. xxiii. 17. That "all the males should appear before him in the temple" at Jerusalem. Hence it is probably concluded, that Christ came up to the passover continually during his private life; and being now come up to Jerusalem to the first passover after his baptism, and solemn entrance upon his office, his first walk was to the temple, and his first work was to purge and reform it from abuses, not to ruin and destroy it, because it had been abused. Now the abuse and profanation of the temple at that time was this: in the outward court of the Gentiles, there was a public mart or market, where were sold oxen, sheep, and doves, for sacrifice; which otherwise the people, with great labor and trouble, must have brought up along with them for sacrifice. Therefore, as a pretended ease to the people, the priests ordered these things to be sold hard by the altar: the intention was commendable, but the action not justifiable. No pretence of good ends can justify that which is forbidden of God: a good end can never justify an irregular action. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's fervent zeal in purging and reforming his Father's house. The sight of sin in any persons, but especially in and among professors, ought to kindle in our hearts (as it did here in Christ's breast) a burning zeal and indignation against it. Yet was not Christ's zeal so warm as to devote the temple to destruction, because of its abuse and profanation. Places dedicated to the worship and service of God, if idolatrously abused, must not be pulled down, but purged: not ruined, but reformed. There is a special reverence due to the house of God, both for the owner's sake, and the service sake. Nothing but holiness becomes that place, where God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Christ, by purging the court of the Gentiles from merchandize, not unlawful in itself, but necessary for the sacrifices which were offered in the temple, though not necessary to be brought there, did plainly insinuate, that a distinction is to be made betwixt places sacred and profane; and that what may be done as well elsewhere, ought not to be done in the house of God, the place appointed immediately for his worship. Observe, 3. The greatness of this miracle in the weakness of the means which Christ made use of to effect and work it: he drove the buyers and sellers before him out of the temple; but how, and with what? St. Hierom, in Matt. xxi. says, That certain fiery rays or beams, darting from Christ's eyes, drove out these merchants from this place. I dare not avouch this, but I am satisfied that Christ drove them out, unarmed with any weapons that might carry dread and terror with them, at most but with a whip or small cord; which probably might be scattered by the drovers that came thither to sell their cattle. Behold then the weakness of the means on the one side, and consider the greatness of the opposition on the other: there was a confluence of people to oppose Christ, this being the most solemn mart of the passover, and here were merchant-men, whose hearts were set upon gain (the world's God,) to oppose him. But neither the weakness of the means, nor the greatness of the opposition, did dismay him, or cause our Saviour to desist from the attempt of reforming what was amiss in the house of God. Learn we hence, That it matters not how weak the means of the church reformation is,

nor how strong the opposite power is; if we engage Christ in the undertaking, the work shall certainly be accomplished. O! how great was the work, and how weak and unlikely were the means here! a parcel of sturdy fellows, whose hearts were set upon their wealth; Christ no sooner speaks to them, and shakes his whip at them, but like a company of fearful hares they run before him. Christ, in purging his church, will make every thing yield and give way to his power. Let it comfort the church under all unlikelihood of reformation. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before our spiritual Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain. I shall close my observations upon this miracle of Christ's whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which both Origen and St Jerome make the greatest miracle that ever Christ wrought, all circumstances considered; I shall close it with this reflection, viz. Were there such power and terror in Christ's countenance and speech here in the temple in the days of his flesh? O, how terrible then will his face and his appearance be to the wicked and impenitent world at the great day! Lord! how fearful will his iron scourge then be! how terrifying that voice, "Depart from me; depart accursed, depart into fire, depart into everlasting fire, into a fire prepared for the punishment of apostate spirits, the devil and his angels!"—God grant we may wisely consider it, and timely flee from the wrath to come.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

The disciples upon this occasion call to remembrance the words of David, Psal. lxxix. 9. *The zeal of thine House hath eaten me up*; which was verified in Christ as well as in David. Where observe, 1. The grace described. *Zeal*, which is the ardor of the affections, carrying forth a man to the utmost for God's glory, and his church's good. Zeal is not so much one affection, as the intense degree of all the affections. Observe, 2. The object about which our Saviour's zeal was conversant, *God's house*, that is, all things relating to the worship of God, temple, tabernacle, ark, &c. which were the pledges of God's presence. Observe, 3. The effect of this, it *hath eaten me up*, like fire that eats up and devours that whereon it lights. What was said of St. Peter, that he was a man made up of all fire; and of St. Paul in respect of his sufferings, that he was a spark of fire burning in the midst of the sea, may much more truly be said of Christ, when he was engaged in the work of church reformation.—Learn, That as Christ was, so Christians ought to be very zealous for the glory of God, the honor of his house, and the purity of his worship. *The zeal of thine house*, that is, for the honor of thine house, *hath eaten me up*, &c.

18 ¶ Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered, and said unto them, (No. 23.)

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Observe here, 1. How exceedingly offended the Jews were at the reformation which our Saviour had made in the house of God: they were awed indeed with the majesty of this great work, and durst not openly oppose, but secretly malign it. Thence note, That redress of abuses in God's worship, especially if it crosses our ease, and controls our profit, (as this did) is usually distasteful. Observe, 2. How these Jews discover their old inveterate disease of infidelity:—they require a sign, and call for a miracle, to justify Christ's commission. Why! had not they a miracle before their eyes? Was not the work of purging the temple a wonderful miracle? Yet they demanded another miracle to make this good. Learn thence, That obstinate infidelity will not be satisfied with the most sufficient means for satisfaction, but still object and oppose against the clearest, the fullest, and most convincing evidence. *What sign showest thou us?* say the Jews, when they had so many signs and wonders daily before their eyes. Observe, 3. The Jews demanding a sign, our Saviour grants them one; he remits them to his death and resurrection, to prove that he was the true Messiah.—*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*; That is, "I know you will destroy this temple of my body, by putting me to death, but I will raise myself again from the grave the third day." Christ did not command them to destroy his body, but only foretold that they would do it. *Non est verbum præcepti, sed prædictionis*: "The words are not imperative, but only predictive and permissive."—Christ did not bid them destroy his body, but foretels what they would do.—"Ye will destroy this temple, but after three days I will raise it up." Where note, That Christ asserts his own power in raising his own body from the dead. True, the Father is often said to raise him, and it is necessary that it be so said, that it might appear that Divine Justice was fully satisfied for our sins, in that he was by him delivered from that death which he underwent for us.—But yet it is often asserted, that Christ raised himself, and that he was quickened by the Spirit, which was as well the Spirit of the Son, as of the Father, dwelling essentially in him. Now, from Christ's foretelling his passion and resurrection, learn thence. That all our Saviour's sufferings were foreknown unto him, were foretold by him; he would not prevent them, but willingly permitted them, and cheerfully underwent them; *Destroy this*

temple. Note here, 1. The state and dignity of Christ's holy body: it is a temple, *He spake of the temple of his body.* The saints' bodies are temples by special sanctification; Christ's body was a temple by substantial inhabitation. The divinity of Christ dwelt in his humanity personally and immediately. God dwells in saints by regal authority, he dwelt in Christ's humanity by personal residence. Note, 2. The violence and indignity offered to this holy temple at our Saviour's death: it was pulled down and destroyed. Death dissolved the union betwixt our Saviour's soul and body; but there was a closer union, which no violence of death could dissolve: namely, the union of his godhead with his manhood; this was incapable either of dissolution or destruction. Note, 3. The repairing, restoring, and raising up of this temple out of the ruins of it, by our Saviour's resurrection. *In three days I will raise it up.* Observe, A full proof of our Saviour's divinity. To raise a dead man exceeds the power of nature; but for a dead man to raise himself, requires the power of God. We read of dead men raised by others; but none but Christ ever raised himself. The Jews could not say, he raised others from the grave, himself he could not raise. Inference, 1. Was Christ's body a temple? So shall ours be too; temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; temples by special appropriation, temples by a solemn consecration, temples by actual employment. *If any man defile this temple, him will God destroy.* 2. Was the temple of Christ's body pulled down by death, and destroyed? So must also the temples of our bodies ere long. The temple of his body was pulled down for our sin: the temples of our bodies ruined by our sin. Sin brought mortality into our natures, and the wages of our sin is death. 3. Was the temple of Christ's body repaired in the morning of the resurrection? So shall the temples of our bodies also, if we be the members of Christ by a vital union. "Thy dead men," O, blessed Redeemer! "shall live; together with thy dead body shall they rise. Awake then and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isa. xxyi. 19.

23 ¶ Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men;

Observe here, What influence the sight of our Saviour's miracles had upon many of the common people. "They believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did;" that is, they were convinced by the works which our Saviour wrought, that he came from God, and what he said and did was really true, and no imposture. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Our Saviour did not, and would not, trust them who yet believed on his name. Thence note, That a naked assent to the history of the gospel is not sufficient to intitle us to saving faith. We may assent to the truth of all that we find there, and yet be far from the kingdom of God. Saving faith implies more than the assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel. We cannot believe or disbelieve what we please, but

must needs assent to what is evident to our understanding; so that it is possible for a man to assent to the truth of christianity, and yet remain in a state of damnation. If he doth not embrace it as good, as well as assent to it as true; if our faith be not the parent and principle of obedience; if our belief doth not influence our practice, though we pass for believers among men, we are no better than unbelievers in the account of Christ. If we believe Jesus to be the true Messiah, and do not receive him in all his offices; if we commit ourselves to his saving mercy, but do not submit ourselves to his ruling power; if we desire him for our Saviour, but disown him for our Sovereign; if we expect salvation by him, and do not yield subjection to him: we put a cheat upon ourselves: for he only believes as he should, that lives as he does believe.

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

St. John's design in writing this gospel being to assert the divinity of Christ, he scatters evidences of it in almost every chapter. Here he declares his omniscience, "He knew what was in man;" that is, being God blessed for ever, he had an exact knowledge of the hearts of men, not by any revelation of men's hearts from God, but by immediate intuition from himself. He knows all men, and all that is in men. See here an ample testimony of the divinity of Christ, his knowledge of the secrets of the hearts of all men, which is declared to be the undoubted property of God alone. 1 Kings viii. 39. "Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men."

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with that famous conference which our blessed Saviour had with Nicodemus. This man was by sect a pharisee; which signifies a person separated and set apart for the study of the law of God, and to teach it unto others: and by calling or profession, "a ruler of the Jews," that is, probably, one of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a chief person in their ecclesiastical court and council. Consider we Nicodemus, first, as a pharisee, which sort of men were filled with inveterate prejudice and enmity against Christ: yet from hence we may gather, that such is the efficacy of divine grace, that

it sometimes convinces and converts also those that are the greatest enemies to Christ, and fiercest opposers of him. No such bitter enemies to Christ as the pharisees; yet behold Nicodemus, a pharisee, coming to him, convinced and converted by him. Consider him secondly, as a ruler of the Jews, as a person of place and power, making a figure in the world. Though they were generally the poor which followed Christ, yet some of the great and rich men of the world, as Nicodemus, a master of Israel, and Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, are called to Christ, and received by him; lest, if he had admitted illiterate and simple men only, the world might have thought that they were deceived through their simplicity. Observe farther, The time when Nicodemus came to Christ: it was by night; partly out of shame, lest the world should think that such a knowing man as he was wanted instruction; and partly out of fear; he had something to lose, and therefore durst not own Christ publicly. However, our dear Lord upbraids him not with his timorousness, but graciously condescends to instruct him in the fundamental principle of christianity, the great doctrine of regeneration. Such is the tenderness of our compassionate Saviour, that he will not extinguish the least spark of holy fire, nor quench smoking flax.

3 Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Christ here acquaints Nicodemus, and in him all persons, that there must be a change from nature to grace, before there can be a change from grace to glory; for though he was a Jew, a doctor, and one that had good thoughts of Christ, looking upon him as an extraordinary person, one that had received power from God to work miracles; yet Christ assures him, that nothing short of the regenerating change would bring him to heaven. It is not enough that we be new-dressed, but we must be new-made; that is, thoroughly and universally changed; the understanding by illumination, the will by renovation, the affections by sanctification, the life by reformation, or we can never come at heaven: we must be like God, or we can never live with him; if we be not like him in the temper of our minds on earth, we can never be happy in the enjoyment of him in heaven, which is a place of the greatest holiness, and would be a place of the greatest uneasiness to an unregenerate and an unholly person; the contagion is universal, deep, and inward, therefore such must the change be.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Two things are observable in this question of Nicodemus, *How can a man be born when he is old?* 1. His ignorance and weakness in propounding such a question. So true is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.* What a gross conception had this learned man of the notion of regenera-

tion? How ignorant is nature of the workings of grace! Men of name and note, of great parts and profound learning, are very often much at a loss in spiritual matters. Yet, 2. In this question of his, there is discovered a great deal of plainness and simplicity; he did not come, as usually the pharisees did, with an ensnaring question in his mouth, but a mind fairly disposed for information and conviction; with a pious desire to be instructed. Whatever ignorance we labor under, it is safest and best to discover it to our spiritual guide, that we may attain the mercy of a saving knowledge: but how many had rather carry their ignorance to hell with them, than discover it to their minister.

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus not rightly understanding Christ's meaning in the former verse, our Saviour is pleased to explain himself in this, and tells him, that the birth he spake of was not natural, but spiritual, wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, whose working is like water, cleansing and purifying the soul from all sinful defilement. Learn hence, That the regenerating change is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, which purifies it from its natural defilement, and renews it after the divine likeness and image. We never understand divine truths aright, till Christ opens our understandings; till then, they will be denied, nay, perhaps derided, even by those that are profoundly learned.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

As if Christ had said, "As men generate men, and nature begets nature, so the Holy Spirit produceth holy inclinations, qualifications, and dispositions." Learn hence, That as original corruption is conveyed by natural generation, so saving regeneration is the effect and product of the Holy Spirit's operation.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus making an exception against our Saviour's notion of regeneration, from the absurdity and impossibility of it, (as he thought) our Saviour therefore proceeds to clear the matter by a similitude taken from the wind, which at once declares the author, and describes the manner of spiritual regeneration; the author of it is the Holy Spirit of God, compared to the wind: First, for

the quality of its motion, "It blows when and where it listeth." Secondly, From the sensibleness of its effects: "Thou hearest the sound thereof." Thirdly, from the intricacy or mysteriousness of its proceedings: "Thou knowest not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." As the natural wind is not under the power of man, either to send it out, or to restrain it; it bloweth where it listeth for all us, though not where it listeth in regard of God. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is as wind in the freeness of its motion, and in the variableness of its motion also. Learn hence, That the way and work of the Holy Spirit of God, in the soul's regeneration, is oftentimes very secret and usually exceeding various. Various as to the time; some are wrought up in youth, others in old age. Various in his methods of working; some are wrought upon the corrosives of the law, others by the lenitives of the gospel. Various in the manner of his working, and in the means by which he works: upon some by a powerful ordinance, upon others by an awakening providence. But though there be such variety in the method of the Spirit's working, yet is the work in all still the same. There is no variety in the work wrought. The effect produced by the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration is alike and the same in all: namely, likeness to God; a conformity in our natures to the holy nature of God; and a conformity in our lives to the will of God. Again, It is in a very secret work, and therefore compared to the wind. We hear and feel the wind blow, we observe its mighty force, and admire its strange effects; but we cannot describe its nature, nor declare its original. Thus the Holy Spirit, in a secret and hidden manner, quickens and influences our souls. The effects of its operations we sensibly discern: but how and after what manner he doth it, we know no more than how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child. Therefore it is called an hidden life. Colos. iii. 3. It is not only totally hidden from carnal men, but in part hidden and unknown to spiritual men, though they themselves are the subjects of it.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

Observe here, 1. How Nicodemus, consulting only with carnal reason, persists in his apprehension concerning the absurdity and impossibility of our Saviour's notion of regeneration, or being born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" Learn hence, That the great cause of men's ignorance in matters of salvation, and the

mysteries of religion, is consulting their own and natural reason, without submitting their understandings to the authority of divine revelation. Till they can give a reason for every thing they believe, they cry out with Nicodemus, *How can these things be?* Whereas, though we cannot give a reason for all gospel mysteries which we believe, we can give a good reason why we believe them, namely, because God hath revealed them. No man can be a christian who refuses to submit his understanding to the authority of divine revelation. Observe, 2. How our Saviour reproves Nicodemus for, and upbraids him with his ignorance, ver. 10. and his infidelity, ver. 12. First, his ignorance is reprov'd, *Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* As if Christ had said, "Ignorance in any, as to the fundamentals of religion, is shameful, though but a common learner, much more in a teacher and master in Israel; now thou art one of them, and yet knowest not these things." Learn hence, 1. That a man may be very knowing himself, and take upon him to teach and instruct others, and yet be very ignorant of the nature, and much unacquainted with the work of regeneration upon his own soul: a man may be very sharp sighted, as the eagle, in the mysteries of art and nature, and yet blind as a mole in the things of God. 2. That ignorance in the fundamentals of religion especially, is very culpable and shameful in any that enjoy the means of knowledge, but especially in those that undertake to teach and instruct others. *Art thou a teacher, thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Next our Saviour upbraids him for his infidelity, ver. 12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not.* This infidelity received its aggravation from the facility and perspicuity of our Saviour's doctrine. I have told you earthly things; that is, I have set forth spiritual things by earthly similitudes, not in a style suitable to the sublimity of their own nature. Let the ministers of Christ learn their Master's example, in all their discourses to accommodate themselves, and descend as low as may be to the capacities of their people: *I have told you earthly things.* 3. That even spiritual things, when they are shadowed forth by earthly similitudes, and brought down in the plainest manner to the capacities of their people, yet are they very backward to believe them; *I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe them not.*

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that cometh down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.

Here our Saviour declares to Nicodemus, That none ever ascended up into heaven, to fetch down from thence the knowledge of divine mysteries, and to reveal the way of life and salvation to mankind by a mediator, but only Christ himself; who, though he took upon him the human nature, and was then man upon earth, yet he was at the same time in his divine nature actually in heaven as God. This text evidently proves two distinct natures in Christ; namely, a divine nature as he was God, and a human nature as man. In his human nature, he was then upon earth, when he spake these words: in his divine nature, he was at that instant in heaven. Here observe, That the Son of God hath taken the human nature

into so close and intimate an union with his godhead, that what is proper to either nature is ascribed unto the person of our Saviour. The same person who was on earth as the Son of man, was then in heaven as God, and yet but one person still. Lord! What love hast thou shown to our human nature, that under that name thou ascribest to thyself what is proper to thy Godhead! "The Son of man which is in heaven." The Socinians produce this text, to prove that Christ after his baptism was taken up into heaven, there to be made acquainted with the will of God, to fit him for the execution of his prophetic office here on earth, and that for this reason he was said to be "in the beginning with God," as Moses before him was taken up into the mount, and taught by God. But, 1. We have not the least word of any such thing in scripture, though we have a particular account of our Saviour's birth, circumcision, baptism, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension; yea, of small things compared with this: as his flight into Egypt, his sitting on a pinnacle of the temple; yet not a word of his assumption into heaven. 2. There was no need of it, because Almighty God could reveal himself to Christ as well as to other prophets, out of heaven as well as in it; besides, Christ was fitted for his prophetic office by the unction of the Spirit he received here on earth; and therefore this ascent was altogether needless.

14 ¶ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Christ having instructed Nicodemus in the doctrine of regeneration in the former verses, here he instructs him in the death of the Messiah, and in the necessity of faith in his death; "The Son of man must be lifted up;" that is, upon the cross, and die; "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish." Observe here, 1. An Old Testament type which our Saviour refers to, and that is, the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the history of which is recorded, Numb. xxi. 7, 8. Observe, 2. The anti-type, or the substance of what that type did shadow forth, the brazen serpent's lifting up upon the pole, prefiguring Christ's exaltation or lifting up upon his cross. "So must the Son of man be lifted up." Learn hence, that the Lord Jesus Christ is of the same use and office to a sin-stung soul, which the brazen serpent was of old to a serpent-stung Israelite. Here observe, 1. Wherein the brazen serpent and Christ do agree. And, 2. Wherein they differ. They agree thus: in the occasion of their institution: they were both appointed for cure and healing. Were they serpent-stung? We are sin-stung; devil-bitten. Was the sting of the first serpent inflaming? Was it spreading? Was it killing? So is sin, which is the venom and poison of the old serpent. They agree in this: that they both must be "lifted up" before cure could be obtained; the brazen serpent upon the pole, Christ upon the cross. They both must be "looked upon" before cure could be obtained: the looking up of the Israelites was as necessary unto healing.

(No. 23.)

as the lifting up of the serpent. Faith is as necessary to salvation as the death of Christ. The one rendered God reconcilable unto sinners, the other renders him actually reconciled. Again, did the brazen serpent heal all that looked upon it, and looked up unto it, though all had not eyes alike, some with a weak, others with a stronger eye? In like manner doth Christ justify and save all, that with a sincere faith, though weak, do rely upon him for salvation: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish." Further, The brazen serpent was effectual for Israel's cure after many stings; if after they were healed, they were stung afresh, and did look up to it, they were healed by it. Thus the merit of Christ's death is not only effectual for our cure and healing at our first conversion, but after involuntary relapses and backslidings, if by faith we have recourse to the blood of Christ, we shall find it efficacious for our further benefit and future healing. In a word, as the brazen serpent had the likeness of a serpent, but nothing of the venom and poison of the serpent in it: so Christ did take upon him our nature; but sin, the venom and poison of our nature, he had nothing to do with: though Christ loved souls with an invincible and insuperable love, yet he would not sin to save a soul. This was the similitude and resemblance between Christ and the brazen serpent. The disparity or dissimilitude follows: the brazen serpent had no power in itself, or of itself, to heal and cure: but Christ has a power inherent in himself for the curing and healing of all that do believe in him. Again, The brazen serpent cured only one particular nation and people, Jews only: Christ is for the healing of all nations, and his salvation is to the end of the earth. Farther, The brazen serpent cured only one particular disease; namely, the stinging of the fiery serpents; had a person been sick of the plague, or leprosy, he might have died for all the brazen serpent: but Christ pardons all the iniquities, and heals all the diseases of his people. Psalm, ciii. 3. Yet again, Though the brazen serpent healed all that looked up unto it, yet it gave an eye to none to look up unto it; whereas Christ doth not only heal them that look up to him, but bestows the eye of faith upon them, to enable them to look unto him that they may be saved. In a word, the brazen serpent did not always retain its healing virtue, but in time lost it, and was itself destroyed. 2 Kings xviii. 4. But now the healing-virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood is eternal. All believers have and shall experience the healing power of our Redeemer's death to the end of the world. Lastly, The Israelites that were cured by looking up to the brazen serpent, died afterwards; some distemper or other soon carried them to their graves; but the soul of the believer that is healed by Christ shall never die more: *Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

16 ¶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Here observe, 1. The original source and fountain of man's salvation; and that is, God's free and undeserved, his great and wonderful love. *God so loved the world,*

he doth not say how much, but leaves it to our most solemn raised thoughts; it is rather to be conceived than declared; and admired rather than conceived. *God so loved the world;* hence note, that the original spring and first cause of our salvation is the free favor and mere love of God. A love worthy of God from whom it proceeds, even love inexpressible and inconceivable. Observe, 2. The greatness of the gift by which God evidenced and demonstrated the greatness of his love to a lost world; *He gave his only begotten Son:* that is, he delivered him out from his own bosom and everlasting embraces. Now this will appear a stupendous expression of God's love, if we consider that God gave him who was not only the greatest, but the dearest person to him in the world, even *his own Son;* that he gave him for sinners; that he gave him for a world of sinners; that he gave him up to become a sacrifice for the sin of sinners. Observe, 3. The gracious end for which God gave this great gift of his love to lost sinners; *That whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* Where note, 1. The gentle and merciful condition upon which salvation depends; *Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish.* 2. The infinite goodness of God in proposing such a vast reward unto us, upon our performing of this condition: *He shall have everlasting life.* Learn hence, That faith is the way which God hath appointed, and the condition which God hath required, in order to our obtaining salvation by Jesus Christ. This faith consists in the assent of the understanding, that Jesus is the Saviour of the world; in the consent of the will, to accept of Jesus freely and voluntarily, deliberately, advisedly, and resolvedly, for our Saviour: in accepting the merit of his blood, and submitting to the authority of his laws; it being in vain to expect salvation by Christ, if we do not yield subjection to him; he that thus *believes in Christ*, that submits himself to his ruling power, as well as commits himself to his saving mercy, *shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 ¶ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

Observe here, That the salvation of sinners was the intentional end, and the condemnation of them only the accidental event, of Christ's coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world was to save it. The end of his second coming will be to judge the unbelieving part of it. Observe, secondly, That unbelief is the formal cause of the sinner's damnation; it is that sin which doth bind all other sins upon the sinner, and consigns him over to damnation; it is that sin which doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it: which is intimated in the next verse.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

Observe here, 1. The worth and dignity of a choice and invaluable privilege declared, *light is come into the world.* A personal light, *Christ:* a doctrinal light, *the gospel.*— Observe, 2. The unworthiness, abuse, and great indignity, which the world, through infidelity, offers to this benefit: they reject it, and *love darkness rather than light.* Observe, 3. The dreadful sentence of wrath which the rejection of this benefit and the abuse of Christ, brings upon the impenitent and unbelieving world. It terminates in their full and final condemnation: *This is the condemnation;* that is, it is a just and righteous condemnation, it is an inevitable and unavoidable condemnation, it is an heightened and aggravated, it is an accelerated and hastened, an irrevocable and eternal condemnation. Learn hence, That the greater and clearer the light is, under which the unregenerate and impenitent do live in this world, so much the heavier will their condemnation and misery be in the world to come, if they wilfully and finally reject it.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

In these words our Saviour acquaints us with the different nature of sin and holiness. It is the nature of sin, and the property of sinners, to hate the light, because it discovers the evil and sinfulness of their ways unto them, and condemns them for them; as the Ethiopians are said to curse the sun for its bright and hot shining; whereas holy and gracious persons that walk uprightly, do love the light; that is, they delight to have their thoughts, words, and actions, tried by the light of the word, because *they are wrought in God;* that is, performed as in the sight of God, according to the directions of the word of God, and with a single eye and sincere aim at the glory of God. Learn hence, 1. That the word of God or the gospel of Jesus Christ, has all the properties of a great and true light. It is of a pure and purifying nature, it is of a manifestative and discovering nature. It has a piercing power, and penetrating virtue, it enters the darkest recesses of the soul, and detects the errors of men's judgments, as well as discovers the enormities of their lives.— Learn, 2. That nothing is so hateful to, and hated by a wicked man, as the discovering and reproofing light of the word of God: for at the same time that it discovers the sin, it condemns the sinner. Learn, 3. That a truly gracious person, who acteth agreeable to the will of God, is not afraid to examine his actions by the word of God; but desires and delights that what he doth may be made manifest both to God and man. *He that doeth truth, cometh to the light,* and rejoiceth

that his deeds may be made manifest, because they are wrought in God.

22 ¶ After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 ¶ And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

Our blessed Saviour having now finished his excellent sermon preached to Nicodemus at Jerusalem, he departs thence with his disciples into the country of Judea, to make proselytes by the ordinance of baptism. Where note, 1. Our Lord's unwearied diligence in doing his Father's work and will. He goes from place to place, from city to country, preaching with, and baptizing by his disciples: for *Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples*, John iv. 2. Note, 2. That the enjoyment of Christ's bodily presence did not take away the use of his own ordinances. None are above ordinances till they come to heaven. The ordinance of baptism is here administered by the disciples, even in the presence of Christ himself. This is called the baptism of repentance, of which children, as well as others, were capable subjects, because baptism doth not require children's repentance at present, but engages them to repentance for time to come: as children that were circumcised were obliged to observe the whole law, but could not perform it till they came to understand it. Note, 3. How John did go on with the work of baptizing, though Christ and his disciples did eclipse and obscure him; though the people now flocked after Christ, *All men came unto him*, ver 26. yet John kept to his duty. It is the duty of God's ministers to continue in their diligence, and go on with their work, when God raises up others about them of greater parts and better success. O! the admirable humility of that minister, who can say with John the Baptist, *Let another increase, though I decrease*.

25 ¶ Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him.

Observe here, What a spirit of envy there was in John's disciples against Christ, upon account of the multitude of the followers: *He that was with thee beyond Jordan, baptizeth, and all men come unto him*. Where note, 1. How men

ly John's disciples think and speak of our Saviour, compared with John, their master. They do not so much as allow him a name, or give him any title, but *He that was with thee beyond Jordan, the same baptizeth*. Observe, 2. How they intimate, as if Christ had received all his credit and reputation from their master, John: *He to whom thou bearest witness, baptizeth*; as if they had said, "This man whom the people flock after, neglecting thee and thy disciples, is much inferior to thee; for he came to thee, thou didst not go to him; thou baptizedst him, he did not baptize thee; thou gavest testimony to him, he did not give testimony to thee." Whence we observe, What a bitter spirit of envy and emulation there has always been amongst the ministers of the gospel, even from the very first plantation of the gospel, which causes them to look upon the exalted parts and gifts of others as a diminution and debasing of their own; but why should the prospering of the work of God, in one minister's hand, be matter of repining unto others? Shall not God honor what instruments he pleaseth? And will he not reward all his faithful laborers according to their sincerity, not according to their success?

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

31 He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all.

Observe, here, How holily and wisely John the Baptist corrects the envy and jealousy of his own disciples, and endeavours to root all prejudice out of their minds against Christ; in order to which, he shows them a five-fold difference between Christ and himself. 1. He tells them Christ was the master, John but his minister, and that he had told them so from the beginning: *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him*. The faithful ministers of Christ think it honor enough to be servants to him; and would not have their followers attribute the least part of that honor and glory to them, which is due to Jesus Christ. 2. John acquaints his disciples, that Christ was the bridegroom of his Church, to whom the Christian church was to be solemnly espoused and married; and that he had honor enough in being one of the bridegroom's

friends and servants: and accordingly, instead of envying, he rejoiced at the success which the bridegroom had, and took great pleasure in it. Learn, 1. That the relation betwixt Christ and his church is a conjugal relation, a relation of marriage; yet set forth under the name of bride and bridegroom, rather than under the notion of a complete marriage because it is but begun here, and to be consummated in heaven. And also to show that Christ's and his people's affections are as warm and fresh, as strong and vehement, towards each other, as the affections of espoused and newly married persons are to one another; Isa. lxii. 5. "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Learn, 2. It is honor sufficient to the ministers of Christ, that they, as friends of the bridegroom, are employed by him to further the marriage relation betwixt him and his spouse. Their office is to woo for Christ, to commend his person, and to invite all persons to accept of him for their head and husband, 2 Cor. xi. 2. I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Learn, 3. That there is no greater joy to the ministers of Christ than to see themselves honored by him, as his instruments, in preparing a people for Christ, and happily uniting them unto him. Oh! how little do our people know, and less consider, how much of the comfort of the poor ministers' lives lie at their mercy: we live as we see any of them stand fast in the Lord: we die as we see others stick fast in their sins. This was the second difference which John acquaints his disciples was found betwixt Christ and himself. The third follows, ver. 30. "He must increase, but I must decrease." He must increase, that is, in honor and dignity, in esteem and reputation, in discovery and manifestation. He shall shine forth as the rising sun, and I must disappear as the morning-star. Not that John's light was diminished, but by a greater light obscured only; as all the stars disappear at the appearance of the sun. Yet, observe, What matter of joy it was to John to see himself out-shined by Christ; let him increase, though I decrease. That minister has true light in himself, that can rejoice when he is out-shined by others; who is content to be abased and obscured, if he may but see Christ dignified and exalted in the lives of his people, whosoever the person is, whom God honors as an instrument in that service. The fourth difference wherein Christ excels John and all his ministers, is in the divine original of his person, ver. 31. "He that cometh from above is above all," says John. Now Christ is from above, his original is from heaven; I am from the earth (though I had my commission from heaven) and accordingly my words and actions are earthly. My Master, therefore, infinitely surpasseth and excels me in the dignity of his person, and in the sublimity of his knowledge. From the whole, note, How much it is the desire and endeavour of every gospel minister to magnify Jesus Christ, to display his glorious excellencies and perfections before the temple, that they may reverence his person, revere his authority, and respect his laws. This was the care of the holy Baptist here, and it will be the endeavour of every faithful minister of Christ that succeeds John, to the end of the world.

that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33 He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

Observe, 1. Another great difference which John the Baptist teacheth his disciples to put betwixt his testimony and Christ's; to the intent that he might remove the prejudice which was upon the disciples' minds against the Messiah, he shows them that his own testimony (which they so much admired) was by revelation only; Christ's by immediate institution. John testified only what he had received; but Christ what he had seen; lying in the bosom of the Father: *What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth.* Learn hence, That it is Christ's (the great Prophet of his church) peculiar prerogative to have the knowledge of divine truths immediately from the Father, by special communication; and that all others receive their knowledge from him by gracious illumination only. Observe, 2. How sadly and sorrowfully the holy Baptist resents it, that Christ's testimony was no better received and entertained by the world: *He testifieth, but no man receiveth his testimony.* John's disciples murmured, *That all men came unto Christ,* ver. 26. But John mourns that there came not more, and complains, that none, that is, very few, received his testimony. Thence learn, That it ought and will be a matter of great regret and sorrow to all the friends of Jesus Christ, but especially to his faithful ministers and servants, that his doctrine is so ill received and entertained in the world. It greatly affects and grievously afflicts them, that when they testify of Christ, no man, that is, comparatively, very few men, receive their testimony. Observe, 3. The eulogy and high commendation given of all true believers, *They receive Christ's testimony,* and thereby set to their seal that God is true; that is, have subscribed to and ratified the truth of God; that God, in all his promises of the Messiah, under the Old Testament, is faithful and true. Learn hence, The great honor that God puts upon the faith of believers. As unbelief defames God, and makes him a liar; so faith gives testimony to the truth of God, and setteth his seal that God is true: *He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.* Observe, 4. The illustrious character which the holy Baptist gives of Christ, his Master; he is the person whom God hath sent, and unto whom God giveth not his Spirit by measure. He whom God hath sent; that is immediately and extraordinarily from heaven; not as the prophets and apostles were sent, but in a way peculiar to himself; having authority for speaking, not only from God, but as being God himself. And accordingly it is added, that *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;* that is, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit were poured forth upon Christ, in a measure far above and beyond all finite creatures; there being a double difference betwixt Christ's fullness of the Spirit, and all other persons whatsoever. 1. In the measure of it. God did not give out the Spirit to Christ

sparingly, and with limitation, as he did to the former prophets and John the Baptist, in proportion to what their offices required; but he was anointed more plentifully and abundantly with the Holy Spirit above and beyond his fellows. 2. In the manner of its working. The holy prophets that were filled with the Spirit (according to their measures) yet could not do or declare all things, nor act upon all occasions, but sometimes the Spirit restrained them, and sometimes departed from them. But Christ had no limits put upon the vigor of his Spirit, but his own will; therefore could work what, and when he pleased. Learn from hence, That Christ had an abundant fitness from God for the discharge of his office, and an abundant fulness for his people. God did not measure to him a certain quantity and proportion of the gifts and graces of his Spirit, but poured it forth upon him without measure.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

The Father loved the Son from eternity, as he was his Son by eternal generation; and he loved him as Mediator by special constitution; he loves him as the brightness of his own glory, and the express image of his person, with an essential, natural, and necessary love; and he loves him as Mediator, for undertaking our cause, and interposing for our peace. Learn hence, that God the Father had a special love and affection to Christ, not only in regard of his eternal Sonship, but with respect to his office and Mediatorship; "The Father loveth the Son." It follows, "He hath given all things into his hand;" that is, he hath intrusted him with all things necessary to our salvation. Lord! what a privilege is this, that our happiness is in Christ's hand, not in our own without his. O wonderful goodness, to put our concerns into the sure hands of his Son, which were lost by the weak hands of Adam.

36 He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Learn, 1. That though all power be given to Christ, to dispense grace here, and glory hereafter, yet none must expect to enjoy it, but upon condition of believing in him, and of obeying him, for the original word signifies both. No faith is acceptable to Christ, nor available to our salvation, but that which is the parent and principle of obedience. Learn, 2. That final unbelief renders a man infallibly an object of the eternal wrath of God; "He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him." The unbeliever now lies under the sentence of God's wrath, hereafter he shall lie under the full and final execution of it. Lord! how sad is it to be here in a state of condemnation! but how intolerable will it be in hell, to continue eternally under the power of condemnation! To lie for ever in that mysterious fire of hell, whose strange property is always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume: for, after millions of years are expired, still it is a wrath to come; and though the unbeliever has felt and

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endured never so much, yet still *the wrath of God abideth on him*. Every word carries dread and terror with it. The *wrath*, not the anger; and the *wrath of God*, not of man, at whose rebukes the devils tremble. And this wrath of God not only flashes out like lightning, but *abides*, dwells, and sticks fast upon him: that is, on his person, the whole man, soul and body.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN, therefore, the Lord knew how the pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but *his* disciples).

3 He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

The former part of this chapter acquaints us with our Saviour's removal from Judea into Galilee. The occasion of it was this: Christ hearing that John was cast into prison, and understanding how the pharisees were enraged at the increasing of the number of his disciples; to decline their fury, and prevent danger to himself, he leaves Judea, and departs into Galilee, for his own preservation. Hence learn, 1. That when the faithful ministers of Christ do meet with eminent success in their Master's service, they must expect to meet with a mighty shock of malice and envy from satan and his wicked instruments. Christ himself experienced it; let his ministers expect it, and prepare for it. 2. That it is neither unlawful nor unbecoming for the ministers of Christ to flee when persecution threatens them; their Lord and Master having fled before them: and commanded also, *When they persecute you in one city, to flee into another*.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well; and it was about the sixth hour.

Here observe, 1. How wonderfully the wisdom of God overrules the malice of men for his own glory, and the good of others. The malice of the pharisees in Judea drives Christ into Galilee, and in his passage through Samaria, the first fruits of the Gentiles are called, and particularly the woman of Samaria. Observe, 2. How in every step of Christ's way he was doing good to the souls of men. In his passage through Samaria into Galilee,

5 A

a poor woman is brought to know him to be the true Messias. Observe, 3. Our holy Lord, in his journeying from place to place, did travel usually on foot: and the weakness of his body upon travelling, shows him to be truly and really man, *and in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.* Our blessed Lord did not only take upon him our nature, but the infirmities of our nature also.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink,

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? (for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.)

Observe here, 1. How all our motions and actions are under the direction and government of God, and how divine providence doth sometimes dispose of small matters to become occasions of great good. This poor woman's coming to the well to draw water, became the means of her conversion. Observe, 2. Christ speaks to, and seeks after, this poor woman, before she takes notice of him; God is found of those that seek him not, and makes himself manifest to them that inquire not after him. *Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink.* Observe, 3. The great poverty of our Lord's outward condition, he wanted a draught of water for his refreshment, and a meal's meat now at dinner-time, to refresh his wearied nature. Oh! what contempt did Christ cast upon the world when he was here in it! He would not honor it so far as to keep any part of it in his own hand. Yet, observe, 4. That though Christ had neither house nor land, nor money of his own, yet he lived not by begging, or upon mere alms. *The disciples were going now into the city to buy, not to beg meat:* for there was a bag which required a bearer, John vii. 6. And our Saviour's friends and followers supplied him with money for his necessary occasions; *His disciples were gone to buy bread.* Observe lastly, How bitter is the enmity which differences in religion, and diversities of opinions do occasion: they do not only alienate affections, but even violate the bonds of civil society and common conversation. *The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans:* who neither eat nor drink with them.

10 Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The Samaritan woman had refused Christ a draught of water in the former verse, he offers her the water of life in this verse. O! how kindly doth Christ deal with those that

dealt unkindly with him! *If thou knewest the gift of God, &c.* Here observe, 1. The mercy which Christ had for, and was so desirous to bestow upon, this poor woman: it was the gift of God; that is himself, his Holy Spirit, in the sanctifying gifts, and saving graces of it. All which are compared to water, in regard to their effects and operations, which are to purify the unclean, and to satisfy the thirsty. Observe, 2. The way and course which this woman and every lost sinner ought to take, in order to the obtaining of this inestimable gift; and that is, by asking it, *Thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee living water.* Learn hence, That Christ himself, his Holy Spirit, with all the sanctifying graces of it, must be earnestly sought of of God; and such as do unfeignedly seek them, shall certainly obtain them. Observe, 3. The true cause and reason assigned, why sinners ask not for, and seek not after, Jesus Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit; and that is, ignorance of the worth and want of them. *If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked.* Learn hence, That it is ignorance of the worth of Christ and insensibleness of the want of him, that makes persons so indifferent in their desires after him, and so remiss in their endeavours for the obtaining of him. Oh sinners! did you but know who and what Christ is, that is offered to you, did you but see his beauty, fulness, and suitableness, and were you but sensible of the worth and want of him, all the world could not keep you from him; you would break through all difficulties and dangers, through all sufferings and reproaches, to come unto the enjoyment of him!

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again;

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life:

Observe here, 1. How ignorant persons are of spiritual things, till enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God. This poor woman's question, *Whence hast thou that living water?* looks much like that of Nicodemus, John iii. 9. *How can these things be?* A natural person cannot perceive the mind of Christ when speaking to him about spiritual things. Spiritual objects must have a spiritual eye to discern and behold them, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The natural man perceiveth not the things of the

Spirit." Observe, 2. With what great humility and condescension our holy Lord treats this poor woman, pitying her ignorance, and pardoning her infidelity; he tells her, that the water of that well, which she was about to draw, could not give an abiding satisfaction; but the thirst quenched for the present, would certainly return again: but he that should drink of the water which he had to give, that is, be made partakers of the graces of the Spirit, shall find such refreshing satisfaction therefrom, that all inordinate desires after earthly things will be quenched and extinguished, and will be like a well of water springing up, till he come to eternal glory.—Learn hence, 1. That as the body of man is subject to a natural, so is the soul of man subject to a spiritual, kind of thirst. 2. That no creature comfort, or earthly enjoyment, can quench this thirst which the soul of man is subject unto. 3. That the Spirit of grace (which our Saviour here calls the *water of life*) is able fully and perfectly to quench the thirst of the soul: and where it is once savingly received, shall never be totally or finally lost. *It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*; that is, the graces of the Spirit shall be in believers as permanent habits, as fixed principles that shall not decay. Hence St. Peter calls it "incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly.

These words set forth unto us, 1. What manner of person this woman was, whose conversion Christ sought so industriously after. 2. The means he used in order to that end. Observe, 1. What manner of person this woman was; besides that she was an idolater, as being a Samaritan, she was also an adulteress, and lived now in the sin of uncleanness with one that was not her husband, after she had had five husbands before. Whence we learn, That the ice of old age will not quench the fire of lust, *concupiscentia non senescit*: such is the pollution of our nature, that lust will be insatiable, if grace doth not restrain it. This woman, after five marriages, yet lives in the sin of uncleanness. Observe, 2. The way and manner our Lord takes, the method and means our Lord uses, in order to her conversion. 1. He deals very tenderly and gently with her; he doth not call her whore, nor upbraid her for her impudent lewdness, in living with a man that was none of her husband, but only gives her to understand that he knew the sin she lived in; yet this he did likewise with all imaginable privacy, whilst his disciples were away, and no body by but they two only. Hence learn, 1. That private sins are not to be reproofed publicly. 2. That in re-

proving sin, all sharpness and bitterness of expression must be avoided: the pill of reproof must be wrapped up in sugar; for if they to whom it is given, taste the bitterness of gall and passion mixed with it, they will certainly spit it out before, it may be upon our faces. Our Lord's practice here instructs us, that sin is to be so reproofed, as that the credit and estimation of the sinner may be preserved as much as may be.—Note, 2. That as Christ dealt with this woman tenderly and gently, so he discovers her sin to her particularly, and sets her secret sin before the face of her conscience distinctly.—If ever the ministry of the word works upon the minds of men in their conversion, it must be by a particular and close application of the word to every man's conscience: generals will not affect. Note, 3. What the particular sin is, which Christ charges home upon the conscience of this woman: it is the sin of uncleanness, that the man she kept with, was not her husband. Learn hence, That, amongst all sins, the sin of uncleanness will lie heaviest upon the conscience, and wound the soul most deeply, when the Spirit of God once effectually discovers it, and charges it home upon the conscience. For there is no sin so directly opposite to sanctification and holiness, as this sin: no sin that quenches the Holy Spirit of God like this.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain: and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

In these verses, the Evangelist declares a three-fold effect and fruit of the grace of conversion that appeared in this woman. 1. She neither denied, nor excused, nor extenuated this sin, which Christ had charged her with, but tacitly owns, and implicitly confesses it. 2. She doth not only own and confess what she was charged with, but she doth profess reverence to our Saviour's person, and pays honor to him as an extraordinary prophet; *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*. 3. She desired instruction and resolution from him concerning the worship and services of the true God, how she might seek him, and where she might serve him most acceptably, whether at Jerusalem, or upon mount Gerazim? *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*. Where observe, How ready and forward persons of a false religion are to ascribe too much to antiquity, and to the example and custom of their forefathers. Whereas it is not the continuance of a thousand or two thousand years, that can make any thing truly ancient in religion, except it has been from the beginning; nothing is truly ancient in matters of religion, but that which can derive its original from him, that is truly called the *Ancient of days*.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,

22 Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Here we have our Saviour's answer to the foregoing question, which consists of two parts. 1. Concerning the place of worship. 2. Concerning the worship itself. As to the place of worship, our Saviour tells her, that though the Jews had heretofore by warrant of God's word regularly worshipped at Jerusalem, and the Samaritans superstitiously worshipped at mount Gerizim, yet the hour was coming, namely, at his death, when all difference of places for God's worship should be taken away, and therefore she need not trouble herself about the place of God's worship, to know whether of the two places were holier, and the better to serve God in: for ere long the service of God should not be confined more to one place than another. Learn hence, 1. That since the death of Christ, the religious difference of places is taken away, and the worship of God not confined to any one particular place or nation. 2. Our blessed Saviour resolves her, concerning the worship itself, namely, That the ceremonial worship, which the Jews and Samaritans used, should shortly be abolished, and instead thereof a more spiritual form of worship should be established, more suitable to the spiritual nature of the great and holy God, and containing in it the truth and substance of all that which the Jewish ceremonies prefigured and shadowed forth. Learn hence, That the true worship of God under the gospel, doth not consist in the external pomp of any outward ceremonies, but is spiritual and substantial: no worship is acceptable to him, who is the Father of spirits, but that which is truly spiritual.

24 God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

God is a spirit: that is, he hath no body, nor bodily parts; he is not a bare spiritual substance; but a pure and perfect Spirit; and therefore his worshippers *must worship him in spirit and in truth*: where spirit is opposed to the legal ceremonies, and truth to the Jewish rites, not to hypocritical services: for the old patriarchs did worship God in *spirit and in truth*. As truth is taken for sincerity, they served him with a sincere conscience, and with a single heart. But our Saviour's business is to show, that a worship without legal rites and Jewish ceremonies, is proper to the times of the gospel. In the words, observe, 1. The nature of God declared; *God is a spirit*. 2. The duty of man inferred: therefore *they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth*. From the whole note, 1. That God is a pure spiritual being. When bodily parts, hands, and eyes, &c. are ascribed to him, it is only in condescension to our weak-

ness, and to signify those acts in God, which such members do perform in us. Note, 2. That the worship due from the creature to God is a spiritual worship, and ought to be spiritually performed; that is, we must worship him from spiritual principles, sincere love, and filial reverence; for spiritual ends, that we may please him, and promote his glory: and after a spiritual manner, with the whole heart, soul, and mind, and with a fervency of spirit. We must have awful apprehensions of him, suitable to the nature of his being; but above all we must endeavour to resemble him: then is God best worshipped by us, when we are most like to him. The Jewish ceremonial worship was abolished, to promote the spirituality of divine worship: yet must not this be so understood, as if God rejected bodily worship, because he requires spiritual under the gospel; for Jesus Christ, the most spiritual worshipper, worshipped God with his body. Besides, God has appointed some parts of worship, which cannot be performed without the body, as sacraments. In a word, God has created the body as well as the soul, Christ has redeemed the body as well as the soul; and he will glorify the body as well as the soul; therefore it is our duty to worship and glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are his.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

Observe here, 1. What a general expectation there was in the minds of all persons (at the time of our Saviour's appearing) of one whom the Jews called the Messiah. *I know that Messiah cometh*. This woman, though a Samaritan, yet knew that the Messiah should come, and that he was now expected. Observe, 2. What the work and office of the Messiah was apprehended and believed to be, namely, to reveal the whole mind and will of God to a lost world: *When the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things*. Learn hence, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised and true Messiah, being called and appointed by God to be the great Prophet of his church; hath fully and perfectly revealed all things needful to be known for our salvation, John xv. 15. "All things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you." Observe, lastly, How freely and fully Christ reveals himself to this poor woman; he tells her plainly, that he was the Messiah. When the Jews asked him, John x. 24. *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*, Christ did not in plain terms tell them who he was; nay, when John Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask him, whether he were, *He that should come*: he gave them no direct answer; yet behold he makes himself plainly known to this poor woman; he discerning her humility and great simplicity, that she was willing to be instructed by him, and did not come to him as the Jews and pharisees did, captiously, with a design to entangle and ensnare him. Hence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ delights to reveal himself, and make known his mind and will to such as with an humble mind, and an honest simplicity of heart, do desire to know him, and understand their duty to him.

27 ¶ And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

Observe, here, 1. How the providence of God so ordered and disposed of things, that the disciples did not return to Christ, till he had finished his discourse with this poor woman. An humbled sinner may meet with such satisfaction and sweet refreshment in Christ's company, that the presence even of disciples themselves (the best and holiest of saints) may be looked upon as injurious to it, and an interruption of it. This poor woman had so sweet a time with Christ, that an end being put to the conference, by the coming of the disciples, might be matter of grief and resentment to her: yet the providence of God so ordered, that the disciples did not come to break of the conference till Christ had made himself known as the Messiah to this poor woman. Observe, 2. The carriage and behaviour of the disciples, upon their return to Christ: finding him preaching a sermon to a single woman, they marvelled, but yet were silent. Learn, 1. That the humility and condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ, in treating poor penitent and humble sinners, is a matter of wonder and admiration, even to disciples themselves. O, blessed Saviour! there was more kindness and condescension, more love and compassion, more meekness and humility in thyself alone, than in all thy disciples and followers put together. Yet observe, 2. Though they marvelled, they were silent, *No man said, Why talkest thou with her?* Thence note, That such reverence is due to Christ in all his dispensations and actions, that when we can see no reason for what he doth, it is not for us to inquire, much less for us to quarrel, but we must awfully admire what we cannot comprehend. Observe, 3. The behaviour of this woman after the conference was over; she leaves her water-pot, and makes haste to invite and call her neighbours to Christ, whose grace and kindness she had experienced. Learn hence, That such as truly know Christ, have tasted sweetness in him, and derived comfort and satisfaction from him, will be forward to invite, and industrious to draw, others to a saving acquaintance with him. *Come with me, and see a man that told me all that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?* Learn farther, from the woman's leaving her water-pot behind her, and hastening to the city, that when once a soul has tasted the sweetness and excellency that is in Jesus Christ, those things which were highly esteemed before, will be little regarded then. The poor woman came to draw water, and thought much, and spake much of the water of that well which was before her: but

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meeting with Jesus Christ, and tasting of his grace, she forgets both water and water-pot, and away she goes to fetch in all her acquaintance to Christ.

31 ¶ In the mean-while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Observe here, The fit and seasonable motion which our Saviour's disciples make to him; *Master, eat.* Learn from thence, though a person's chief care should be for his own soul, and for improving all opportunities for doing good to the souls of others: yet the bodies of men must not be neglected, but supported by meat and drink; especially theirs, whose health and strength may be of greater use and service to God and his church. The body is the servant of the soul, the instrument whereby it worketh: and therefore to neglect the body, is to disable and unfit the soul for service, to hinder the functions and operations of it. The sixth commandment, which forbids us to kill, requires us to use all means for the preservation of life, both in ourselves and others. Observe next, Our Saviour's answer to the disciples' motion; *Master, eat, say they; I have meat to eat that ye know not of, says he; for my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* Not that our Saviour did not want meat at this time, for he was both hungry and thirsty, as appears by his asking water of the woman to drink, and by his sending his disciples into the city to buy meat; but our Lord was more intent upon doing his Father's work, than upon satisfying his own hunger. Christ hungered more after an opportunity of doing good to the souls of men, than he did after meat and drink to satisfy his hunger. Lord! let us, thy ministers, learn of thee to prefer the spiritual welfare of our people before any temporal advantages whatsoever.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye

bestowed no labor; other men labored and ye are entered into their labors.

Our blessed Saviour having, in the former verses, given a most plain and evident demonstration of his fervent desire to bring souls home to God, doth in these verses labor to stir up and kindle the like affections in his disciples; and this he doth by three very effectual arguments. The first argument is drawn from the ripeness of the people, and their willingness to hear, and their readiness to be reaped and gathered by the gospel (whereof there was a present instance in the Samaritans, who were now coming forth in multitudes to Christ) which opportunity was therefore to be improved: *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.* Learn hence, That as a people is sometimes ripe for the reaper's hand, so it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to lay hold upon such opportunities, with as much desire and delight, as the harvest mendo upon a reaping season. The second argument to stir up the disciples' diligence in preaching the gospel, is drawn from the great reward they should receive for this their work. *He that reapeth, receiveth wages.* The harvest-man's wages is double to what other laborers receive. The ministers of God shall receive good wages at his hand, how ill soever they are requited and rewarded by an unkind world. And as a farther encouragement, it follows: *He that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together;* that is, the prophets who took so much pains in sowing the seed of the gospel, and particularly John the Baptist, and you my apostles which succeed them, and reap the fruit of what they did sow, shall have the same reward in glory, and rejoice together. Learn hence, That not only the successful, but the faithful laborer, in God's harvest, shall be rewarded; not only those which see the fruit of their ministry in the conversion of sinners, but such as are faithful seedsmen. Though the seed does not come up till we are in our graves, nay, though it rots under the clods, and does not come up at all, yet shall the faithful seedsmen be rewarded according to his labor, not according to his success. The third argument to quicken the disciples' diligence, is drawn from the easiness and facility of that labor which God required of them: *Others have labored, and ye are entered into their labors;* that is, the prophets and John the Baptist have prepared the ground, and sown the seed, and made ready a people for the Lord, and now ye enter into their labors, performing and gathering them into the gospel-church; yet, this must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively: not as if the prophets reaped nothing, converted none! but that their fruit was small in comparison of the success which the apostles found. Nor is it to be understood as if the apostles took no pains at all, but that the prophets' greater pains render the apostles' labor successful, who took less pains. Learn hence, That the wisdom of God sees it fit that all his servants in the work of the ministry do not meet with the same difficulties, nor enjoy the same success. Some are laborious sowers, others are joyful reapers; some labor all their days with little visible success, others bring in many to Christ, perhaps by a single sermon: some labor even with weariness, and reap little, others enter into their labors, and reap much.

39 ¶ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of

the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them; and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed, because of his own word;

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Here an account is given of the conversion of more of the Samaritans from the city of Sichar. Some believed on him, upon the full report which the woman had made. That *He had told her all that ever she did;* but others were brought to believe by *his own word.* Now from the woman's being an instrument to bring her acquaintance to Christ by her own experience of what she had heard from him, Learn, 1. That very weak instruments, when they employ themselves for Christ, desiring to extol his praise, and set forth his glory, are sometimes richly blessed with great success. *Many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of this poor woman.* Learn, 2. That when a person can say but little of Christ, yet if it be spoken from experience and sensible feelings, it will be more successful and persuasive, than much more that is spoken from notional knowledge. Such was this woman's testimony concerning Christ, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?* She spake what she found, yea, what she felt within herself, and speaking her own experience, *many believed on him for her saying.* But farther, These Samaritans believed Christ to be a prophet upon the testimony of this woman: but they believed him afterwards to be the Messiah, or the Saviour of the world, upon the credit and authority of his own word, ver. 41. *And many more believed because of his own word.* Thence learn, That although instruments speaking may be a mean to draw persons to give some assent to truth, yet it is Christ himself that must work a full persuasion, and his own word is the surest foundation for faith to build and depend upon: *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we heard him ourselves.*

43 ¶ Now, after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee:

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

Our blessed Saviour having spent two days with the Samaritans, as an introduction to the calling of the Gentiles, he goes forward towards Galilee, the place which he was pleased to make choice of for the exercise of the greatest part of his ministry. Coming into Galilee, he passed by the city of Nazareth, where he had had his education, knowing what little respect he was like to find there: a prophet ordinarily having little honor in his own country; therefore shunning Nazareth, he goes to Cana, where he had done his first miracle. Learn hence, 1. That there is a real tribute of honor due unto every prophet and minister of God, which ought to be testified by reverence to their persons, by a due estimation of the dignity of their calling, by obedience to their doctrine, and by an honorable maintenance. A prophet should have honor; and honor includes all these. Learn, 2. It is very usual and ordinary for the prophets of God to meet with least respect where they are most known; their nearest neighbours, their nearest relations, their nearest acquaintance, are oftentimes farthest off from giving them that honor that is due unto them. Learn, 3. That the true prophets and messengers of God shall be sure to find some that will entertain their persons, and embrace their ministry, though they be disesteemed and rejected by others. Though our Saviour had no honor at Nazareth, yet he found entertainment amongst the rest of the Galileans.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51 And, as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth!

52 Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend: and they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This *is* again the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

In this last paragraph of the chapter, we find our blessed Saviour performing a second miracle in Cana of Galilee, curing a nobleman's son that was sick of a fever. This nobleman apprehended Christ to be a prophet, and believed that if he were bodily present with his son, he might possibly cure him: but he did not believe him to be the Messiah, who was true God, and every where present; therefore to give him infallible proof that he was so, he tells him his son was cured by the word of his mouth, even at that distance. By which miracle he cured not only the child of his fever, but the father of his unbelief. From the whole, we note, 1. The person that here applies himself to Christ; a *nobleman*. We do not find Christ oft attended with nobility. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" Yes; here is one: the sovereign grace of God is free: and he has his numbers among all orders, ranks, and degrees of men. And though not many noble are called, yet some are. Note, 2. The calamity which befel this noble person, *his son was sick*; yea, dying, Earthly greatness is no defence against afflictions; great men are in trouble as other men; neither the wealth and riches of this nobleman, nor his power and authority, nor his honor in his country, nor his favor with his prince, could keep off God's hand either from himself or from his son; but the father feels as much by sympathy, as the child by sense. Note, 3. The cause and special occasion which brought this nobleman to Christ; it was in general an affliction; and in particular the sickness of his child. Learn hence, That great is the fruit and profit of afflictions to the children of men. Many, with this nobleman, never come to Christ till they be driven by the cross; and particularly, God sanctifies the sickness and death of near and dear relations, (children in special) to bring persons near to himself. Note, 4. This nobleman was neither faithless nor faithful: had he been quite faithless, he had not taken such pains to come to Christ: had he been faithful, he had not limited the Son of God, by saying, *Come down and heal my son ere he die*. Come down, as if Christ could not have cured him absent: *ere my son die*, as if the same power required to heal him being sick, could not raise him being dead. Lord *heal my son*, had been a proper suit to him who was the great physician: but *Come down and heal him*; was to teach Christ how to work. He who doeth whatsoever he will, must do it how he will, and when he will. It is for us to crave and receive, not to prescribe and appoint. Note, 5. The meekness and great condescending goodness of Jesus Christ; notwithstanding the infirmity of this poor man, our Lord says, *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Worthiness;

in the creature, is not the motive that rules Christ. Should we measure our hopes by our worthiness, there was no blessing to be hoped for; but if we measure them by Christ's bounty and compassion, there is no blessing to be despaired of. Note, 6. How Christ not only answers the desires, but exceeds the expectations of this distressed person. His request was only, *Come and heal my son*. Christ's answer was, *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Our heavenly Father, when he doth not give us what we ask, gives us better than we asked. We ask what we think best, but God gives that he knows to be best. Christ here gave a greater demonstration of his omnipotency than was craved. Note lastly, With one word doth Christ heal two patients; the son of his fever, the father of his unbelief. It was a low degree of faith that brought the father to Christ; it was a higher dignity that sent him back to his son; but highest of all, when finding his son healed, he himself believed and his whole house. Learn hence, That a weak faith may be true, but a true faith is always growing and increasing: *It is like the path of the just, that shineth more and more until the perfect day*.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

This chapter begins with a description of the famous pool of Bethesda, whose waters were medicinal, to cure the first comer thereunto, whatsoever disease he had. Some think this was effected in a natural way, and that the entrails of the sacrificed beasts being washed in this pool, an healing virtue was communicated for curing the palsy, and such cold diseases: as persons that have lame and withered hands, are at this day directed to put them into the belly of a beast newly opened. But others look upon the healing virtue of this pool to be supernatural and miraculous, because it cured all diseases how great and desperate soever, and this in a moment, or very quickly; and but one at a time; and that one the first that stepped in only, after an angel had descended and troubled the waters; all which show, that the healing virtue came not from the goodness of the waters, but that it was a supernatural work. Some think that the miracle of this

pool was granted to the Jews, partly to strengthen them in the true worship of God, and to confirm them in their religious course of sacrificing against the scoffs of the Romans, who were now their lords; such a virtue being given to that water wherein their sacrifices were wont to be washed. Learn thence, That means of God's appointment, how improbable and unlikely soever, must not be despised, but awfully admired, and thankfully used; although the way and manner of their working be not understood or comprehended by us.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

10 ¶ The Jews, therefore, said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up *thy* bed, and walk.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up *thy* bed, and walk?

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being *in that place*.

It was very commendable that the rich men did not engross this pool, and the benefit of it, to themselves, but suffered poor people to come to it. In this college of cripples a poor man, that had been lame thirty-eight years, was found, who wanted strength to help himself, wanting money to hire others, and others wanting mercy to help him. Christ takes pity on him, and because he could not go to health, health is graciously brought to him, and that by the hand of the great physician Christ Jesus. Observe here, 1. That not only are men's bodies subject to innumerable infirmities and diseases, but it pleases God, for wise ends, to continue some of his servants laboring under bodily weakness for many years together.

yea, even all the days of their life. Here is a poor man, for eight and thirty years together, under the discipline of God's rod by bodily weakness. Observe, 2. That it is the duty of the afflicted to wait upon God in a diligent use of all means which God has appointed for their help and healing; as to trust to means, is to neglect God; so to neglect the means, is to tempt God. This poor man, no doubt, had made use of the means before, yet waits at the pool now. Observe, 3. Though Christ well knew the case of this afflicted person, and wanted no information, yet he asks him, if he were willing to be made whole? to make him sensible of his misery, to quicken his desires after healing, and to raise his expectations of help from him, Though Christ knows our wants, yet he takes no notice of them, till we make them known to him by prayer. Observe, 4. The time when Christ wrought this miracle of healing upon the impotent man, it was upon the sabbath-day; and, as evidence of the certainty of the cure, Christ bids him, "Take up his bed and walk." Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial, they were obvious to sense, and would bear the examination of all persons. The miracles which the church of Rome boast of will not bear the examination of our senses: their great miracle, transubstantiation, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it contradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with. And our Saviour's working this and many other miracles on the sabbath-day, was for the testification of the miracles to all persons that would take notice of them. Observe, 5. How unjustly the Jews tax the cripple that was healed with the breach of the sabbath, for taking up his bed, and walking on the sabbath-day? Whereas the law only forbade carrying burthens on the sabbath-day for profit, in way of trade; but this man's carrying his bed was a testimony of God's goodness and mercy towards him, and of his gratitude and thankfulness towards God. Hypocritical and superstitious persons often-times pretend much zeal for observing the letter of the law, little respecting the moral sense and signification of it. Besides, our Saviour has a mind to let the Jews know that he was Lord of the sabbath, and that he hath power over it, and could dispense with it as he thought good. Observe, lastly, The great modesty and humility of our blessed Saviour, how hateful all ostentation and vain glory was unto him; for having wrought this famous miracle before the people at a public time, the feast of the passover, to shun all applause from the multitude, he conveys himself privately away from them: "Jesus conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place." Our Saviour's business was to do much good, and make but little noise; he sought not his own glory.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

These words are our Saviour's seasonable advice and counsel to the poor impotent cripple, whom he had miraculously restored to health and soundness. Whence observe, 1. The person admonishing, Jesus; he that had (No. 24.)

been his physician before, is his monitor and teacher now: "Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more." Oh, how much is it the duty, but seldom the practice, of those whom God makes instruments for recovering bodily health, to put their patients in mind of their obligations to thankfulness and new obedience! Thus did our Saviour. The recovered man's physician gave him instruction: his healer became his monitor. *Sin no more.* Observe, 2. The person admonished, the recovered cripple: *Thou art made whole.* But what was he? Not a disciple, not a believer, *For he that was healed wist not who Jesus was*, ver. 13. he knew not Christ, therefore believed not on him, and yet was healed by him. Thence learn, That there are many outward mercies and common blessings, which Christ bestows upon those that have no spiritual knowledge of him, or saving acquaintance with him. *The man that was healed wist not who he was that had healed him.* Observe, 3. The place where Christ meets this his recovered patient; not at the tavern, but in the temple, returning thanks to God for his recovered health: when God sends forth his word and healeth us, it is our duty to make our first visit to God's house, and to pay our vows in the great congregation, and sound forth the praises of our great and gracious deliverer. Observe, 4. The circumstance of time when Christ found him in the temple, soon after his recovery. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple.* We must not be clamorous and importunate to receive mercies, and dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks; but make haste, and not delay the time to pay our acknowledgments to him that healeth. Observe, 5. The admonition itself; *Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*; where it is farther implied, that Almighty God has sorer plagues and severer judgments in store for those sinners who go on obstinately in a course of sin and rebellion against God, notwithstanding all the signal rebukes of his avenging anger. From the whole note, That when the Lord doth graciously heal a person or a people, it is a mercy to be much observed, and thankfully acknowledged.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews, that it was Jesus which had made him whole.

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.

After the man understood who his healer and benefactor was, he went and told the Jewish magistrates that it was Christ that had healed him. This he did, not with any evil design no doubt, to inform against him, and stir up the Jews to persecute him; but desirous to publish what Christ had done, to his honor, and to direct others to make use of him. Learn thence, That it is the duty of all those that have experienced the power and pity of Christ themselves, to proclaim and publish it to others, to the intent that all that need him may experience help and healing from him: this seems to be the poor man's design: but behold the blindness, obsti-

nacy, and malice of the Jews, who persecuted Christ, and sought to kill him for doing good, and healing a cripple that had been thirty-eight years so: *Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him; Yet observe the cloak and pretence they have for their malicious persecution of our Saviour; namely, the supposed violation of the sabbath-day; They sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.* Learn hence, That great cruelty against Christ and his members has always been, and still is, masked and disguised with a fair pretence of zeal for God and his commands. The pharisees mortally hated our Saviour; therefore, to cover their malice, they traduce him as a profaner of the sabbath, and seek to take away his life.

17 ¶ But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have our Saviour's apology for his working the foregoing cure on the impotent man on the sabbath-day. And the chief argument he insists upon is drawn from his unity and equality in nature and operation with his Father; *As the Father worketh, says he, so I work.* Here he speaks of himself, not as a servant, or instrument in the Father's hand, but as the fellow-worker with the Father, both in the works of creation, and in the works of providence, and preservation also. Learn hence, 1. That although Almighty God has long since ceased from the work of creation, yet not from the work of preservation. *My father worketh hitherto,* not by creating new kinds of creatures, but by upholding and preserving what he has already created. Learn, 2. That Christ the Son of God is joined with, and undivided from the Father, in working. As the Father created all things by him (not as a man, and as an instrument in his Father's hand; for then he was not such) but as his fellow-worker, being equal in nature and power with the Father; in like manner as the Father preserveth, sustaineth, governeth, and upholdeth all things, so doth Christ; the Father's actions and his being the same, *My father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, not only because he had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Observe here, The Jews, instead of being satisfied, were the more enraged; not only because he had violated the sabbath (as they pretended) by healing the cripple on the sabbath-day, but because Christ had asserted, that God was his Father in a peculiar manner, and made himself equal with God; our Saviour therefore goes on to assert his equality and conjunction with the Father in his operations and work-

ings, which doth at once justify his work on the sabbath day, and prove him to be truly and really God. Now our holy Lord, to prove himself equal with God the Father, produces first many arguments, to verse 31, and then alledges the testimony of many witnesses, to the end of the chapter. Our Saviour's first argument to prove himself equal with the Father in essence and nature, is this, that the Father and he are equal in operation, in will and consent for working; that the Son doth all that the Father doth, and the Father doth nothing without the Son, ver. 19. "The Son can do nothing of himself;" that is, as man, as the Messiah, and as Mediator, he could do nothing of himself. His perfect obedience to, and compliance with, the will of his Father that sent him, would not suffer him to do any thing without him; but as God, he could do all things of himself. Learn hence, That it is an undeniable proof that the Father and Son are one in nature, essence, and being; in that they are inseparable in operation and working; *What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise; and the Son doeth nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do:* therefore Father and Son being equal in operation and working, are equal in nature and being; and consequently, both essentially, truly, and really God: therefore the Arians of old, and the Socinians at this day, are wide when they produce this text, *The Son can do nothing of himself,* to prove that Christ is not equal with God the Father. They forget or neglect to distinguish between his divine nature, which could do all things, and his mediatorial office, which could not do, but what the Father that sent him had appointed him to do.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

The second argument which our Saviour produces to prove his unity in nature, and equality in operation with the Father, is drawn from that special love which the Father beareth to the Son: which inclines him to communicate all things to him by a divine and ineffable communication. Learn hence, 1. That God the Father loved Jesus Christ his Son, with an essential, natural, and necessary love, as being the substantial image of himself, and the splendor and brightness of his glory, "The Father loveth the Son:" that is, with an essential, eternal, and ineffable love. 2. That the Father's love to Christ was communicative; the Father communicated his essence and nature, his wisdom and power for operation, to the Son; "The Father showeth the Son all things that himself doeth;" namely, by a divine, inconceivable, and unspeakable communication.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them: even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

A third argument, proving Christ to be God, and equal with the Father, is here produced: namely, his raising of the dead; he is joined with the Father in that work, and equal with him: *As the Father quickeneth*

whom he pleaseth, so doth the Son quicken whom he will: that is, not as the Father's instrument, but as a principal agent, by the same authority, with the like absolute freedom of will which the Father uses, being a sovereign and independent being as the Father is: *As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* This is more than ever was said of any prophet or apostle, that he did such works at his will. Learn hence, 1. That quickening or raising of the dead is an act of omnipotency, and proper to God only: *The Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them.* 2. That Christ's power to raise the dead, as well as the Father's, is a proof of his equality with his Father, and an evidence of his being truly and really God; *the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

22 For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23 That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

A fourth instance of Christ's godhead, and proof of his equality with the Father, is, That it is his work to judge the world: *The Father, says Christ, judges no man: that is, no man without me, but all men by me, to this intent, That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: that is, honor him with the same faith, love, fear, and worship, that is due and payable to God the Father.* Hence learn, 1. That Christ, as God, hath the absolute power of life and death, of absolution and condemnation, which he executes in conjunction with his Father. 2. That having this power of judging the world with the Father, doth show that the same glory is due to him, which is due unto the Father. *All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.* 3. That such as pretend to honor Christ, but deny him to be God equal with the Father, withdraw the highest honor from him; and such as withdraw the honor from the Son, deny it to the Father, who will not be honored but in and through honoring of the Son. This text speaks dread and terror to the Socinians, who pretend to honor Christ, but not with the same honor with which they pretend to honor the Father: in God's account, they honor him not at all: *For he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father.* True, they pray to Christ, and give him divine worship, though they believe him to be but a creature; but what is this but idolatry, to worship that which by nature is not God, and to do that to a creature which God requires to be given to himself, having said, *My glory will I not give to another;* Isa. xlviii. 2. Divine honor can be only due to a divine person; that is, to him that is God blessed for evermore.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of God; and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself:

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.

Here we have a fifth evidence of Christ's godhead, and equality with the Father: namely, that he is the author of spiritual and eternal life to all that believe on him. He that hath a fountain of life equal with the Father, and communicated to him from the Father, is God: But Christ hath this, ver. 26. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself.* Again, He that hath authority to execute judgment upon angels and men, is God: and Christ hath such authority, ver. 27. *He hath given him authority to execute judgment.* Farther, he that with his voice quickeneth and maketh alive them that hear it, is God; and Christ doth this, ver. 25. *The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live.* The dead: that is 1. The spiritually dead; such as are dead in trespasses and sins; these hearing the voice of Christ in the ministry of the word, shall live a life of grace on earth, and a life of glory in heaven. 2. Such as are corporally dead also! these are likewise quickened and raised by Christ as God. Learn hence, 1. That God the Father hath communicated to Christ his Son a power to quicken and enliven such as are spiritually and corporally dead. 2. That the Father's communicating this power to the Son argues no inequality or inferiority in the Son, but he hath the same life infinitely, independently, and equally with the Father: *As the Father hath it, so hath the Son: the Father hath it in himself, and so hath the Son also;* therefore the Son, as well as the Father, is essentially and truly God. 3. Others, by the dead, understand those whom Christ raised from the dead, when he himself arose. When many of the bodies of the saints arose with him, Matt. xxvii. it being said, *The hour now is, &c.* Dr. Whitby.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

Our Saviour finding the Jews amazed and astonished at his declaring his sovereign and supreme authority and power to quicken and raise whom he pleased from the dead, doth in these verses assure them, that there should be a general resurrection, and an universal day of judgment, both of

the righteous and the wicked, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments in another life, according to men's actions here in this life. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, shall and come forth.* Here observe, 1. The certainty and universality of the resurrection of the dead declared: *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall come forth.* Observe, 2. The powerful and efficacious means by which this great and sudden change shall be effected and accomplished in the morning of the resurrection; namely, the omnipotent voice of Christ: *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.* 3. Here are the different ends of the resurrection declared, according to the difference of persons which shall then be raised, good and bad; *Those that have done good to the resurrection of life: and those that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.* Learn, 1. That there shall certainly be a resurrection of the body. 2. That all in the graves shall be raised, though not all alike: the wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ, as their judge; the righteous shall be raised by virtue of their union with Christ as their head. 3. Accordingly as men live in this world, and go out of it, so will they be found at the resurrection, without any change of their state; there will be then only two sorts of persons, good and bad. All that have done good, how small soever the degree of their goodness hath been, shall be rewarded: and all that have done evil shall be everlastingly punished: for all persons shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, in the other world, accordingly as they manage their deportment and behaviour in this life; *They that have done good shall go, &c.*

30 I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

Here Christ declares to the Jews, and in them, to all mankind, that they might assure themselves his judgment would be exactly righteous, because he had no private will or power of his own, contrary to, or different from, his Father. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ being the same in essence and nature, in power and operation, with the Father, had no private will or interest of his own, but acted all things as God, in co-ordination with the Father; and, as man, in subordination to him; *I can of mine own self do nothing*; that is, neither as God, nor as Mediator: not as God, for God the Father and Christ being one, equal in power, what one person doth, the other doth; not as Mediator, for so Christ finished the work which his Father gave him to do; the will of the Father, and the will of Christ being both one. As Christ was sent by his Father's order, so he was altogether guided by his Father's will, wherewith his own will exactly concurred.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 ¶ There is another that beareth

witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

Our blessed Saviour having produced these five foregoing arguments, to prove his unity in essence, and his equality in power with the Father, comes now, at the end of the chapter, to produce several testimonies for the proof of it: and the first of them is, the testimony of God his Father: *There is another that beareth witness of me, whose witness is true.* Now the Father had lately, at Christ's baptism, by a voice from heaven, declared him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased; which illustrious testimony given to Christ they had not regarded. Learn hence, That as Christ came into the world in obedience to his Father, and to bear witness to him, so did the Father honor him, and bear witness of him, and his testimony concerning his Son is undoubtedly true, and to be depended and rested upon: for we make the Father a liar, if we do not depend upon the record which he hath given of his Son.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

34 But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

The second testimony to prove Christ to be the Messiah, was that of John the Baptist. We read, John i. 19. how the Jews sent to inquire of him, Whether he were the Christ or not; and he denied it, and pointed at Jesus, saying, *Behold the Lamb of God*; yet would not the Jews abide by this testimony of John, concerning the Messiah. Nevertheless, says Christ, *I receive not testimony from John*, that is, "John by his testimony added nothing to me; I was what I was, and I am what I am, before John testified of me, and since." Learn hence, That the divinity of Christ's person, and the verity of his doctrine, needs no man's testimony for the confirmation of it, being sufficiently confirmed by Christ's own authority, and his Father's testimony; *I receive not testimony from man*; that is, "I need it not, I desire it not upon my own account, but upon your's only, that upon the credit of John's testimony ye might believe on me, and be saved by me;" *These things I say, that ye might be saved.*

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

Observe here, John's character, and the people's carriage. 1. John's character; he was a *light, a burning and a shining light*: he had in him a light of knowledge, to enlighten, direct, and comfort others; and this his knowledge was accompanied with zeal; he was a *burning light* in his doctrine, and a *shining lamp* in his conversation: he had the light of knowledge in his head, the warmth of zeal in his heart, and the influence

of both in this life. Learn hence, 1. That those whom God calls to the office and work of the ministry, he furnishes with abilities and endowments suitable to their great employments; he endows them with a light of knowledge, which is animated by the heat and warmth of zeal. 2. That ministerial gifts and abilities are not bestowed alike upon all, but dispensed variously. All are lights according to their measure, but all are not equally burning and shining lights for proportion and degree. 3. That the brightest burning and clearest shining lights in the church of Christ, have but their time in this world; they are subject, as well as other men, to the common condition of mortality, and the lamps of their lives burn out the faster, by lighting others to heaven. *John was a burning and a shining light*; but now is put out and gone. Observe, 2. As John's character, so the people's carriage; *Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light*. Here is a threefold gradation; they rejoiced, they rejoiced in his light, and they rejoiced for a season. 1. They rejoiced. The word signifies that they leaped for joy, and danced about him as children do about a bonfire, when he first began his ministry among them. O, how warm are the affections of a people, when a pious and zealous minister comes first among them. 2. They rejoiced in his light, not in his heat. Or, they rejoiced in John's light, not in Christ's; for when they found that John bare record to Christ, they soon grew cold in their affection towards John. 3. They rejoiced only for a season; for an hour, as the word signifies. For a short time John's ministry was acceptable. Learn hence, 1. That it has been an old practice among the professors, not to like their pastors long, though they have been ever such burning and shining lights. John was not changed, but his hearers were changed; he did burn and shine in the candlestick of the church with equal light and lustre to the last; but they had changed their thoughts of him, and lost their esteem for him. Learn, 2. That as nothing in general is so mutable as the mind of man, so nothing in particular is so variable as the affections and opinions of people towards their ministers. The lamp of John's ministry was always alike burning and shining, his oil did not waste, but his hearers' zeal wasted, and their affection cooled: those whose gifts are not all abated, may yet find a great abatement in the acceptance of their gifts; therefore let no man live upon the breath of men; least of all let ministers live upon the popular air, or the speech of the people. O, let us live upon the credit which we have with God, and rejoice chiefly in his esteem. If our performances find acceptance with God, we are safe and happy, though they fall under contempt with men.

36 ¶ But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

The third testimony produced by Christ, to evidence and prove himself to be the promised Messiah, and Saviour of the world, is that of his miracles; which, by an omnipo-

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tent power, as God, he was enabled to work. Christ's miracles were speaking testimonies of his unity with the Father, and of the divinity of his person. Not so the miracles of his apostles; for he wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power and authority; but the apostles expressly declared the contrary, Acts iii. 12, 16. *Why look ye so steadfastly on us, as if we by our own power had made this man whole? His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong*. Learn hence, That the testimony of Christ's own works, his miracles wrought in his own name, and by his own authority and power, is a clearer confirmation of his godhead, office, and doctrine, than the best of men's testimonies; yea, than John Baptist's own testimony, *That he saw the Spirit descending on him*.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not heard his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Here our blessed Saviour produces again the testimony of his Father, that he was the true and promised Messiah: this was given him both at his baptism and his transfiguration; when God the Father owned Christ to be his Son, by an audible voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Which testimony the Jews ought the more to have regarded, because though their forefathers had heard the voice of God at certain times, Exodus. xx. and Deut. iv. yet they in their times had never heard his voice. Learn hence, That the father's immediate testimony of Christ from heaven, is greater than all the testimonies given to him here on earth; greater than John's, greater than his miracles. The presence of the glorious Trinity, when that testimony was given, Matt. iii. ult. made that witness most awful and solemn.

39 ¶ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.

The next testimony which Christ appeals to, is the testimony of the scriptures; that is, the writings of Moses and the prophets, which Christ bids the Jews diligently search, and they shall find that they abundantly testified of him, and that all the prophecies and types were fulfilled in him. The word (*search*) signifieth to search, as men do for a golden mine in the bowels of the earth, which they must dig deep for, before they can come at. It intimates, 1. That there is an inestimable treasure lying hid in the holy scriptures, which we shall never fathom by a slight, superficial search. 2. That this inestimable treasure may be found out by the painful searcher; and it is the duty of all the members of the visible church to read and search the scriptures, which point out the way to eternal life.

6 D.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Here our Saviour upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity; that notwithstanding God the Father by a voice from heaven, and John the Baptist by his testimony on earth, notwithstanding all the miracles which they had seen wrought by Christ himself, and notwithstanding the scriptures, which they pretended so highly to esteem, did prove him to be the Messias, and the author of eternal life, which they professed to seek; yet such was their obstinacy, that they would not come unto him, nor believe in him. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.* Hence observe, 1. A choice and invaluable mercy, which Christ stands ready to bestow upon poor sinners, that is life, both spiritual and eternal. A life of grace, in order to a life of glory. Observe, 2. The gracious condition upon which this invaluable blessing may be had; and that is, upon coming to Christ, believing on him, and receiving of him. 3. Here is the true reason declared why sinners do miss of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, when he has so dearly purchased it for them, and does so freely tender it unto them, and that lies in their own wilfulness and obstinacy; *Ye will not come unto me.* Learn hence, That the true reason why so many sinners miss of salvation and eternal life, after all that Christ has done and suffered for them, is their own obstinacy and unwillingness to come to him, that they may have life. Man, by nature, has not only an inability, but a fixed enmity in his will against Jesus Christ.

41 I receive not honor from men.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Here observe, 1. How little our Saviour sought the approbation and vain-glorious estimation of men; *I receive not honor from men.* The same should all his disciples and followers do; rest satisfied in the secret testimony and silent applause of their own consciences, without pumping for popular applause. Observe, 2. The dreadful sin which Christ charged upon the Jews, as the cause why they rejected him, *I know that you have not the love of God in you.* Oh! deplorable state and case, to be void of all true love to God! Love being the spring of all action, and the root of all true obedience; he that loves God, will not only sweat at his work, but bleed at his work too, if his work cannot be carried on without bleeding. But where love of God is wanting, and no care to please God is found, his authority is despised, his Son rejected: as the Jews here would not come to Christ, that they might have life, because they had not the love of God in them. Observe, 3. The high affront which the Jews offered to the Son of God in preferring any seducers or impostors before him, who came in their own names; whilst he was rejected, who came in the

name of his Father. Learn hence, That though Christ was the great Ambassador of his Father, not a servant but a son, and had his mission, his approbation, and his testimony from heaven; yet so far did the perverseness and prejudices of the Jews prevail, that he was rejected, whilst impostors and deceivers, false christs and anti-christs, without any evidence or authority from God (because promising them a temporal kingdom) were embraced and entertained; *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; but if another (a seducer) should come in his own name, him ye will receive.* As if Christ had said, You are incredulous to none but me; every cheat that has but wit or wickedness to tell you, "The Lord hath sent him," is believed by you; but though I come in my Father's name, showing a commission signed and sealed by him, and doing those works that none but a God can do, yet you receive me not. O unreasonable infidelity!

44 How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

Here Christ tells the Jews, that it is impossible they should believe aright in him, because they were so in love with the praise of men, that they would own him for the Messias who could promise them a temporal kingdom, and in the mean time reject himself, who came authorized with the testimony and approbation of God; you will receive honor one of another, but reject the honor that cometh from God only. Learn, That such as ambitiously hunt after vainglory and respect from men, do evidence themselves to be regardless of God's approbation and acceptance.

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Think not that I will accuse you; that is, that I only will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses; that is, the writings of Moses, which you pretend to depend upon, and to trust to; for had you believed his writings, that is, the prophecies and types contained in his writings, you would have been led by them to believe in me; for they all pointed at me, and received their accomplishment in me; but if Moses cannot be heard by you, I must expect no authority with you. Learn, 1. That the whole scope of Moses' ceremonial law, was to point out and prefigure Jesus Christ; Christ was the sum of the law, as well as the substance of the gospel; he was Abraham's promised Seed, Moses' great Prophet, Jacob's Shiloh, Esau's Emanuel, Daniel's Holy One, Zachary's Branch, and Malachi's Angel. 2. That such as believed the ancient prophecies before Christ came, did see their accomplishment in him, when he was come.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea of Tiberias*.

Observe here, How busy and industrious our holy Lord was about his Father's work, both on the sea, and on the land, both by night and by day; "His meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work;" some have inquired into the reasons why Christ travelled by sea, as well as by land; and they seem to be these; 1. To show what his intent was in making the sea, namely, to be sailed upon, as the land was made to be walked upon. 2. That Christ might take occasion to manifest his deity, in working miracles upon the sea, as well as upon the land. 3. Might it not be to comfort and encourage sea-faring men, that dwell much upon the waters, in the midst of their distresses, to trust in and pray to such a Saviour, as had himself an experimental knowledge of the dangers of the sea? Some have farther observed, That after our Saviour's resurrection, we never hear of his sailing upon the sea more; for such a turbulent condition, which necessarily attends sea voyages, was utterly inconsistent with the stability and perpetuity of Christ's state, when he was risen from the dead; the firm land better agreeing with his fixed estate, than the fluctuating water.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

Observe here, What an exact knowledge Christ had, not only of all his followers, but of the motives and principles which did induce them to follow him; it was not the excellency of his person, nor the heavenliness of his doctrine, that drew the multitude at this time after him, but the novelty of his miracles, *They saw the miracles which he did*: it is better to feel one miracle wrought upon the heart, in changing and renewing that, than to see a thousand outward miracles wrought before our eyes.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 ¶ When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 (And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.)

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for

them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, ⁵Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves, and, when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

This miracle of our Saviour's feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, and several particulars therein are very remarkable. Observe, 1. What a poor and slender provision the Lord of the whole earth hath for his family, for himself, for his disciples, and the multitude; nothing more than five barley loaves and two fishes. Teaching us, that these bodies of our must be fed, not pampered. Our belly must not be our master, much less our God; and as the quality of the victuals was plain, so was the quantity small; only five loaves and two fishes. Well might the disciples say, *What are they among so many?* The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects, which faith can easily apprehend, and a divine power more easily produce. When men judge by sense and reason, and do not look to Christ's power, if extremities come, they are soon at their wit's end, and know not what to do. Observe, 2. How the great Master of this miraculous feast doth marshal his guests; he commanded them to sit down. None of the people reply, "Sit down, but to what? Here's the mouths, but where's the meat? We may soon be set, but when shall we be served?" Not a word like this, but they

obey and expect. Lord, how easy it is to trust thy providence, and rely upon thy power, when there is corn in the barn, bread in the cupboard, money in the purse! But when our stores are empty, when our stock runs low, when we have nothing in hand, then to depend upon an invincible bounty, is a noble act of faith indeed. Observe, 3. The actions performed by our blessed Saviour. 1. *He blessed the loaves*; teaching us, by his example, never to use or receive the good creatures of God without prayer and praise, not to sit down to our food as a beast to his fodder. Christ *broke the loaves*! he could have multiplied them whole, why then doth he rather choose to do it in the breaking? Perhaps to teach us, that we may rather expect his blessings in the distribution of his bounty, than in the reservation of it. Scattering is the way to increasing, and liberality the way to riches. Again, 3. "He gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude;" he did not do it with his own hands, but by their's; doubtless it was to gain reputation to his disciples, from the people: the same course doth Christ take in spiritual distributions. He that could feed the souls of his people immediately by the hand of his Spirit, chooses rather by the hands of his ministers to divide the bread of life among them. Observe, 4. That reality and greatness of the miracle, *They did all eat and were filled*; they did eat, not a crumb or a bit, but to satiety and fullness. All that were hungry did eat, and all that did eat were satisfied, and yet twelve baskets of the fragments remained. More is left than was at first set on. It is hard to say which was the greatest miracle, the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. If we consider what they ate, we may wonder that they left any thing; if what they left, that they eat any thing. Observe lastly, These *fragments*, though of barley loaves and fish bones, must not be lost, but gathered up: we must exercise frugality in the enjoyment of the greatest plenty. Lord! how tremulous will their account be, who, having large and plentiful estates, do consume them upon their lust! how will they wish they had been born to poverty and necessity, when they appear to make up their accounts before God!

15 ¶ When Jesus, therefore, perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Here we have observable, The wonderful effect of the foregoing miracle; the people seeing so many thousands fed with five loaves, were so transported, that they concluded that Jesus was certainly the promised Messiah. Now the notion they had of the Messiah was this, that he should be a temporal prince, that should subdue all nations under his feet, and particularly free the Jews from the slavery of the Roman yoke, which was now upon their necks; forgetting what our Saviour had often told them, that his kingdom was not of this world, but within men; and that his business was to free men from soul slavery, not from civil subjection: however, upon this mistake, the Jews here in a furious zeal designed to take Christ by force, and make him their king; but our Saviour (who came not into the world to disturb the order of civil government) understanding their intentions, withdraws himself into a mountain, to avoid giving the least occasion for any such jealousy or suspicion.

He learn, That although Jesus Christ be the great King of his church, and doth exercise a spiritual kingdom in it, yet he came not into the world to be a temporal king, nor was his kingdom of this world, or ever designed to be prejudicial to the thrones of princes, and civil government of men. Therefore doth Christ withdraw himself and refuse all this offer, as no ways agreeable to him, or consistent with his design.

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum; and it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

18 And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew.

19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship; and they were afraid.

20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Observe here, 1. The great danger the disciples were in, and the difficulties they encounter with, after they had enjoyed the sweet privileges of Christ's gracious presence with them. They were tossed upon a tempestuous sea. Learn thence, That it is not unusual, after sweet refreshments and manifestations from Christ unto his people, to meet with a stormy and sharp exercise of faith and patience; such was the lot of his disciples here: a constant gale of sweetness, an uninterrupted course of prosperity and happiness, as it is not to be expected here, so neither can it be enjoyed here, without great peril and danger. Observe, 2. What haste our Saviour makes towards his disciples, when they were tossed upon a tempestuous sea; *Jesus drew nigh unto the ship*. Nothing can separate between, nor keep Christ from his children and people in a suffering hour. He that waded through a sea of wrath to save his people, will walk upon a sea of water to succour and relieve them in an hour of tribulation. Observe, 3. The disciples not discerning Christ, not knowing him to be their Saviour, were afraid of him. Christ may be coming to save his people, and they not able at present to discern and apprehend him; but their fears may be highest, when their deliverer and deliverance is nearest. Observe, 4. How speedily Christ relieves them of their fears, by telling them who he was; *It is I, be not afraid*. It is a sufficient support in all our afflictions to be assured of Christ's gracious presence with us. Say but, O Saviour, *It is I*, and then let evils do their worst: that one word, *It is I*, is sufficient to allay all storms, and to calm a thousand tempests. Observe

lastly, with what joy and gladness the disciples received and entertained Christ, in this hour of their distress: *They willingly received him into the ship.* Though the company of Christ is always sweet and welcome to his disciples and friends, yet never is it so very agreeable and desirable to them as in the hour of trial and temptation; then they willingly receive him, and joyfully welcome and entertain him.

22 ¶ The day following, when the people, which stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was none other boat there save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that his disciples were gone away alone;*

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread; after that the Lord had given thanks.)

24 When the people, therefore, saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus :

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi; when camest thou hither ?

26 Jesus answered them, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Our blessed Saviour having wrought the foregoing miracle, feeding five thousand with five loaves, the people followed him in troops, from place to place. Christ, who knew their hearts, tells them plainly what was their end: they followed him indeed, but not for any spiritual excellencies they saw in him, or soul advantages they expected from him, but for bread: only to have their bellies fed with the loaves, not their souls satisfied with the bread of life. Oh! how seldom is Christ sought for his own sake, viz: *Jesus queritur propter Jesum*, Aug. How natural is it for men to seek Christ for sinister ends and bye-respects! but to seek him only for outward advantages, is the basest of bye-ends, and that which the soul of Christ exceedingly abhors. *Labor not for the meat*

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which perisheth. This prohibition must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively; not as if Christ intended to take them off from their lawful labors, and the business of their callings; but his meaning is, *Labor not in the first and chief place for earthly things, which are all perishing; but for bread for your souls to live eternally by; even for the food of my heavenly doctrine, which will make them that feed upon it immortal: and thus the Son of man stands ready to give unto you: For him hath God the Father sealed:* that is, by a special commission and authority, hath empowered to him to dispense all spiritual blessings to them that want and crave them. Learn hence, 1. That all the things of this life are perishing and fading. The best of outward comforts and enjoyments are meat that perisheth. 2. That it is the greatest of follies to labor intensely and inordinately for, and to set ourselves with all our might and strength to pursue and follow after, perishing things. 3. That Jesus Christ's holy doctrine, his heavenly grace, is food that never perisheth, nor diminisheth, how many soever partake of it, but makes all that partake thereof to be partakers of eternal life therewith. 4. That Jesus Christ is authorized, sealed, and commissioned, by his Father, to give eternal life to such as industriously labor after him, and will not be satisfied without him; *him hath God the Father sealed;* that is, Jesus Christ was sealed to the office of Mediator by God the Father: Christ was sealed at his baptism; sealed by his doctrine; sealed by his miracles; sealed by his resurrection; sealed by his unction, or super-eminent and unparalleled sanctification. Lord! where will the rejecters of Christ then appear at the great day, who have despised the authority of him, whom the Father commissioned to give eternal life to whomsoever he pleaseth.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered, and said unto them; This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Here the Jews, who were strict observers of the ceremonial law of Moses, and rested thereupon for salvation, inquire of our Saviour what they should do that they might please God? Christ directs them to the great duty of believing on himself, to own and acknowledge him to be the true Messiah, and as such to rely upon him alone for salvation; *This is the work of God ye believe, &c.* Learn hence, That for a penitent humble sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is a work highly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Christ calls faith the *work of God*, upon a threefold account: it is the work of his efficiency and operation; it is the work of his commanding; and it is the work of his approbation and acceptance, a work that God is highly pleased with, and greatly delighted in; *This is the work of God.*

30 They said, therefore, unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Here the Jews tell our Saviour, that, before they will believe in him, they must see some sign from him, to confirm his doctrine, and to prove him to be the Messiah; they acknowledged Christ had wrought a great miracle in feeding five thousand persons, with five barley loaves: but Moses fed their fathers in the wilderness, who were not less than six hundred thousand persons, with excellent manna from heaven, and this for forty years together; from whence they would seem to conclude, that they had more reason to believe Moses than Christ: not considering that Moses was but an instrument to obtain, by prayer, the manna at the hands of God: but Christ was an agent, and that, by a creating power inherent in himself, he multiplied the five loaves to the feeding of five thousand. Note here, from the Jews requiring a sign before they would believe, that he who publishes a new doctrine to the world, ought to confirm his mission by some miraculous operation. 2. That God honored Moses, his messenger, very much, and Christ, his minister, much more, in that both of them wrought great and special miracles for the confirmation of their mission. 3. That the Jews not believing Christ to be the true Messiah, upon so many attestations, and after his divine mission was confirmed by such miraculous operations, rendered their infidelity inexcusable, and their obstinacy invincible.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Upon the Jews mentioning manna to our blessed Saviour, he takes occasion to make a comparison betwixt himself, the bread of life, and manna, the bread of Moses; and that in three particulars. 1. It was not Moses that gave the Israelites that manna, it was God, at the prayer of Moses; but it was God that now offered them the bread of life, were they willing to accept it. 2. The manna was not given from heaven, that is, from the celestial heaven, but only from the air and clouds, which frequently in the scripture is called *heaven*: but Christ the bread of life is given and sent by the Father from the highest heaven, even the heaven of glory. 3. Manna was not true spiritual food effectively and of itself, but bodily food only: but Christ is real and spiritual bread, which gives life to lost and dead men; which manna did not, could not do. And whereas manna was peculiar to Israel only, Christ gives life to all sorts of persons, Gentiles as well as Jews; *The bread of God giveth life unto the world*. Learn hence, That as Christ is the truth and substance of all types in the Old Testament, so particularly, the manna was an illustrious type of Christ. In many things they agree; and in some they differ. They agree in their original: manna came down from above, so

did Christ: manna was freely given, so is Jesus Christ the free gift of God: manna was not fit to be eaten as it lay in the field, but must be ground in a mill, or beaten in a mortar, and baked in an oven before it was fit for food: Christ was ground by his sufferings, bruised on the cross, scorched in the fiery oven of his father's wrath, that he might become a fit Saviour for us. Again, as the manna was gathered by the Israelites daily and equally, it was rained down upon their tents, and every man had his omer: thus is Christ, in the ministry of the word, daily offered to a lost world, and all that believed in him, shall share alike in the benefit of the justification, sanctification, and glorification from him; but now the manna and Christ differ in this: and the truth excels the type thus: there is a quickening, enlivening virtue, a life-giving, and a life-upholding power, in Christ the bread of life, which was never found in manna, the bread of Israel; and whereas manna only fed the body of an Israelite, and this only for a little time in the wilderness; Christ nourisheth the soul, the souls of all believers, be they Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, and this not for a time, but for eternity; *The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world*.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus saith unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not.

Observe here, 1. How the carnal Jews, hearing of the bread which Christ had commended so highly, and conceiving of it carnally, desire that they may partake of it constantly; *Lord, evermore give us this bread*: The commendation of spiritual things may move the affections, and quicken the desires of natural persons; but if their desires be not spiritual and serious, diligent and laborious, constant and abiding, they are no evidence of the truth of grace. Observe, 2. Christ discovers another excellent effect of this bread of life, which he had been recommending; that such as feed of it *shall never hunger more*; that is, inordinately; after the perishing satisfactions of this world; but shall find an all-sufficient fulness in him, and complete refreshment from him, for the preserving and perpetuating of their spiritual life: *He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, &c.* Observe, 3. How justly Christ upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity; *Ye have seen me*, says our Saviour, *yet ye believe not*. Ye have seen me in the flesh, you have heard my doctrine, you have seen my miracles: I have done amongst you those works which never any man did, to convince you that I am the Messiah, yet ye will not own me to be such, nor believe on me; Oh the strength of infidelity and unbelief! The devil has as great an advantage upon men by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall

come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Our blessed Saviour having lamented the obstinate infidelity of the Jews in the foregoing verse, who, though they had seen him, would not believe on him; he doth in this verse comfort himself with the assured expectation, that there would be a number, which should certainly and infallibly come unto him; *All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, &c.* Here observe, 1. An account of the persons that shall come to Christ; *All that the Father hath given him.* There is a double gift of us to Christ. 1. In God's eternal purpose and counsels. 2. In our effectual vocation and calling, when our hearts are by the Holy Spirit of God persuaded and enabled to accept of Christ, as he is freely tendered to us in the gospel. Observe, 2. The gracious entertainment which Christ gives to those that come unto him; *He will in no wise cast them out*; where the positive is included in the negative; *I will not cast them out*; that is, I will kindly receive and graciously entertain them. Learn hence, 1. That both God the Father, and Christ his Son, are unfeignedly willing, and cordially desirous of the salvation of lost sinners. The federal transaction which was betwixt the Father and the Son from everlasting, above the salvation of lost sinners, evidently declares this. Learn, 2. That the merciful and compassionate Jesus will in no wise cast out or reject, but kindly entertain and receive, every penitent sinner that doth believably apply unto him for pardon of sin and eternal life; *I will in no wise cast out*; that is, I will not cast them out of my pity and compassion, out of my love and affection, out of my prayer and intercession, out of my care and protection;—I will not cast them out of my covenant; I will never cast them out of my kingdom; for my nature inclines me, my promise binds me, and my office, as Mediator, engages me, to the contrary.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day,

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In these words, our Saviour gives us the confirmation of the foregoing promise, that he will in no wise cast out those that come unto him, by assuring us, that it was the great end for which he came into the world. His Father sent him to do his will, and not his own: that is, not to do his own will without his Father's, but to do his own will and his Father's. For Christ, as God, had a co-ordinate will with his Father's,

and, as man, a will subordinate to the will of his Father. Now it is the will of both Father and Son, that such as believe in him should be preserved from perishing, and be raised up by Christ at the last day. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ stands not only inclined by his own mercy and goodness to save repenting and believing sinners, but doth also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a trust, committed to him from the Father. Therefore Christ mentions the will of him that sent him, as a reason of his fidelity in this matter. Learn, 2. That the Father's will and good pleasure is the original source, the fountain and first spring, from whence the salvation of believers doth proceed and flow. *It is the Father's will that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.* Learn 3. That such as are given to Christ by the Father, and put as his trust into his keeping, he looks upon them as his charge, and stands engaged for the preservation of them. *This is my Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I shall lose nothing.* Yet hath the Father so committed the care of believers to his Son, as that he keeps them still in his own hand. John x. 28, 29. *My Father which gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* Learn, 4. From those words, *I will raise him up at the last day*, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly, essentially, and really God. That person who can by his own almighty power raise the dead, must certainly be God. And this power Christ had. He raised others from the dead, and his own dead body from the grave also, by his own power; and therefore Christ says, *I am the resurrection and the life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* Doubtless he that spake these words, and made these promises, knew his own power to perform them; and that power must be omnipotent, and that act of omnipotence doth prove him to be God. It is true the disciples raised the dead, who yet were no God's, but with this difference, they raised the dead by Christ's power; but Christ raised others and himself also by his own power.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

43 Jesus therefore answered, and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

Although Christ had, in the foregoing verses, plainly asserted himself to be the true bread that came down from heaven, for the benefit of the world; yet the Jews understanding his words carnally, are offended with him, for pretending to come down from heaven, when they knew him to be the Son of Joseph and Mary. They understood nothing of his divine nature, nor of his miraculous conception by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and therefore were highly offended at him. Thence learn, that ignorance of Christ's

divine nature was the ground and occasion of that contempt which was cast upon his person. Observe farther, the proof which Christ gave of his divine nature, in his knowing the hearts and thoughts of these murmuring Jews; *Jesus said, murmur not among yourselves.* Christ knows and observes the most secret murmurings and repinings that are found in the breasts of the children of men: and this his knowledge is an evidence and proof of his divinity that he is truly and really God.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

In which words we have something necessarily implied, and something positively expressed. The misery of man in his natural and unsanctified state is here implied; he is far distant from Christ, and unable of himself to come unto him. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies, unto God; enemies to the holiness of his nature, and to the righteousness of his laws; and as the state of unregeneracy is a state of enmity, consequently must it be a state of impotency: *Without me, therefore says Christ, ye can do nothing;* John xv. 5. that is, without interest in me, and influence of grace derived from me. Again, the truths we have expressed are these: 1. That all those who come unto Christ are drawn unto him. 2. That the drawing of sinful souls unto Jesus Christ is the special and peculiar work of God. This drawing is a powerful act, but not a compulsory act; God doth not draw any against their wills to Christ, but he inclines the wills of sinners to come unto him. He draws by effectual persuasion, and not by violent compulsion. 3. That all those who are drawn to Christ here, shall be raised up gloriously by him hereafter: *I will raise him up at the last day.* Such as are brought to Christ by the Father, Christ shall never abandon them till he has raised them up at the last day, and presented them blameless and completed before his Father, where they shall ever be with the Lord.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

In these words our blessed Saviour confirms his former assertion, concerning his Father's drawing, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, which speaking of the days of the Messiah, foretold, that persons should be taught of God to embrace the Messiah; whence Christ inferreth, that every

one who is thus taught, shall come unto him, and believe in him. Learn hence, 1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ in the way of faith. 2. That such shall not miscarry in the way of faith, who are under the special teachings and instructions of God; *They shall all be taught of God,* and he teacheth to profit, and that not only authoritatively, but efficaciously and effectually. Those whom God undertakes to teach, receive from him both an ear to hear, and a heart to understand. *They shall all be taught of God,* and they that are taught have heard and learned of the Father.

48 I am that bread of life,

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

In these verses, our blessed Saviour resumes his former doctrine, namely, that he is the object of saving faith, and the bread of life, which he compares with the manna, the bread of Israel. *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness,* which manna was an illustrious type of Christ. Thus both came down from heaven; both were freely given of God without any merit or desert of men: both in a miraculous manner; both at first unknown what they were, and whence they came; both equally belonging to all; both sufficient for all, poor and rich. The manna, white in color, so clear is our Lord's innocence; pleasant like honey, so sweet are his benefits; beaten and broken before eaten, Christ on his cross, bleeding and dying; given only in the wilderness, and ceasing as soon as they came into the land of promise, as sacraments shall vanish, when we enjoy the substance in heaven. But though manna was thus excellent, yet the eaters of it were dead: but such as feed upon Christ, the bread of life, shall live eternally in bliss and glory. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.* Here we learn, 1. What a miserable creature man naturally is, in a pining and starved condition, under the want of soul food. 2. That Jesus Christ is the food of souls, which quickens them that are dead, and is unto the needy soul all that it can need; such spiritual food as will prove a remedy and preservative against death, both spiritual and eternal. *I am the living bread.*

52 The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Observe here, How the Jews, understanding Christ after a carnal manner, were offended at what he had said: for they thought it was inhuman to eat man's flesh, and could not understand how the body of Christ could in such a sense be food to all the world. Hence note, That carnal persons put a carnal sense upon Christ's spiritual words, and so occasion their own stumbling. But yet, notwithstanding the Jews stumbling at our Saviour's expression, he doth not alter his words, but presseth more and more the necessity of feeding upon him by faith, in order to eternal life; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Learn from hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the true spiritual food of all believers. 2. That those, and only those, who do by faith feed upon him, shall obtain a life of grace and glory from him; if we do not by faith feed upon him, we can have no evidence for a life of grace, no title to a life of glory. This place some papists produce to countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation, a bodily eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament. But it is evident that Christ treats not of the sacrament in this chapter, for the sacrament was not now instituted; therefore it is not a sacramental, but a spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith, that is here meant. For this eating gives life to the eater; all that eat are saved, and all that do not eat are damned; but this is not true of a sacramental eating; besides, this eating which Christ speaks of, he makes absolutely necessary to salvation: but some are saved that never fed upon Christ in the sacrament, as John the Baptist, and the thief on the cross. Lastly, If it be understood of the sacramental eating and drinking, woe be to the church of Rome, for denying the cup to the laity; because drinking of Christ's blood is here made as necessary, as eating of his flesh, in order to eternal life. "Except ye

(No. 25.)

eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Observe, farther, The close and intimate union which is betwixt Christ himself and those that feed upon him: "He that eateth me, dwelleth within me, and I in him." As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so believers and Christ become one; and by feeding on him, that is, by believing in him, there followeth a mutual inhabitation; Christ dwelling in them, and they in him: this is true of a spiritual feeding upon Christ, but not of a sacramental eating. Nay, Christ carries it higher still, and tells us, that as there is a real union between the Father and him, and as the father lives who sent him, having an eternal fountain of life in himself: and the Son lives by the Father, having the same life communicated to him with his essence from the Father: in like manner, says Christ, he that eateth me, the same shall live by me. All which is certainly true of our spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith; but cannot be applied to a corporal feeding on him in the sacrament, as the papists would have it.

60 Many, therefore, of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it?

61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

62 *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

The foregoing doctrine of our Saviour, concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood, sounded so very harshly, that not only the common multitude, but some of them that had been his disciples, that is, who had given up their names to follow him, could not tell how to hear it. Our Saviour reproves their unjust stumbling at what he had said, that he was the bread which came down from heaven, and tells them that his ascension into heaven should prove the truth of his descent from heaven. Hence we learn, That Christ's arising from the grave, and ascending into heaven, by his own power, is an evident proof of his godhead, and that he really came down from heaven in respect of his divine nature, which condescended to be clothed with our flesh. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

63 It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

To convince the Jews that our Saviour did not mean a carnal and fleshly eating of his body, he tells them, That such an eating would profit nothing; but it is a spiritual eating of him by faith, that bringeth that quickening life of which he had spoken. *It is the Spirit* or divine nature *that quickeneth*; the flesh, or human nature, alone, separated from his godhead, *profiteth nothing*, and can give no life. Learn hence, That it is the godhead of Christ, united to the human nature, which adds all virtue, efficacy, and merit, to the obedience and suffering of the human nature. It is

the Spirit, or divine nature of Christ, that quickeneth; the flesh, or human nature alone, profiteth nothing; and therefore the carnal eating of his flesh would do no good.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, That no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

66 ¶ From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Our blessed Saviour having thus cleared his doctrine, that he was the bread of life which came down from heaven, and that he is not to be carnally, but spiritually, fed upon: he plainly tells the Jews, That the true cause of their stumbling at his doctrine was their ignorance and unbelief; *There are some of you that believe not.* Upon which plain dealing of our blessed Saviour's, many unsound professors did wholly forsake him, and accompanied no longer with him. Learn hence, That multitudes, who have long professed Christ and his holy religion, may draw back, and fall from their profession, and finally revolt from him. 2. That it is an evil heart of unbelief which causes men to depart from Christ, and to make shipwreck of their profession.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

Our Saviour, finding many of his nominal disciples forsaking him, and departing from him, asks his apostles (the twelve) whether they would also go away? intimating that their departure would go nearer to him than the departure of all the rest. The nearer they are from whom they receive unkindnesses, the nearer do these unkindnesses go to our hearts: *Will you, the twelve, also go away?* Peter, as the mouth, and in the name of the rest, answers, That they

knew none besides to whom they could go, and expect that happiness which they did from him. They that go from Christ can never hope to mend themselves, let them go whither they will: therefore it is as irrational as it is sinful to depart from Christ, *who hath the words*, that is, the promise of *eternal life*. Observe lastly, St Peter having made this profession for himself and the rest of the twelve, that they would not depart from Jesus, whom they believed to be the true Messiah, the Son of God; Christ intimates to Peter, that his charity was something too large in promising so much for them all; for there was one traitor among them, whose heart was as open to Christ, as his face was to them; he meant it of Judas Iscariot, of whose perfidiousness he gave them warning at this time. Learn hence, That the better any man is in himself, the more charitable is the opinion which he has of others. Charity inclines to believe others good till they discover themselves to be bad. Learn, 2. That Christ doth approve of our charitable judgment of others' sincerity, according to what we hope and believe, though we happen to be mistaken, and our judgment is not according to truth: Christ knew Judas to be an hypocrite at this time, but doth not reprove Peter for having a better opinion of him than he deserved. It is far better to err on the charitable than on the censorious hand; it is less offensive to Christ, and less injurious to ourselves.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER these things, Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

Our blessed Saviour, knowing that the rage of the chief priests and pharisees in Judea and at Jerusalem was grown to that height that they were resolved to kill him: to avoid their fury he resolves to continue in Galilee, and would not come into Judea at present, nor go up to Jerusalem into the mouth of his enemies; his hour being not yet come. Learn hence, That so long as it was necessary for Christ to save and preserve himself from danger, he was pleased to use the ordinary means for his own preservation, namely, retirement, and withdrawing himself; Christ, as God, could have rid himself out of the hands of his enemies by a miraculous preservation; but he uses the ordinary means when they would serve their turn. And as he would not decline danger when his hour was come, so he would not run before it was come; but used all prudential means and methods for his own safety and preservation. "He would not come unto Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him."

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

There were three great feasts which the Jews celebrated every year; namely, the feast of the passover, the feast of pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles; this last was observed in the month of September, after they had gathered

in the fruits of the earth; whence it was also called the feast of ingathering: at this feast they went out of their houses, and dwelt in booths seven days, in remembrance of their living in tents or booths in the wilderness for forty years together, before they came to Canaan. Now the institution of this feast being to call the Israelites to the remembrance of their former condition in the wilderness, teaches us how prone and ready we are to forget our troubles, and the mercies wherewith our troubles have been sweetened, when once they are past and over. The Jews, when settled in Canaan, going out of their houses yearly, and dwelling in booths, did thereby testify, that present mercies had not made them forget former trials and troubles.

3 His brethren, therefore, said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples may also see works that thou doest.

4 For *there* is no man *that* doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

Observe here, 1. The advice which Christ's brethren, that is, his kindred, gave him, to render himself more famous and publicly known to the world: they advise him not to stay any longer in Galilee, an obscure place, but to go into the more noble and populous country of Judea, and work miracles there. But what high presumption was this in creatures to prescribe to Christ, and direct him whether to go, and what to do? Observe, 2. The reason they offer for their advice; For no man that seeketh to be known openly, will do any thing in secret: that is, "If thou wilt be thought to be the Messiah by thy working miracles, do them not in a corner; but go up to Jerusalem with us this next feast, that the great men may take notice of them." Such as hunt after reputation themselves, and are ambitious of vainglory and commendation from men, measure others, even the most holy and religious, by their own inclinations and dispositions: and wonder that others do not follow their measures for gaining reputation and respect. Thus did our Lord's brethren here: but the wonder ceases, if we consider the following words; *Neither did his brethren believe in him.* It is no new thing for the holiest servants of God to meet with great trials from their graceless friends. Christ met with this before us: his kindred, according to the flesh, not believing in him, were a sore trial and temptation to him. Some martyrs have confessed, that the hardest works they have met withal, have been to withstand the temptations, the tears, and entreaties, of their dearest and nearest relations.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet full come.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee.

Here we have Christ's answer and refusal returned to his brethren's desire: he tells them, That they might go up to the feast of Jerusalem when they pleased, and as publicly; but it was not fit for him to appear so publicly, because the doctrine which he taught was odious to the pharisees, and the prevailing power at Jerusalem: he therefore resolves to go up privately, that he might not stir up the jealousy of the sabbhedrim; but for them, they were out of danger of the world's hatred; for, being the children of it, the world would love its own; but him it hated because he reproved its sins. Where we may remark, That though our Lord Jesus Christ was most freely willing, and ready, to lay down his life for sinners, when the time was come that God the Father called for it; yet he would not expose his life to hazard and danger unseasonably. Teaching us by his example, as not to decline sufferings when God calls us to them: so not to tempt God by running into them, when we may inoffensively avoid them. *Your time is always ready, mine is not yet come*

10 ¶ But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour, who came to fulfil the law, goes to Jerusalem at the Jewish feast, according to the command of God; Exod. xxiii. *Three times a year shall all thy males appear before me.* Christ being made under the law, sheweth a punctual obedience to the law, and fulfilled it in his own person. Observe, 2. The different opinions which the Jews at Jerusalem do express concerning our Saviour; some allowing him the charitable character of being a good man; others traducing him as being a deceiver of the people. Our dear Lord, we see, when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report. Is it any wonder to find the friends of Christ branded with infamy and reproach,

when Christ himself passes under the infamous character of a deceiver of the people? Some allowed him to be a good man; but others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people.

14 ¶ Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned;

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Observe here, 1. Though Christ went up to Jerusalem privately, lest he should stir up the jealousy of the pharisees against himself unseasonably; yet went he into the temple and taught publicly: his example teaches us thus much, "that although the servants of Christ may for a time, and in some cases, withdraw themselves from apprehended danger; yet, when God calls them to appear openly, they must do it courageously, without shrinking, though the danger be still impending." Jesus went up to Jerusalem, entered the temple, and taught. Observe, 2. So admirable was our holy-Lord's doctrine, that the Jews marvel how he should come to the knowledge of such divine mysteries, considering the meanness of his education. They were struck with admiration, but they wanted faith; whereas the least degree of saving faith is beyond all admiration without it. Observe, 3. Our Lord vindicates his doctrine, telling the Jews, that the doctrine he delivered was not his own; that is, not of his own inventing and devising; it was no contrivance of his, nor was it taught him by men: but received immediately from the Father, whose ambassador and great prophet he was. Again, when Christ says, *My doctrine is not mine*, that is, not only mine, but my Father's and mine. For as he was God equal with the Father, so he naturally knew all his counsels; and as man, had knowledge thereof by communication from his godhead. Learn hence, That the doctrine of the gospel is a doctrine wholly from God; he contrived it, and sent his own Son into the world to publish and reveal it. Christ was sent, and his doctrine was not his own, but his that sent him. Observe, 4. A double rule was given by our Saviour, whereby the Jews might know, whether the doctrine he preached were the doctrine of God. First, If a man walk uprightly, and doth the will of God in the best manner according to his knowledge; *If any man will do his will, he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God*. There is no such way to find out truth, as by doing the will of God. The second rule by which they might know that his doctrine

was from God, was this, because he sought his Father's glory, and not his own, in the delivery of it. *He that seeketh his glory that sent him, that same is true*. Hence learn, That the nature and scope of that doctrine which Christ delivered, eminently tending not to promote his own private glory, but the glorifying of his Father, is an undoubted proof and evidence that is doctrine was of God.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered, and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses, therefore, gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day.

Observe here, 1. That our Lord's having vindicated his doctrine in the former verses, comes now to vindicate his practice in healing the impotent man on the sabbath-day, for which the Jews sought his life, as a violation of the fourth commandment given by Moses. Our Saviour tells them, that notwithstanding their pretended zeal for the law of Moses, they more notoriously broke the sixth commandment, by going about to kill him, an innocent person, than he had broken the fourth commandment, by making a man whole on the sabbath-day. Hence learn, That it is damnable hypocrisy, when men pretend great zeal against the sins of others, and do allow and tolerate worse in themselves. This is for their practice to give their profession the lie: the Jews condemn our Saviour for a supposed breach of the fourth commandment; whilst they are guilty themselves of a read breach of the sixth commandment. Observe, 2. The ignominy and reproach which the Jews fix upon our blessed Saviour, in the height of their rage and fury against him. *Thou hast a devil*. The king of saints in heaven, as well as the whole host of saints on earth, hath been frequently smitten and deeply wounded with reproach. Christ was reproached for our sake, and when we are reproached for his sake, he takes our reproach as his own. Moses' reproach was the reproach of Christ, Heb. xi. 26. And he esteemed it a treasure, which did more enrich him with its worth, than press him with its weight. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*. Observe, 3. The wonderful meekness of Christ, in passing over this reproach and calumny, without one word of reply. Guilt is commonly clamorous and impatient, but innocence is silent and regardless of misreports. Our Saviour is not at the pains of a

word to vindicate himself from their impotent censure, but goes on with his discourse, and justifies his own action, in healing a man on the sabbath-day, from the Jews' own practice in circumcising their children on that day, if it happen to be on the eighth day: and the argument runs thus: "If circumcision may be administered to a child on the sabbath-day, which is a servile kind of work, and bodily exercise, without blame or censure, why must I fall under censure for healing a man on the sabbath-day, thoroughly and perfectly, only by a word speaking?" Hence learn, That the law of doing good, and relieving the miserable at all times, is a more ancient and excellent law, than either that of the sabbath rest, or of circumcision upon the eighth day. A ritual law must, and ought to give place to the law of nature, which is written in every man's heart. As if our Lord had said, "If you may wound a man by circumcision on the sabbath-day, may not I heal one? If you may heal on that day one member of the circumcised, may not I make a man whole every whit. If you be at pains to cure such a one with your hand, may not I without pains cure a man with the word of my mouth?"

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

From the foregoing argument, Christ draws an inference, or conclusion, That there is no making a judgment according to the first appearance of things: and that suddenness or rashness, prejudice or partiality, in judging, overthrows righteous judgment. This is the general application of what Christ had said before: and the particular application of it as to himself comes to this, *Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment*: as if Christ had said, "Lay aside your prejudices against my person, and compare these cases attentively and impartially with one another; and then see whether you can justly condemn me as a sabbath-breaker, and acquit yourselves." Such was the perfect innocency of our Saviour's actions, that he could, and did submit them to the reason and judgment of his very enemies.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill?

26 But lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him: do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

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29 But I know him, for I am from him and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

Our blessed Saviour having vindicated both his doctrine and practice, and appeared publicly in the temple, and speaking boldly there, the people of Jerusalem, knowing the hatred and enmity of the chief priests and rulers against him, do wonder that they did not apprehend him. Learn, Almighty God doth and can preserve his own, in the faithful discharge of their duty in such an admirable manner, that even their enemies themselves may wonder at it, and be astonished with it. Observe, 2. The argument which the Jews urged against our Saviour's being Christ, and the promised Messiah, that they knew whence he was, whereas when the Messiah cometh, no man shall know whence he is: now herein they assert a manifest untruth: for though Christ, in respect of his godhead, was prefigured by Melchisedec, who was without father or mother, without descent (that is, without; any that the scripture mentions) yet, in respect of his human nature, the Jews might know whence he was; for the scripture plainly pointed out the tribe, the family, the lineage, and the place of his birth. Observe, 3. That Christ being grieved at this impudent evil, doth reply unto it with much boldness and zeal; he cried, saying, ye both know me, and whence I am; but the Father that sent me, ye know not: "You know me as a man where I was born, and of what family I am, but you know not my divine nature, nor the Father from whom I am by eternal generation, and who hath sent me into the world." Observe, 4. What causeless rage appeared in these men against Christ, for declaring the truth unto them; they would have taken him by violence, had not the power and providence of God restrained them for the present, because his time to suffer was not yet come. Hence learn, That violence and persecution against the faithful dispensers of the truths of God, have been the lot and portion of such in all ages and generations: Christ experienced it; let his ministers expect it. Observe, 5. That although the rulers at Jerusalem were angry and enraged, yet the meaner and inferior sort of people believed on him, being convinced by the wonderful miracles which he had wrought amongst them, that he was the true and promised Messiah. For say they, whenever the Messiah comes he cannot do greater or more evident miracles than this man hath done. Learn hence, That although the grace of God be not ensured to, or entailed upon any sort of people; yet ordinarily, it is the meaner sort of people with whom it prevails most. Many of the common people at Jerusalem were believing, when the rulers there were persecuting: men that live in pleasure and at ease, see no need of dependance upon God, have little inclination or desire to further the gospel, and encourage either the dispensers or

professors of it; nay, it is well if they do not turn persecutors.

32 ¶ The pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and *then* I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me and shall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles?

36 What *manner of* saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me and shall not find me: and where I am *thither* ye cannot come?

Observe here, 1. How enraged the pharisees were, when they heard that so many of the common people were brought to believe in Christ, and to cleave unto Christ, insomuch that they sent public officers armed with authority, to apprehend our blessed Saviour; *The pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.* Learn thence, That nothing more enrages the enemies of religion, and draws trouble on the preachers and professors of it, than the success which the gospel at any time meets with. Observe, 2. Our Saviour tells them, that as they desired to be rid of him, so ere long they should have their desire: he would leave them, and go to his Father, and in his absence they would wish for his bodily presence again, but should not have it. Learn, The despisers of Christ have little cause to be weary of him, and to seek to put him away by violence and persecution; for their obstinate contempt of him will cause him to depart from them, and finally to forsake them. Observe, 3. How the Jews, not understanding our Saviour's words aright, reasoned among themselves, whether, by leaving of them, he meant to go into some pagan country, and teach the Gentiles the mysteries of the Jewish religion, which above all things they could not endure to hear. Learn hence, That it is the ordinary sin of a people privileged with the means of grace, not to be sensible of the hazard or danger of Christ's leaving and forsaking them; till at last he forsakes them finally, and casts them off, to their inevitable and unutterable condemnation. Thus did our Lord deal with the Jews here; *I go my way, and whither I go ye cannot come.*

37 In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

The feast of tabernacles (which is the first here meant) lasted eight days; the first and last of which were to be kept holy with religious assemblies and sacrifices: and it was a custom among the Jews, upon that solemn day, to offer up a pot of water unto God, which they drew out of the fountain of Siloam; with reference to this custom, Christ here cries with a loud voice, inviting the people to fetch and draw from him, as from a living fountain, all the sanctifying gifts and saving graces of the Holy Spirit. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ is the original and fountain of all saving grace, whom, if we thirst after, repair to, and by faith depend upon, as a Mediator, we shall certainly receive what influences of grace soever we want and stand in need of.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Here again Christ alludes to a Jewish custom: the Jews were wont at fountains to build great vessels of stone, and in the midst or belly of them to have pipes, through which the water passes. "Now," says Christ, "Thus shall it be with every one that believeth on me; he shall be abundantly filled with the spirit of God, in all the sanctifying and saving graces of it." Christ and his Holy Spirit are a living fountain, whose waters never fail: they are not a water-brook, but a spring of waters: we shall never miss of the waters of life, if we seek unto and wait upon Christ for them. *For if we believe on him, out of our belly shall flow rivers of living waters* sufficient for ourselves, and wherewith to refresh others.

39 (But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

These words are the Evangelist St. John's commentary upon the foregoing promise; he tells us, that Christ spoke this of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which did accompany the descent of the Holy Ghost at the feast of Pentecost. *For the Holy Ghost was not yet given:* that is, not so plentifully given; *because Jesus was not yet glorified.* Learn hence, That although the Spirit was in some measure given by God from the beginning to good men, yet the more plentiful effusion of it was deferred, till the ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ.

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet,

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him: but no man laid hands on him.

In these verses an account is given of the various effects which our Lord's foregoing sermon had upon his hearers' hearts: some were so affected with it, that they believed him to be the great prophet promised to Israel, Deut. xviii. 18. Others apprehended him to be the Christ; others contradicted both, supposing him to be born not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. And upon this diversity of opinions there arose a division amongst them: and some had a mind to have apprehended him, but, by an overruling providence, they were restrained from the doing of it at present. Learn hence, that diversity of opinions in matters of religion, even concerning Christ himself, have been even from the beginning. Some accounted him a prophet, others the Messiah; some thought him neither; but a grand impostor and deceiver. Our dear Lord, when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report; let his followers expect and prepare for the same; for innocence itself cannot protect from slander and false accusation.

45 ¶ Then came the officers to the chief priests and pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him?

49 But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.

Observe here, 1. How God restrained the rage and malice of Christ's enemies, till his hour was come: the officers of the chief priests, who were sent forth with a commission to apprehend him, returned without him: but with this honorable mention of him in their mouths, *Never man spake like this man.* Such is the power of Christ's doctrine, that even those that come unto it with prejudice and with a persecuting purpose, may be surprised by it, and though not converted, yet bridled and restrained: the preaching of the gospel doth sometimes restrain the violence of the hand, when it works no change in or upon the heart. Thus it was with these poor officers. Observe, 2. That the pharisees being more enraged at the reason which the officers gave for neglecting their office, than for the neglect itself, upbraided them, that they should suffer themselves to be so deceived, whereas none of the grandes, or learned rabbies, had owned him: only an accursed crew of ignorant people followed him, and doated on him. Here note, That when Christ came into the world, the great ones of the world not only refused to believe on him, but boasted of their unbelief, as an argument of their wisdom. *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* Oh no, they were too wise to believe! Faith is left to fools, and

accounted folly by those wise men. Nay, farther, they count the common people cursed, who did believe on Christ. Oh prodigious stupidity! to account them accursed who receive Jesus Christ, the chiefest blessing: great men have not always the wisdom of a man, but more seldom have they the wisdom of a real christian. Great in honor, and wise in understanding, are a sweet couple, but seldom seen together.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them).

51 Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and knoweth what he doeth?

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

53 And every man went unto his own house.

Here observe, 1. How God stirs up Nicodemus, though he durst not openly own Christ, yet to plead for him, that he might not be condemned before heard; this was a common rule of justice, and nothing but what might have been said on behalf of the greatest malefactor; he could not well have said less; but God so ordered it, that it was enough to divert the storm from falling upon Christ at this time. One word shall be sufficient to blow over a persecution, when God will have it so. Observe, 2. They answer Nicodemus with a taunt, a mock, and a scorn, that no prophet ever did rise out of Galilee, nor ever should. Therefore Christ arising out of Galilee, as they thought, could be no prophet. Observe lastly, That though they were more and more enraged, yet they disperse without concluding any thing against Christ, for that time every one went to his own home. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS went unto the mount of Olives.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of a most excellent sermon, which our Saviour preached in the temple, at the feast of tabernacles. Now the feast being ended, Jesus did not tarry in the city all night, but went out of it two miles, as he frequently used to do, to the mount of Olives. Although it was so dangerous for him to be seen any more in Jerusalem, yet early the next morning he returns again to the city, enters the temple, and falls upon his work of

preaching without fear, and with indefatigable diligence. O what a busy, useful life was this of our Saviour's! He spent the day in preaching in the temple, the night in privacy ad prayer on the mount of Olives; and the next morning he returns to his work of preaching again. Thus was he always holily and painfully employed. To glorify his Father, and to be useful and beneficial to mankind, was his food by day, and his rest by night. Lord, how little do we resemble thee, if, when thy life was all pain and labor, ours be all pastime, pleasure, and recreation.

3 And the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act,

5 Now, Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard *it*, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Our Saviour early in the morning entering upon the work of preaching: Observe, 1. What a mixed auditory he had, of scribes and pharisees, and common people. All sorts of persons came to hear him, but not all with the same intentions; the common people came to learn, but the scribes and

pharisees came to cavil and carp; the latter came to tempt and ensnare him, the former to be taught and instructed by him. It is not our bare attendance upon ordinances, but the purity of our aim, and the sincerity of our intentions, in waiting upon God in them, that is, an evidence of our sincerity. Observe, 2. How the hypocrisy of these pharisees was gilded over with an appearance of sanctity, as if they were great lovers of chastity, and haters of uncleanness: they bring to Christ a woman taken in adultery, to be censured by him. One that had not known these pharisees, would have concluded them very holy and honest, very conscionable and conscientious persons; but Christ, who saw into their bosoms, soon found that all this was done only to tempt him. Thus a smooth tongue and false heart often accompany one another; when we see a glittering appearance, we have a reason to suspect the inside. Observe, 3. The punishment which the pharisees sought to have inflicted on this adulteress: it is death, let her be stoned; sometimes the punishment of adultery was burning, sometimes stoning, always death: Lord! how ought christians to blush, who have slight thoughts of the sin of adultery, which both Jews and pagans held ever deadly? Observe, 4. Their ensnaring question, *Moses commanded that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?* The pharisees desire no better advantage against Christ, than a contradiction to Moses, their lawgiver: it has been an old stratagem to set Moses and Christ at variance, but they are fast friends; they are subordinate one to another, not opposed one against another. Moses brings us to Christ, and Christ to glory; fain would these colloquing adversaries draw Christ to contradict Moses, that they might take advantage of the contradiction to condemn Christ. Observe, 5. The wisdom and caution of our Lord's answer; he doth not excuse her crime; but bids her accusers look at home, and examine their own consciences, whether they were not guilty of the like, or as great a sin: he doth not say, "Let her be stoned;" this had been against the course of his mercy; he doth not say, "Let her not be stoned;" this had been against the law of Moses; but he so answers, that both his justice and mercy are entire; she dismissed, and they ashamed. It is a false zeal that is eagle-eyed abroad, and blind at home: such as are most wicked themselves, are oftentimes the most ready and skilful to spy out the faults and failings of others: we stand too near ourselves to discern our own miscarriages. The eye that sees every thing, sees not itself. Observe, 6. Though Christ abhorred the sin, yet he does not condemn the sinner, "Hath no man condemned thee; neither do I condemn thee:" says Christ. This Christ said, not to excuse the woman, or to connive at her offence, but to show that he declined the office of a civil judge, which was to pass sentence on criminals. He therefore doth not say, No man ought to condemn thee, but *Hath no man condemned thee?* Christ doth not execute the office of a magistrate in judging her to death; but of a minister, in calling her to repentance and reformation; how ought every one of us to keep within the bounds of our calling, when our Saviour himself will not intrench upon the office and functions of others? Observe lastly, Our Saviour's cautionary direction to this adulteress: *Go, and sin no more.* Where note, Christ doth not say, Go, and commit adultery no more, but, *Go, and sin no more.* It is not a partial repentance, or a turning away from this or that particular sin, which will denominate us true penitents, or entitle us to the par-

doning mercy of God, but leaving of all sin, of what kind soever; therefore, says Christ, *Go, and sin no more.*

12 ¶ Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

13 The pharisees, therefore, said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true.

14 Jesus answered, and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, *yet* my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

17 It is also written in your law, That the testimony of two men is true.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered; Ye neither known me nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.

Our blessed Saviour having baffled the design which the pharisees had upon him, and showed a spirit of divine wisdom, in delivering himself from that snare which they had laid for him, he returns to instruct the people in the treasury. And here note, 1. He instructs them in the nature of his office, which was, to enlighten all men with the knowledge of divine truth; so that they should not walk in darkness, either of sin or error, but he led to eternal life. Learn hence, That the great end and errand of Christ's coming into the world, was to give light unto poor souls that sat in darkness. Observe, 2. The exception which the pharisees made against our Saviour's testimony of himself: *Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true.* Indeed, such is the corrupt nature of man, which is prone to seek itself, and hunt after vain glory, that it may render a person's testimony of

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himself suspected; but Christ, being true God that cannot lie, and coming out of the bosom of his Father, as his ambassador, his testimony of himself is above all exception, and ought to be credited without farther proof. Observe, 3. How Christ challenges his enemies, the pharisees, for judging carnally of him, and according to the meanness of his outward appearance, whereas he judged no man; that is, first, no man, as they judged according to outward show. Or, secondly, *I judge no man*; that is, at present. My proper work is not to condemn any, but to teach all; and my present office is that of a prophet, and not of a judge. My coming now is to instruct and save the world; my next coming will be to judge and condemn it. Observe, 4. Christ declares that he is not alone in the testimony given of himself, but that the Father did also testify and bear witness of him; and that according to their own law, the testimony of two was always accounted and esteemed valid. "Now, says Christ, if so much weight be to be laid upon the testimony of two men, how much more forcible should the testimony of the Father, and of him whom the Father hath sent, be to satisfy you, that what I say of myself is true? Learn hence, 1. That the Father and the Son, though one in essence and operation, yet are distinct persons. 2. That these distinct persons did bear joint witness concerning Christ. God the Father testified of him by a voice from heaven; and Christ as God, bare witness of himself as man, and as Mediator. Surely out of the mouth of two such witnesses, the truth of Christ's divine mission is sufficiently established.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: Whither I go ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said, therefore, unto you, That ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

Observe here, A dreadful threatening denounced by Christ against the obstinate and unbelieving Jews. *Ye shall die in your sins*; that is, in the guilt of your sins, under the power, and undergoing the punishments of your sins: Lord! what a sad word is this, *Ye shall die in your sins*; O better is it a thousand times to die in a ditch; for they that die in their sins, shall rise in their sins, and stand before Christ in their sins; such as lie down in sin in the grave, shall have sin lie down with them in hell to all eternity. The sins of believers go to the grave before them; sin dieth, while they live; but the sins of unbelievers go to the grave with them; While they live they are dead in sin; and by sin they fall into death: from which there is no recovery unto life. Ob-

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serve, 2. The grand sin for which this great punishment is threatened, and that is the sin of unbelief: *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Plainly intimating, that of all sin, infidelity or unbelief is the grand damning sin under the gospel. The devil hath as great an advantage upon men, by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith. Unbelief renders a sinner's case desperate and incurable; it doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, *Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.*

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things.

The Jews hearing our Saviour denouncing such a terrible threatening against them, because they believed not on him in the foregoing verses; here they perversely asked him, Who he was? Our Saviour replies, That he was the same that he was from the beginning, even the very Christ; and that they were the very same, they were also the mortal enemies and opposers of the truth. But that the time was hastening, when they should be fully convinced who he was; namely, when they had lifted him up upon his cross, when he was risen again, and ascended into heaven, and brought that destruction upon them, which he had so often threatened. Learn hence, That the sufferings of Christ were clear and convincing demonstrations, both who he was, and what he was. The darkening of the sun, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, were such convincing proofs of his deity, that they could not but say, *Verily, this was the Son of God.*

29 And he that sent me, is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

That is, he that sent and commissioned me for the great work of redemption, he is continually with me, both to assist and to accept me, I doing every thing that is agreeable to his holy will and pleasure. Hence learn, 1. That the work of redemption in the hands of Jesus Christ, was a work well-pleasing to God the Father; the work itself was highly pleasing to him, and Christ's way of managing it was well-plea-

sing also. 2. That the reason why it was thus well-pleasing to God, was, because he acted in a constant conformity to his Father's will, kept to his Father's commission, and executed his Father's commands, *doing always those things that pleased him.* Learn, 3. That as the Father and Christ was inseparable in respect to the unity of the divine essence; so the Father was always with Christ as Mediator, both to support and uphold him, to accept and reward him. The Father hath not left me alone, either in the doing of his will, or in the suffering of his pleasure. Learn, 4. That those who desire the gracious and special presence of God with them in all conditions, particularly in times of sufferings and trouble; they must make it their care and study to please God, and to observe his will in all things; then God will be with them in his guiding presence, in his strengthening presence, in his comforting, in his quickening, in his sanctifying, sympathizing, and accepting presence.

30 As he spake these words many believed on him.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Observe here, 1. The blessed fruit and success of our Saviour's foregoing discourse concerning his person and office. *As he spake these words, many believed on him:* not by their own natural power and ability, but by Christ's omnipotent and efficacious grace; he that spake to the ear, caused his word to reach the heart; Christ himself, that planted and watered, gave also the increase. Observe, 2. The love and care of Christ mentioned to these new converts; he watereth immediately these plants with wholesome advice and counsel. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* Where note, It must be Christ's word, the true doctrine of the gospel, and this abided and continued in, which will evidence our discipleship. Observe, 3. A special privilege which shall follow upon abiding in the doctrine of Christ; they shall increase in the knowledge of it, and be made free by it. *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Where note, 1. That man is naturally in bondage and captivity, by blindness of mind, by hardness of heart, by rebellion of will. 2. That the means appointed by God to set him at liberty from this captivity and bondage are the word of Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel. *The truth shall make you free.*

33 ¶ They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Observe here, How these carnal Jews understand all that our Saviour said, to bespoken in and after a carnal manner; when he spake to them before, *of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*, they understood it grossly of his natural body. When he speaks to them here of a spiritual freedom from sin, they understand it of a civil freedom from servile bondage and subjection; alledging, *They were Abraham's seed, and never in bondage to any man*: which was a manifest untruth, they have been in bondage, in their ancestors, to the Egyptians and Babylonians; and in their own persons to the Romans. But this was not the bondage that Christ meant; but a spiritual slavery and thralldom under the dominion of sin, and power of satan; *for he that committed sin, is the servant of sin*; that is, whosoever doth habitually, wilfully, deliberately, and constantly, allow and tolerate himself in a sinful course, he is under the servitude and thralldom of sin. Every sinner is a bond slave; and to live in sin is to live in slavery. And this every man doth till the Son makes him free; then, and not till then, *he is freed indeed*. Learn hence, That interest in Christ, and continuance in his doctrine, sets the soul at liberty from all that bondage whereunto it was subject in its natural and sinful state. O happy exchange from the devil's slaves, to become Christ's freemen! and also freed from the rigorous exactions and terrible maledictions of the law.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed: but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered, and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me; a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham.

The Jews boasting again that they were Abraham's seed, and bearing themselves much upon it; our Saviour tells them, He knew they were so, his natural children according to the flesh; but not his genuine children according to the spirit: this he proves, because they did not tread in Abraham's steps, and do his works; for if either the temper of their minds, or the actions of their lives, were agreeable to Abraham, they would not seek, as they did, to destroy and kill him, only, for bringing the doctrine of salvation to them, which he had heard and learned of the Father. Thence learn, 1. How prone we are to glory in our outward privi-

leges, and to rely upon them. Whereas these are arguments of God's goodness towards us, but no evidence of our goodness towards him. 2. That it is very dangerous and unsafe to pride ourselves in, and depend upon, any external privileges and prerogatives whatsoever: as our being born within the pale of the visible church, our descending from pious parents and holy progenitors; for unless we be followers of their faith, admirers of their piety, and imitate their example, we are none of their children; but belong to another father, as our Saviour tells the Jews in the other verses.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one father, *even God*.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.

In the former verses the Jews made their boast that they were the children of Abraham; in these, that they are the children of God. *We have one father, even God*. This our Saviour disproves, telling them that if God were their father, they would love him, as proceeding from him by eternal generation; and in his office employed by him as Mediator. Also, if God were their father, they would understand him speaking from God; whereas now they were so transported with malice, that they could not endure his doctrine with patience, though it came from God. All which were undeniable proofs, that they were not the children of God. Hence learn, That none can justly pretend any interest in God as his children, but they that love Christ, as being the express image of his Father's person, and do hear and receive his doctrine, as coming from God; this the Jews did not do; therefore, says Christ, they are not the Children of God. Observe farther, Having told them whose children they are not, our Saviour tells them plainly whose children they were. *Ye are of your father, the devil*. This appears by their being actuated by him, by their resembling and imitating him; their inclinations, dispositions, and actions, being all to fulfil the lusts of the devil. Now, as his servants we are whom we obey; so his children we are, whom we resemble. Learn hence, That men's sinful practices will prove them to be satan's children, let their profession be what it will: if

in the temper of their minds, and in the actions of their lives, there be a conformity to satan's disposition, and a ready compliance with his temptations, they are certainly his children, what pretensions soever they make of being the children of God. None could pretend higher to the relation of God's children than the Jews did; yet, says Christ, *Ye are the children of the devil, for his works ye do.* Note hence, That the devil hath the relation of a father to all wicked men: and this fatherhood doth not proceed from the act of the father, but of the children; for the devil doth not make wicked men his children by begetting them; but they make the devil their father, by imitating of him.

45 And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye, therefore, hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Here observe, 1. The free reproof which Christ gave the Jews for their obstinate unbelief; *because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.* 2. The challenge which he gives the worst of his adversaries; *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* So perfectly pure, innocent and spotless, was the doctrine and life of Christ, that although his enemies loaded him with slander and false accusation, yet none of them could justly convict of, much less, condemn him for, the least known sin. Observe, 3. The Jews being enraged at this free reproof, fell a railing at his person, charging him with being a Samaritan, possessed with an evil spirit. Our Saviour meekly replies, That he did not deal with the devil; but was honoring his Father in what he did, and said; and therefore his Father would take care of his honor, and judge between him and them. Here note, That though Christ used some sharpness in reproving the Jews and representing them to themselves; yet he answers with wonderful mildness and meekness, when he discovers his resentments of his own reproaches: how cool was Christ in his own cause; but warm enough in God's!

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now

we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead and the prophets; and thou sayest, If any man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me, of whom ye say, That he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him and keep his saying.

Observe here, 1. The blessed fruit and effect of observing our Saviour's doctrine: *he that keeps my sayings shall never see death;* that is, shall be secured from eternal misery, and enjoy eternal life. Observe, 2. How the Jews misunderstood our Saviour's words. *He that keeps my sayings shall never see death;* as if he meant a freedom from temporal death: and hereupon they looked upon him as beside himself, to promise a privilege which neither Abraham nor the prophets did ever enjoy. Whereas it was not exemption from temporal death, but freedom from eternal destruction, which our Saviour promised to them that keep his saying. Hence learn, That the misunderstanding of Christ's doctrine, and taking it in a carnal sense, has given occasion for the many cavils and objections made against it. Observe, 3. How Christ clears himself of all ambition in this matter, and shows that he did not make this promise of delivering his followers from death vain-gloriously, but that God, whom they called their father, had honored him with power, to make good whatever he had promised to them that keep his saying. Learn hence, That has Christ entirely sought his Father's glory, so the Father conferred all honor and glory upon Christ as Mediator; thereby testifying, how infinitely pleased he was with the redemption of mankind performed by him. "If I honor myself, my honor is nothing; it is my Father that honoreth me."

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.

That is, "Abraham having received a promise, that the Messiah should come of his seed, he exceedingly rejoiced to see the day of my coming in the flesh, though afar off, with the eye of his faith, and in a figure, in his sacrificed son Isaac; and this sight of his faith was so transporting, that he leaped for joy." Learn hence, That a strong faith gives such a clear sight of Christ (though at a distance) as produceth a holy delight and rejoicing in him.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou

art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Observe here, 1. What a false and ridiculous construction the Jews make of our Saviour's words, as if he had affirmed that he had seen Abraham, and Abraham him, with bodily eyes: whereas Christ only asserted, that Abraham had seen his day: that is, he foresaw by faith the day of his incarnation, and coming in the flesh. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's positive asserting of his divinity, or that he had a being as God from all eternity: for, says he, *Before Abraham was, I am*. Where note, That Christ does not say, *Before Abraham was, I was*: but, *Before Abraham was, I am*; which is the proper name of God, thereby is signified the eternal duration and permanency of his being. The adversaries of Christ's divinity say, that before Abraham was, Christ was: that is, in God's fore-knowledge or decree: but this may be said of any other person as well as Christ, that he was in the fore-knowledge of God before Abraham was born. Whereas undoubtedly it was Christ's design in these words, to give himself some preference and advantage above Abraham, which this interpretation doth not in the least do. Observe lastly, how the Jews looking upon Christ as a blasphemer, for making himself equal with God, and for asserting his eternal existence, they make a furious attempt upon his life, by taking up stones to cast at him, as the Jews used to deal with blasphemers: but our Saviour delivers himself miraculously from their fury, and escapes untouched. Hence learn, That when arguments fail, the enemies of truth betake themselves to force and violence: *They took up stones to cast at him*. 2. That as Christ disappointed his own persecutors, so he can and will deliver his own people in their greatest extremity from their persecutors' rage and fury. 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished."

CHAPTER IX.

AND as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with a famous encounter which the pharisees had with our blessed Saviour in the temple at Jerusalem; this being ended, as he passed from the temple, he saw a man lying, possibly by the high-way, who was born blind; him Christ pitches upon as an object fit to exercise his divine power, in the cure and healing of. They that are blind by casualty, may perhaps be relieved by art and industry; but to cure one that is born blind, nothing less is required than an almighty power. Learn hence, That diseases and distempers, which are incurable by the ordinary course of nature, are not insuperable to Christ's power, nor impossible for him to help, but a

(No. 26.)

proper object for him to magnify his power upon. Therefore it is here recorded, that this poor man was blind from his birth: such blindness being accounted incurable by natural means.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Here observe, Something implied or supposed; namely, 1. That all bodily afflictions and calamities do come upon us for sin. Whereas afflictions, although they always fall upon a sinner, yet they are not always sent to punish sin, but by way of purgation and prevention of sin. 2. It is here supposed, that as some afflictions come upon men for personal sins, so others come upon them for parental sins, and that children may and oftentimes do, very justly suffer for their parents' sins. 3. It is here supposed, that there is no other reason of a person's sufferings, but only sin: whereas, though sin be much and often the cause of sufferings, yet we may wrong God and man, yea, and sin too, to conclude it always the cause of suffering. 2. It is implied here, that there is a transmigration of souls from one body to another; the disciples supposed, that this soul, when it was in another body, sinned, and was now punished by being put into a blind body. This Pythagorean error was crept in among the pharisees, and the disciples here seemed to be tainted and infected with it. This may teach us, how far the holiest and wisest of men are from an infallible spirit, and that the best of men may be misled by a common error.

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Christ's answer must not be understood absolutely, as if he denied this man and his parents to be guilty of sin, for both he and they had sin enough, not only to deserve temporal blindness, but eternal darkness. The meaning is, that in afflicting this man, the Lord did not so much respect his or his parents' sin, as the manifestation of his own glory, in this miraculous cure. Christ doth not deny but that a man's own sin, and the sin of his parents, may be the procuring cause of blindness; but that neither the one nor the other was the cause in that man's case; but that the power and mercy of God might be seen in restoring this man to his sight, therefore was he born blind. Whence note, 1. That though sin be always the deserving, yet it is not always the procuring cause of affliction. 2. That we seldom think of, or hit upon, any other cause of affliction, but only sin; though the design of God looks beyond the sin of man in afflictions, yet man seldom looks beyond that, or thinks of any other design of God in afflicting, but only punishing for sin.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Here our Saviour tells his disciples, That he was sent by God into the world, and had a great work assigned him by God, during his abode in it; namely, to instruct, reform, and save mankind; and what our Saviour says of himself, is applicable to every one of us in a lower sense? We are sent into the world to work out our own salvation in the first place, and then to promote the salvation of others as much as in us lies. Note, 1. That every one has a work to do in the world, a great work assigned him by God that sent him into it. 2. That the time allotted for the finishing and dispatching of this great work is a limited time, it is a short time; our working season is a short season; *While it is day*. 3. That after the working season is past and expired, there will succeed a night of darkness, in which there must be a cessation from work. *The night cometh*.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay.

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is, by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Two things concurred towards the cure of this blind man, namely, an act of divine power on Christ's part, and an act of faith and obedience on the man's part. 1. An act of divine power on Christ's part; he tempers clay and spittle together, and anoints the man's eyes therewith, and behold he sees. What an improbable remedy and means was this to human reason! much fitter to put out a seeing man's eyes than to cure a blind man's. Had Christ pulled out his box, and applied some medicinal ointment to his eyes, then the praise had been ascribed to his skill, not to his power; but now it plainly appeared, that all the virtue was in Christ, not in the means. Lord! what great things canst thou do by weak and unlikely means; yea, by opposite and contrary means! but it is the praise of Omnipotency to work by improbabilities. From the contemptibleness of the means or instrument, always redounds the greater honor to the agent. Observe, 2. An act of faith and obedience on the man's part; "He went away and washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam, and returned seeing." Where note, 1. How Christ delights to exercise and try the faith of his people, by their subjection and obedience to difficult commands. 2. That true faith, joined with sincere obedience, never faileth the expectation of them that exercise it: especially in obeying the most hard and difficult commands. Therefore the Evangelist added, that the blind man, after washing, returned seeing.

8 ¶ The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him, that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged.

9 Some said, this is he; others said, He is like him; but he said, I am he.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

The blind man, thus miraculously cured, returns with much joy to his neighbours and acquaintance, who confer with him about this matter; they inquire, Whether he was the person cured or not? Who was the person that cured him, and where that person was? He assures them, he was the very person that was blind, but now cured, and he that cured him was Jesus: that the means used was clay and spittle: but where the person was, or what was become of him, he knew not. Learn thence, 1. That the miraculous cures of God work a sensible alteration in men, not only in their own apprehension, but in the judgments of others. This miracle shined forth among the neighbours, who having seen and observed the blind man, admire his healing. Learn, 2. How frankly the blind man acknowledges, and how freely he confesses, that he was the person whom Jesus had healed; *I am he*. It is an unthankful silence to smother the works of God in affected secrecy; to make God a loser by his bounty towards us, is a shameful injustice. O God! we are not worthy of thy common favors, much less of spiritual blessings, if we do not publish thy mercies on the house-top, and praise thee for them in the great congregation.

13 ¶ They brought to the pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

14 And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Then again the pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do see.

16 Therefore said some of the pharisees, That man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews, who should have been full of silent wonder, and inclined to believe in Jesus Christ, so omnipotent an agent, are prejudiced against him, and bring the late blind man before the pharisees, our Saviour's professed enemies. Observe, 2. The time which our Saviour chose for working this cure, it was on the sabbath; many, if not most of Christ's famous miracles, were wrought upon the sabbath-day. Upon that day he cured the withered hand, Mat. xii. Upon that day he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, John v. Upon that day he cured the blind man here. This Christ did probably for two reasons: 1. To confirm his doctrine which he preached on that day, by miracles:

therefore his preaching and working miracles went together.

2. To instruct the Jews (had they been willing to receive instruction) in the true doctrine, and proper duties of their sabbath; and to let them know, that works of necessity and mercy are very consistent with the due sanctification of the sabbath. It is hard to find out any time wherein charity is unseasonable: for as it is the best of graces, so the works of it are fittest for the best of days.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he has opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered them, and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him: he shall speak for himself.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, he is of age, ask him.

Observe here, 1. How desirous the pharisees were to obscure the glory of this famous miracle which Christ had wrought: in order to which, 1. They re-examine the man, to know what his thoughts were of the person who had done this for him: they judged him to be an impostor and a great sinner: the man declares freely, That he believed him to be a great prophet. Hence we learn, That there may be, and sometimes is, more true knowledge of Jesus Christ in one poor man, than in a general council of learned rabbies. This blind man saw Christ to be a prophet, when the Jewish sanhedrim saw nothing in him but imposture. *This man is not of God*, says the council: *Verily, he is a prophet*, says the blind man. 2. They next examine his parents (being unwilling to believe the man himself) Whether he was their son, or not? If so, whether he were born blind? And if born blind, by what means he now sees? Lord! what obstinate and wilful blindness was found in these pharisees! How do they close their eyes and say, We will not see; What endeavours are here used to smother a miracle, which undeniably proved Christ to be the expected Messiah! They examine first the man, then his pa-

rents, then the man again; hoping, that being over-awed with fear, they would either deny, or at least conceal, the truth; but the more they strove to darken and obscure the truth, the more conspicuous and evident they made it, *Great is truth, and will prevail*, how many soever oppose it, and set themselves against it. Observe next, The wisdom and cautiousness of his parents' answer: they expressly own, the blind man was their son; that he was born blind; but for the way of his cure they wave that, possibly because they did not see this cure wrought; and fearing the sentence of excommunication, a decree being passed among the rulers, "That whoso confesseth Christ, shall be put out of the synagogue." Hence learn, 1. That excommunication or separation from the society of the people of God, is an ancient and honorable ordinance in the church of God, and as such to be revered and esteemed. 2. That this ordinance of God has been, and may be, abused by wicked men, and the edge of it turned against Christ himself, and his sincerest members. 3. That the fear of unjust excommunication must not discourage persons from confessing the truth, when called to it. The parents of the blind man durst not confess Christ, "for fear that they should be put out of the synagogue."

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

25 He answered and said, whether he be a sinner, or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would you hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple: but we are Moses' disciples.

29 We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

Here we have an account of the pharisees farther practising upon this blind man, to rob Christ of the glory of this miracle; first, they insinuate with him, and then they frown upon him. First, they insinuate with him, saying, *give God the praise*. As if they had said, "Ascribe the cure to God, not to this man," whom they conclude to be a sinner, because he broke (as they thought) the sabbath. It is no new thing to see men pretend to aim at the glory of God, when at the same time they are maliciously opposing Christ and persecuting his members. Next, they attempted to frown this poor man into a denial of this miracle wrought upon him, or to persuade the people that it was a cheat: but it is wonderful to observe, how the boldness and confidence of this poor man increased, God giving him that wisdom and courage which all his adversaries were not able to resist or gainsay. Therefore

the pharisees being angry at this boldness of the man, they revile him for being so silly, as to become a disciple to Christ, whose office and authority they knew not: whereas they were the disciples of Moses, whom they knew God spake unto. Learn hence, That such as are led by malice, and prepossessed with prejudice against Christ, will not only think basely of his person, but refuse to see the clearest evidence of his authority and commission. *As for this fellow*, say the malicious pharisees, *we know not whence he is*, or who gave him this commission.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

In these verses the blind man proceeds to vindicate our blessed Saviour, who had cured him of his blindness, from the exceptions of the pharisees, and endeavours, by solid arguments, to convince them, that his cure (being born blind) was truly miraculous; and consequently proved Christ to be of God.

1. The man admires that Christ having wrought such a miracle upon him, they should be ignorant of his authority; "This is marvellous, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." He lays down a general proposition, that no deceiver or false teacher is heard of God, or enabled by him to work such miracles as these, but only such faithful servants as do his will, as thus extraordinarily assisted by him. *We know that God heareth not sinners*; that is, such as love and delight in sin, such as are in a state of sin, and go on in a course of sin, God will not hear such, or answer the prayers of such. Indeed God sometimes hears a sinner's prayer in wrath, and refuses to hear a saint's prayer in mercy: but he never denies a saint's prayer in wrath, or hears a sinner's prayer in mercy. The proposition laid down is an eternal truth; *God heareth not sinners*; that is, so long as they purpose to continue sinners, and go on in a course of sin, and remain bold and presumptuous sinners. Learn thence, That none that live in a course of sin, can reasonably expect that God should hear them, and give an answer of prayer to them. "God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth:" that is, if a man feareth God, and worketh righteousness, him the Lord accepteth, heareth, and answereth. Learn hence, 1. That such as would be heard of him, and accepted with him, must be devout worshippers of him. 2. That it is not enough to prove men religious and acceptable with God, that they are devout worshippers of him, unless they walk in obedience to him, and do his will. *If any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth*. Observe, 3. How the blind man goes on to prove, that Christ had a special authority from God, and an extraordinary presence of God with him in what he did, because he

had done such a work as was never done by Moses, or by any of the prophets, or by any person whatsoever, since the creation of the world. From whence he wisely and well infers, that Christ was a person authorized by and sent of God. Learn hence, 1. That Christ having done that which was never done before (namely, to give sight to one that was born blind) was an evidence of his omnipotency. 2. That this set of omnipotency proved him to be God. Whatever miracles the prophets wrought, they wrought them by Christ's power, but Christ wrought this and all other miracles by his own power. Observe lastly, How this blind man, though unlearned, judges more rightly of divine things, than the whole learned council of the sanhedrim. Whence we learn, That we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions, these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights.—*Dr. Whitby*.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Observe here, 1. A special instance of pharisaical pride; they account this poor man a vile person, whom heaven had marked by his native blindness for some extraordinary wickedness. How prone are we to judge them the greatest sinners, whom we observe to be the greatest sufferers! Observe, 2. From reviling they proceed to excommunicating; *They cast him out*; that is, out of the communion of the Jewish church. O happy man! who having lost a synagogue, hast found heaven! Behold this blind man, and admire him for a resolute confessor, stoutly defending the gracious author of his cure, against the cavils of the pharisees, and maintaining the innocence and honor of so blessed a benefactor. Observe, 3. Our Saviour's regard to this blind man, whom the pharisees had set at nought and excommunicated: *He finds him out*, reveals himself more fully to him, and directs him to believe in him. Where observe, That the miracle which Christ had wrought upon the blind man, did not convert him, and work faith in him, till Christ revealed himself unto him, and enabled him to discern the truth of what he revealed. Learn hence, That miracles confirm faith, but miracles alone cannot work faith. The blind man had experienced a miracle wrought upon him, yet remains an unbeliever, till Christ said, *I am he*. Observe, 4. How readily the man receives the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, upon the forementioned revelation of himself unto him: he instantly said, *Lord, I believe*; and, in testimony

thereof *worship him*; that is, as God incarnate, as God manifested in the flesh. Thence learn, That true knowledge of the Son of God will beget faith in him; and true faith in him will be productive of homage and adoration, of obedience and subjection to him. He that knows Christ aright, will believe, and he that believes, will worship and obey: *He said, Lord I believe. And he worshipped him.*

39 ¶ And Jesus said, for judgment I am come into this world: that they which see not, might see: and that they which see might be made blind.

In these words our Saviour declares not the intentional design, but the accidental event, of his coming into the world, namely, 1. That those who were blind might receive sight. 2. That those who presume they see, and know more than others, for despising the gospel, and shutting their eyes against the light of it, should be left in darkness, and by the just judgment of God be more and more blinded. Those who shut their eyes wilfully against the clearest light, and say they will not see; it is just with God to close their eyes judiciously, and say they shall not see.

40 And some of the pharisees, which were with him, heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Observe here, 1. How the pharisees, who watched all opportunities to ensnare our Saviour, look upon these last words as reflecting upon them; as if Christ did insinuate that they were blind; *Are we blind also?* They that shut their eyes and will not see the light which Christ offers to them, are the worst of blind ones. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to the pharisees' question, *If ye were blind*; that is, simply ignorant of your duty, and without the means of knowledge and instruction, *you should have no sin*: that is, comparatively to what you have: you should not have had so much sin and guilt upon you as now you have, by shutting your eyes against the light. *But now you say we see*: that is, being puffed up with the knowledge which you have, as if ye were the only men that saw; this proud conceit of yours renders your condition incurable, and *your sin remaineth* unpardonable. Learn hence, 1. That it is a far greater sin to condemn the known laws of God, than to be ignorant of them: pride is a greater hindrance of knowledge than ignorance, because the proud man thinks he wants no knowledge. 2. That the most exalted knowledge is insufficient to salvation, without a suitable and correspondent practice. The pharisees had the key of knowledge at their girdle, yet our Saviour tells them of double damnation: Lord! how sad it is to know Christ in this world, as that he will be ashamed to know us in another world!

CHAPTER X.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth: and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And, when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Our blessed Saviour having in the end of the foregoing chapter upbraided the pharisees for their blindness and ignorance in the mysteries of religion, notwithstanding the high conceit which they had of their own knowledge; he proceeds in this chapter further to convince them, that they were blind leaders of the blind, though they thought and looked upon themselves as the only guides and teachers of the people.—And in order thereunto, he propounds a parable of the true and false shepherd, which represents a good and bad pastor and teacher, and gives us a fourfold mark and character of a good shepherd. Observe, 1. The *good shepherd enters in by the door*: that is, he has his vocation and mission from Christ; he comes into the church regularly, in a right and approved way and manner; not by any clandestine methods, or indirect means. *To him the porter openeth*: that is, the Holy Spirit, who openeth the hearts of men to receive Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel, which the faithful shepherds deliver in his name, and by authority received from him. Learn hence, That all faithful pastors have a lawful call to the work of the ministry; they enter by the right door, and execute their trust in a right manner; but such as, without a call from God, unwarrantably thrust themselves into the ministry, are no better, nor no other than *thieves and robbers* in God's account. Observe, 2. Another property of a good shepherd is this, *That he calleth his sheep by their names*. This importeth three things: 1. A special love that he bears to them. 2. A special care that he has over them. 3. A particular acquaintance with them, that he may know how to apply himself suitably to them; which, though it be eminently verified in Christ; yet it is the duty of every faithful pastor and under-shepherd, in his measure, to labor after. Observe, 3. The *good shepherd leadeth out his sheep into good pastures*, that is, he feedeth them with sound doctrine; nourishes them with the word,

of life. Whereas the hireling, or false shepherd, whatever he may do for his own sake, he has no regard to Jesus Christ; to the honor of his person, to the edification of his church, or the salvation of souls; but his design is to raise and enrich himself, and so he may compass that, he cares not how many souls perish through his neglect. Observe, 4. The last property of the good shepherd, here mentioned, is this. *That he goeth before his sheep*, as the shepherd doth before his flock; namely, by a holy life, and unblameable conversation: he treads out those steps before the people, which they take in their way towards heaven. *And the sheep follow him*, and are guided by him. *He leadeth out his sheep, and goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.*

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Observe here, 1. The character which Christ gives of himself, *I am the door of the sheep*: that is, the only way and means by which sinners have access to God, and can obtain salvation: the only door by which sinners are entered into the kingdom of grace, and admitted into the kingdom of glory. Learn hence, That there is no possible way of access to God for fallen man, but by Jesus Christ. As there is no way of entering the house but by the door, and those that so enter are safe: in the like manner, such as come unto God through Jesus Christ, in the way of faith and holy obedience, shall be put into a secure condition, and at last obtain eternal salvation. Observe, 2. The end and design of Christ in coming into the world, asserted and declared by himself; *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. But had not his people spiritual life before he came into the world? Yes, he gave life to his people before his coming, in a measure sufficient to supply their necessity; but since his coming, he gives it in such a super-abounding measure, as may testify his divine bounty: they shall not barely live, but live abundantly, that is, their spiritual life shall abound through the upholding, strengthening, quickening, and comforting presence of his holy spirit; for having conveyed spiritual life unto his people, in their regeneration and conversion, he will cause it to increase more and more in their sanctification, until it arrive to a complete perfection in their glorification. Observe lastly, The character which our Saviour gives of the scribes and pharisees in general, and those false Christs and false prophets, which went before him, in particular; he styles them *thieves and robbers*; *All that ever came before me, were*

thieves and robbers. Observe, He doth not say, *All that were sent before me*, but *all that came before me*, were thieves and robbers. So that Christ doth not speak this of the true prophets, who were sent by God before him, but of the false Christs and false prophets, that came of themselves without any commission from God. The meaning is, all persons that came before me, pretending to be what I am, the true Messias, as did Theudas and Judas of Galilee, &c. they were thieves and robbers: that is, they only sought their own advantage, while they deceived and ruined you. Learn hence, That whoever took upon them the office and person of the Messias before Christ, or whosoever have since usurped a lawful calling in his church, without his commission, they are in Christ's account no better than murderers, thieves, and robbers, and they ought to be so in the people's esteem. *The sheep did not hear them*.

11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

In these verses our Saviour evidently proves himself to be the true Shepherd of his church, by the marks and signs, by the properties and characters of a good shepherd, which were eminently found with him; namely, to know his flock, to take care of them, and to lay down his life for them. 1. Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of his church, hath an exact and distinct knowledge of his flock; *I know my sheep*, with a three-fold knowledge, with a knowledge of intelligence and observation; he knows them so as to observe and take notice of them, with a knowledge, and approbation, and acceptance; he knows them so as to approve and own them, with a knowledge of care and protection; he knows them so as to defend and keep them. Thus Christ knows his sheep, and is also known of them; that is, he is believed on, beloved, and obeyed by them. 2. *He lays down his life for his flock*. And for this doth he eminently deserve the title of the good shepherd. (As for his power, he is styled the great Shepherd.) A good shepherd indeed, who not only gives his life to his sheep, but gives his own life by way of ransom for his sheep! This example of Christ, the great and good shepherd, in laying down his life for his sheep, teacheth all subordinate and inferior shepherds, to prefer the good of their flock even before their own lives.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and

they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

Here Christ proves himself to be the true shepherd of his church from another property of a good shepherd, which is to take care for the increasing and enlarging of his fold, by bringing in the Gentiles to it ; and by breaking down the partition wall, to make one church both of the Jews and Gentiles. Christ calls the Gentiles his *other sheep*, by way of anticipation, because shortly they were to be so, and united together with the believing Jews into one sheepfold : and whereas he says, he must bring those sheep in, we are to understand it not of a necessity of co-action, but of a necessity of compact ; it being a federal agreement betwixt the Father and himself, that both Jews and Gentiles should be one flock, inclosed in one fold, and presented to his Father as a glorious church. Hence learn, How endearing our obligations are to the dearest Jesus, that he should account us Gentiles, who were afar off, his *sheep* (we being so in respect of his eternal purpose) and make it his care, and esteem it his charge, to call us home, and bring us into his fold, the church, that we might be saved amongst the remnant of the true Israelites. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring.*

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself : I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Hence note, 1. That Jesus Christ certainly foreknew his own death and resurrection. 2. That Christ was a volunteer in dying. *He laid down his life*, none could have taken it from him. It is true, his death was a violent death, but a voluntary sacrifice : he died violently, but yet voluntarily : the hand of his enemies could never hurt him without his own consent. 3. That as Christ died voluntarily with respect to himself, so in a way of subjection to his Father's command ; *This commandment have I received from my Father.* 4. That this voluntary submission of Christ to die for us, was the ground of his Father's love to him. *Therefore doth my Father love me ; because I lay down my life.* Although the Father had many reasons to love the Son, yet none was stronger than this obedience of his to death, even the cursed death of the cross, for the redemption and salvation of lost sinners ; therefore did the Father love him with a more exceeding love, because he laid down his life for his sheep.

19 ¶ There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad : why hear ye him ?

21 Others said, These are not the words

of him that hath a devil : can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?

Here the evangelist shows what different effects this sermon of our Saviour had upon the Jews : many of them calumniate and slander him, as one possessed and mad, and therefore not to be heard and minded : others of calmer thoughts said, That the doctrine he taught, and the late miracle which he had wrought in curing the blind man, were abundantly sufficient to confute such a groundless slander. Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ meeting with diversity of dispositions, it is no wonder that it occasioned different effects, to the softening of some, and hardening others : even as the same sun that melteth the wax, hardeneth the clay ; yet is not this to be imputed to the doctrine of our Saviour, but to men's corruptions which oppose the truth, and the maintainers of it. *There was a division again amongst them.*

22 ¶ And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

This feast was not of divine, but human institution ; it was appointed by Judas Maccabeus, and continued eight days, as an anniversary commemoration for the repairing of the temple. Now our Saviour was so far from reproving the Jews for observing this feast, which was of human institution, that he graced the solemnity with his own presence. Hence observe, That our Saviour held communion with the Jewish church, and did, without scruple, conform himself to the observation of their rites and customs, although they were not originally of divine institution. Learn, 2. That such a christian as doth peaceably comply with the practice of the church, in whose communion he lives, in the observation of those different rites and customs which are used by her, acts most agreeably to our Saviour's practice and example. Who can with any show of reason censure christians for observing the feast of the nativity, who see Christ himself observing the feast of dedication ? Certainly no person of sober principles ever questioned, but that ecclesiastical rulers and civil magistrates have a power to appoint public days of thanksgiving yearly, for the commemoration of mercies, which ought never to be forgotten. From our Saviour's presence at this feast, Grotius well notes, That festival days, in memorial of public blessings, may piously be instituted by persons in authority, without a divine command.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not ; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me :

26 But ye believe not ; because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

In these verses we have recorded a new and fresh debate betwixt our Saviour and the Jews, and therein we have observable, 1. The time of this debate, verse 22. It was at the feast of dedication, in the winter, our Saviour taking that opportunity to publish his doctrine, when a concourse of people were gathered together at that solemnity. Observe, 2. The place of this debate, in Solomon's porch. Although the temple and porch built by Solomon were destroyed by the Babylonians, yet when the temple was rebuilt, there was a porch like it, which retained the ancient name. Observe, 3. The debate itself: *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* Not that they affected the knowledge of the truth, but only designed to ensnare him: for if he had affirmed himself to be the Messias, he had brought himself in danger of the Roman governor; because the Jews expected the Messias to be a temporal prince, that should deliver them from the Roman power. Now if Christ had declared himself such a Messias as the Jews expected, it might have cost him his life. Therefore his hour being not yet come, he answers with his usual prudence and wariness to their ensnaring question. Learn hence, That Christ's enemies are full of subtle policies, and can turn themselves into all shapes, that, if possible, they may entrap and ensnare him; and accordingly they pretend here great earnestness of desire to be satisfied, whether he was indeed the true and promised Messias; when in truth they had another design. Observe, 4. The wisdom and caution of our Saviour's answer; he refers them to his miracles, *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.* Our Saviour's miraculous works were sufficient for the Jews to have grounded and bottomed their faith upon, and to have confirmed them in the belief, that he was the promised and expected Messias, had not prejudice, obstinacy, and malice, blinded their eyes, that they could neither see nor consider. Observe lastly, How Christ points out to these Jews the true cause of their infidelity; which was not the obscurity of his doctrine, but their not being his sheep; that is, not as yet converted, they not having the properties of his sheep, which he sets down in the following verses. Learn hence, That men's final unbelief under the means of faith, is a clear evidence of their being in a lost and perishing condition. Infidelity is the sin that doth consign a man over to damnation; and to such as sit under the gospel, doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Here observe, 1. That all sincere and faithful christians are Christ's sheep, and he is their great and good shepherd. This relation implies tender affection, powerful protection, and plentiful provision. The tenderness of Christ's affection towards his sheep, appears by pitying their infirmities, by having a fellow feeling with them in their sufferings, by suiting their temptations to the degrees of their graces. His care in providing for them appears, in affording to them the holy scriptures, the ministry of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the operation of his Holy Spirit, to make all efficacious and effectual to them. His protection of them discovers itself, by preparing them for trials, by supporting them under them, by delivering them out of them, and by sanctifying all to them causing them to work together

in subserviency to his own glory, and his people's good. Observe, 2. That Christ's sheep hear Christ's voice, and answer the call of their great Shepherd. They hear the voice of Christ speaking to them in the scriptures, in the ministry of the word, in their own consciences, in providences; and they hear Christ's voice speaking to them, in and by his Holy Spirit; and as they hear Christ's voice, so do they answer his call: now the right answer to the call of Christ in the gospel, is a present answer, a willing answer, and an abiding answer. Observe, 3. That all Christ's sheep do follow him their shepherd. They follow him, 1. In his doctrine; and, 2. In his example, in his contempt of the world, in his freedom in reproving sin, in the holiness and heavenly-mindedness of his conversation, in his meekness and patience, in charity and universal goodness, and as he was a mighty pattern of prayer. Observe, 4. That Christ, the great and good Shepherd, knows all his sheep. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.* He knows them, so as to distinguish them, so as to observe and take notice of them, so as to own and approve them, so as to take care of them, and provide for them. And as the Lord knoweth who are his, so he knoweth who are not his too; as he knows his sheep, so he knows the goats also, and their place will be at his left hand. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.*

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Observe here, 1. The promise made by Christ unto his sheep, namely, the promise of eternal life, and perseverance in grace, till they come to the full fruition of it in glory, "I give unto them eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." Observe, 2. The confirmation he gives of this from his own and his Father's power, which is employed, engaged, and concerned, for them, and for their perseverance and preservation, notwithstanding all opposition to the contrary. "My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Learn, 1. That eternal life is the portion of Christ's sheep. 2. That eternal life is the gift of Christ. 3. That eternal life is now given to Christ's sheep: they have it now in the purchase, in the promise, and in the first fruits. 4. That all Christ's sheep are put by God the Father into Christ's hand for security. *My Father hath given them me.* 5. The Father doth so intrust Christ with his sheep, as yet to take care of them himself; they are in the Father's hand, as well as in the Son's, and their being in the hands of both, doth assure them of the certainty of their perseverance. *None shall pluck them out of my hand: none shall be able to pluck them out of my Father's hand;* implying that there are many that would pluck them out of their hands, sin, satan, the world, &c. but they shall be kept by the Almighty power of God, *through faith unto salvation;* for who can be too strong for omnipotent power.

30 I and my Father are one.

That is, one in essence and nature, one in authority and power, and not barely one in will and affection, one in concord or consent. That this is the genuine signification of the words, appears by a threefold argument. 1. From the original words; it is not said, I and my Father are one person in the masculine gender, but in the neuter, I and my Father are one thing. Now if that thing be not the Divine Being, they cannot be one; for since the Father is confessed to be God, the Son cannot be one thing with the Father, if he be not God too. 2. It appears from the context; our Saviour, in the preceding verses, ascribed the preservation of his sheep to the power of his Father; *None can pluck them out of my Father's hand*; and he ascribes it also to his own power; *None shall pluck them out of my hand*; plainly intimating, that his sheep were equally safe in his own hand, as well as in his Father's; for, says he, *I and my Father are one*; that is, one in power; and, if they be one in power, they must be one in nature: unless we make an almighty creature, which is a contradiction. 3. It appears evidently by what follows in the next verse, that the Jews understood our Saviour in this sense; why else did they take up stones to stone him? *We stone thee, say they, for blasphemy, because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* The Jews took our Saviour's meaning aright, and were satisfied, that when he said, *I and my Father are one*, he asserted himself to be God, and deserved to die; and well he had deserved it, if he had not been God. The adversaries of our Saviour's divinity, to elude the force of these words, which make so much against them, interpret the words thus, *I and my Father are one*; that is, say they, we are one in will and affection, one in concord and consent: this is a truth, but not the great truth contained in these words: for thus believers are one with God, and one with one another; namely, by an harmony of wills and desires: so far as they are regenerated, God's will and theirs are unisons, they will and desire the same thing, and are of one heart and one mind. But God and Christ are one, in a much higher sense than Christ and believers are one; namely, one in essence and nature, one in authority and power, Christ being consubstantial with God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ is for the nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal with the Father. 2. That although Christ be one in essence with the Father, yet are they distinct persons one from another, *I and my Father, we are one.* Learn hence, That the Son being one in essence, one in power, one in consent and will, with the Father, they are both equally concerned for the perseverance of the saints, for preserving them in grace, and for bringing them to glory. *None shall pluck them out of mine or my Father's hand: for I and my Father are one.* If the power be the same, the essence must be the same.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for

blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews understood our Saviour affirming, that he and his Father are one; that is, one in essence and nature, and himself a person equal with God. This they looked upon as blasphemy in him, to arrogate to himself what is proper to God only. Observe, 2. That the Jews looked upon it as a piece of justice in them to stone Christ for this apprehended blasphemy; *Then the Jews took up stones to stone him.* According to the law of God, the blasphemer was to be stoned to death, but then he was first to be judiciously tried and judged; but such was the furious and fiery zeal of these Jews, that in a tumultuous manner they attempt to stone him to death. Lord! how far doth the fury of men, in opposing truth, outstrip the true zeal of the faithful servants in defending truth! Observe, 3. With what meekness our Lord receives this horrid indignity of stoning (for it is probable, that some stones were cast at him, he saying, *For which of these works do ye stone me?*) he clears his own innocence, and expostulates with them for rewarding him evil for good: *Many good works have I showed you from my Father*; that is, by my Father's authority and commission; *I have been sight to the blind, feet to the lame, a tongue to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf*; do any of these works deserve such usage as stoning at your hands? Learn hence, That such was the perfect and spotless innocence of Christ in all his actions, that he durst and did appeal to the consciences of his most inveterate adversaries; *For which of these works do ye stone me?*

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Here our Saviour by a twofold argument vindicates himself from the imputation of blasphemy, in asserting himself to be God. 1. Because the Old Testament gave to magistrates and judges the title of Gods, as Ps. lxxxii. 6. *I have said ye are gods.* Now Christ argues strongly from the less to the greater, thus: "If judges and magistrates may be called gods, because they are commissioned by him, and derive their authority from him, how much more is that title due to me, who am sanctioned, separated, and ordained for a Mediator, and appointed to the work of redemption, before I came into the world, and consequently was God from all eternity?" This place the Socinians (those professed adversaries of our Saviour's godhead) produce to prove, that Christ was not God by nature, but only in respect of his sanctification and mission. It is a certain truth, that he that was sanctified and sent, was the Son of God; but he was not therefore the Son of God, because sanctified and sent. His sanctification was not the ground of his sonship; but his sonship was the cause of his sanctification. Christ was not therefore God's Son because he was sanctified and

sent; but he was therefore sanctified and sent, because he was his Son. He was a Son before he was sent, even from eternity, otherwise, it must have been said, that God sent him to be his Son, and not that God sent his Son. This supposes him before he was sent to have been actually his Son, as certainly he was, from before the foundation of the world; Prov. vii. 23. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father *is* in me, and I in him.

Here we have a second argument, by which our Saviour proves, that it was no blasphemy to call himself God; but that he was God in very deed: namely, an argument taken from his works: *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*; and the argument runs thus: if (says Christ) I do those miraculous works, which no power less than a divine power can effect, then you ought by these works to be led to believe and acknowledge, that I am truly and really God; but the works which I do are the effect and product of an omnipotent power, therefore you ought to believe, that I am one in essence with the Father, there being a mutual in-existence of one person in the other, so that the Father is in me, and I in him: and thus *I and the Father are one.* Learn hence, That Christ never required of his disciples and followers an implicit faith, or a blind obedience; but as he submitted his doctrine to the trial of reason, so he submitted his miracles to the examination and judgment of sense; therefore he says, *If I do not the works of my Father, that is, divine works, believe me not to be a divine person.*

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hands.

40 And went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized: and there he abode.

41 And many resorted unto him and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man, were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

Observe here, 1. The violence and fury of these unbelieving Jews against the holy and innocent Jesus! *They sought again to take him.* Observe, 2. The prudential care of Christ for his own preservation; his time being not yet come, he withdraws from Jerusalem, the nest of his enemies, and goes beyond Jordan; when Christ was persecuted in one city he fled to another; he has sanctified a state of persecution to his ministers and members by his own being in it. It is no disgrace for any of them to fly, when their Captain did it, and bids them do it, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another.* Observe, 3. The success of Christ's ministry beyond Jordan: *Many resorted to him, and believed on him.* This place about Jordan was the place where John had exercised a great part of his ministry, and now, many years after John's death, the fruit of his ministry appears;

for many believed on him there; that is, about Jordan, where John had preached and baptized. Learn hence, That the labors of faithful ministers may seem to be lost, and lie long like seed under the ground, and yet at last by some new watering may spring up, and the fruit appear in abundance. Here John's ministry about Jordan hath fresh fruit upon Christ's coming, long after John was dead. Observe 4, The dignity of Christ above John, *John did no miracle*; but Christ did all. The wisdom of God so ordered it, that though the Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, wrought many miracles for the confirmation of their divine mission, yet John the Baptist coming immediately before Christ, as his messenger and forerunner, wrought none, for these three reasons probably: 1. That so the glory of Christ in working miracles, when he came upon the stage of his ministry, might be the more clear and evident. 2. That the evidence of Christ being the Messiah might be the more clear by the miracles which he wrought. 3. That the minds of the people might not be divided and distracted between John and Christ, and that there might be no pretence or competition between them: *Therefore John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of Christ were true.*

CHAPTER XI.

NOW a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

This chapter relates unto us the miraculous power of Christ, in raising of dead Lazarus, which, as it was one of his last so it was one of the greatest miracles which he wrought, and yet we find none of the Evangelists make mention of it, but only St. John; the reason is supposed to be this, because when the other evangelists wrote their history, Lazarus was then alive; (for Epiphonius says, he lived thirty years after he was raised by Christ) and probably, the mention of this relation might have brought Lazarus into danger and trouble; but St. John wrote his gospel after Lazarus' death. This miracle was a sufficient demonstration of Christ's Godhead: none but an almighty power could recal a man four days dead, from a settled corruption to a state of life. None but he that created Lazarus could thus make him anew. Here observe, 1. The tender sympathy of these two endeared sisters with their afflicted brother; they feel his sorrows, and acquaint their Saviour with his sufferings. *Lord! behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* They do not say, Our brother that loves thee is sick; *he whom thou lovest is sick*; thereby

pleading not the merit of Lazarus, but the merit of Christ. For how can the love of Christ, which is infinite and eternal, have any cause but itself? Note, The person whom Christ loved is sick, and dies. Learn hence, That strength of grace, and dearneſs of reſpect, even from Christ himſelf, cannot prevail either againſt death or againſt diſeaſes. Lazarus, whom Christ loved, is ſick. Obſerve, 2. The gracious answer which Christ ſent to the ſiſter's meſſage; *This ſickneſs is not unto death; but for the glory of God*; that is, this ſickneſs ſhall not bring upon him ſuch a death as he ſhall remain under the power of, to the general reſurrection; but is only deſigned to give me an opportunity of glorifying God, by exerting my miraculous power in reſtoring him to life. Learn hence, 1. That as God's own glory is his ſupreme aim and end in all his actions, ſo in particular it is deſigned by him in ſending afflictions upon his people, to glorify his power and wiſdom, mercy and love, in and upon them. The ſaints' ſickneſſes are all for the glory of God. 2. That God is glorified when his Son is glorified: as none do honor the Father who do not honor the Son; ſo the Father accounts himſelf glorified, when the glory of the Son is advanced. *This ſickneſs is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

5 Now Jeſus loved Martha, and her ſiſter, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard, therefore, that he was ſick, he abode two days ſtill in the ſame place where he was.

7 Then after that ſaith he to *his* diſciples, Let us go into Judea again.

8 *His* diſciples ſay unto him, Maſter, the Jews of late ſought to ſtone thee; and goeſt thou thither again?

9 Jeſus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he ſtumbleth not, becauſe he ſeeeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he ſtumbleth, becauſe there is no light in him.

Obſerve, 1. What an *happy*, becauſe an *holy* and *religious* family was here, and much honored by Christ: *Jeſus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus*; wherever true piety dwells, it draws the eye and heart of Christ towards it. Christ had frequently and familiarly lodged under their roof, and he rewards them for their entertainment with his love; *Jeſus loved Martha and her ſiſter.* Where note, That Martha is here named firſt, though elſewhere Mary had the precedence, to ſhow, no doubt, that they were both equally dear to Christ.

Obſerve, 2. That although Christ loved Lazarus, yet he ſeems to neglect him, he delays going to him for ſome days: but could Christ abſent himſelf from one ſo long, whom he loved ſo well? We find he did. Let us take heed then that we do not miſinterpret Christ's delay. He ſeldom comes at our time, but never ſtays beyond his own; our Saviour had a double end in ſtaying thus long; namely, for greatening of the miracle, and confirming of their faith. Had Christ gone before Lazarus was dead, they might have attributed his

recovery rather to the ſtrength of nature, than to Christ's miraculous power; or had Christ raiſed Lazarus as ſoon as he was dead, they might peradventure have thought it rather ſome trance or ecſtacy, than a death and diſſolution; therefore Christ ſtays ſo many days, that God might be the more glorified, and his own omnipotent power the more magnified. We learn then, That when Christ delays to help them whom he dearly loves, it is always for wiſe ends and holy purpoſes. Obſerve, 3. How the diſciples, though they were dearly affected to Lazarus (for they had learned to love where their Maſter loved) yet they diſcourage Christ from going to him into Judea, for fear of violence offered to him, "Maſter, the Jews of late ſought to ſtone thee, and goeſt thou thither again?" Here the diſciples pleaded for their Maſter's ſafety, at the ſame time aiming at their own; they were to go with him into Judea, and they well knew that their danger was inwrapped in his, therefore they ſeek to divert him from his intention. O how has the fear of ſuffering made many of the friends of Christ decline an opportunity of glorifying God, and doing good to others! But cannot God give ſafety in the miſt of danger, if he pleaſeth? Let us then not chooſe our way according to our own apprehenſion, either of danger or ſafety: but as we ſee God going before us, if our call be clear, let us go on with courage, whatever difficulties lie in our way. Obſerve, 4. How our Saviour corrects theſe fears of his diſciples, by acquainting them with his call from God, to undertake this journey into Judea. "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk therein, he ſtumbleth not: but in the night he ſtumbleth." As if Christ had ſaid, "As he that walks in the day is in no danger of ſtumbling, but in the night he is in danger; ſo as long as I have a call from God, and my working time laſts, there is a divine providence that will watch over me, and ſecure me from all danger; now my day is not fully ſpent, and therefore it is in the power of mine enemies to precipitate my paſſion, or to bring the night of ſufferings upon me before the appointed time: but ere long the night will come on, the working time will be over, and then ſhall both I and you ſtumble upon death; but while the day laſteth we are ſafe." Learn hence, 1. Every man has his twelve hours, that is, his working time, assigned him by God in this world. 2. Whiſt theſe hours are not ſpent, and whiſt his working time is unexpired, he ſhall not ſtumble, he ſhall not die, he ſhall not be diſabled from working, while God has any work for him to do; neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, ſhall take him off till his work be finiſhed. 3. Every man has his night as well as his day, in which he muſt expect and prepare to ſtumble; that is, to fall by death: for, when God has done his work by us and with us, he will withdraw his protection from us, but not his care over us. We ſtumble upon death, and fall into the grave; but God receives us to himſelf, and at the end of our working ſeaſon rewards us for our work.

11 Theſe things ſaid he: and after that he ſaith unto them, Our friend Lazarus ſleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of ſleep.

Obſerve here, 1. Our Saviour coming near to Bethany, tells his diſciples that Lazarus ſleepeth; that is, plainly, he was dead. This ſhewed his omniſciency, and that he was truly God; for he had received no advice of his death from any perſon, but as God he knew that he was deceaſed.

Observe, 2. The sweet title given both to death and Lazarus; death is called a sleep, Lazarus is styled a friend; yet Christ says, not my friend but our friend Lazarus sleepeth; intimating that gracious familiarity and mutual friendship which was betwixt himself and all his members. Learn hence, 1. That all true believers are Christ's friends. 2. That the friends of Christ must die as well as others. 3. That their death is but a sleep. *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.* It followeth, *but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.* Observe, Christ says not, We will go and awake him, but I will go, and I will awake him. The disciples, who were companions in the way, must not be partners in the work; witnesses they may be, actors they cannot be; none can awake Lazarus, but the Maker of Lazarus. Who can command the soul to come down and meet the body: and who can command the body to rise up and meet the soul, but that God that created both soul and body? Lord; it is our comfort against the dread and terror of death, that our resurrection depends upon thy almighty power. *I will go that I may awake him out of sleep.*

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe: nevertheless, let us go unto him.

16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Observe here, 1. How desirous the disciples were that Christ should not go to Bethany where Lazarus was. Bethany being within two miles of Jerusalem, where the seat of our Saviour's enemies was. But our Lord, knowing his call to be clear, resolves to go; *Nevertheless*, says Christ, *let us go unto him.* O love stronger than death! the grave cannot separate betwixt Christ and his friends: other friends accompany us to the brink of the grave, and there they leave us to worms and dust; for death hath both horror and noisomeness to attend it: but for thee, O Saviour, the grave-stone, the earth, the coffin, are no bounders of thy dear respects. Blessed be God, that neither life nor death can separate from the love of Christ; but even after death and burial he is graciously affected to those he loves. Christ has a gracious regard to the dust of his saints; though his holy ones see corruption, they shall not always lie under the power of corruption; their dead bodies are a part of the undoubted members of Christ's mystical body. Blessed be God, the time is coming, when Christ shall knock at the doors of his children's graves, and call them up out of their bed of dust, *and they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.* Observe, 2. The wise and holy design of Christ in delaying to go to Bethany till Lazarus was dead; namely, that he might at once raise Lazarus' dead body, and his disciples' faith, confirming them in the belief, that he was the Son of God, and the true Mes-

sias. But could the faith of the apostles want confirmation, who had seen so many miracles wrought by our Saviour, and had lived under his ministry all the time of it? Yes; the faith of the most eminent saints, even of the apostles themselves, wants confirmation in this state of weakness and imperfection, and is capable of growth. *I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.* Observe, 3. The great passion which Thomas expresses upon the notice given by Christ of Lazarus' death? plainly, *Lazarus is dead*, says Christ; *Let us go, and die with him*, says Thomas. Oh what passionate and impatient expressions do sometimes drop from our mouths, on occasion of the death of our dear relations! we are ready to be so affected with the death of our friends, as to wish ourselves out of the world, that we might be with them. But we must remember, that it is God that appoints us our several posts, and particular stations, which we must keep, till the wisdom of God sees fit to remove us.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had laid in the grave four days already.

18 (Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.)

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Observe here, 1. The length of time which Christ designedly delayed before he would come to Lazarus' grave; he was not above six miles off Bethany, being within two miles of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem within four miles of Bethabara, where Christ now was, and yet our Saviour comes not of four days; doubtless, that the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection might be the more conspicuous and remarkable. Christ could as easily have cured Lazarus being sick, as have raised him being dead, and as easily have raised him the first day, as the fourth day; but that had not carried along with it such a full conviction of Christ's almighty power. Therefore, that he might draw the eyes of their faith more stedfastly to behold and admire his almighty power, our Saviour defers his coming till Lazarus had been dead four days. Observe, 2. The civil usage of mourning with those that mourned for the dead: anciently they mourned thirty days, and sometimes forty, for a dear relation. Numb xx. 29. During which time, neighbours and friends came to visit and relieve them in their sadness, with such consolatory arguments as they had. Christian religion doth not condemn natural affection: human passions are not sinful, if not excessive; to be above the stroke

of passions is a condition equal to angels: to be in a state of sorrow without the sense of sorrow is a disposition beneath the beasts: but duly to regulate our sorrows, and set boundaries to our grief, is the wisdom, the duty, the interest, and the excellency, of a Christian. As to be above all passions, will be our happiness in heaven, so to regulate and rectify our passions, is a great part of our holiness on earth. Observe, 3. Although Martha was a true mourner for the death of her brother, yet she doth not so far indulge to grief, but upon the first notice of Christ's approach, she arises to go forth to meet him, with a mournful moan in her mouth, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Where observe, how faith and infirmity were mixed together; faith appeared in that firm persuasion which she had of Christ's power. *Hadst thou been here, my brother had not died.* But then her infirmity appeared in limiting Christ both to time and place; to place, *If thou hadst been here*: as if Christ could not (if he had pleased) save his life, absent as well as present. Then to time, *Now he stinketh*; as if she had said, "You are come, but, alas! too late; you have stayed too long, he is past recovery, the grave hath swallowed him up." As if death would not deliver up his prisoner at the command of Christ: Oh! the imperfect composition of the best of saints! what a mixture of faith and infirmity is found in the holiest and best of Christians! This also farther appears in her next words, ver. 22. *I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, he will give it thee*: she seems not to believe that Christ was able to raise him by his own immediate power, but must obtain power of God to do it, as the prophets were wont to do that raised the dead. She thought Christ a person highly in God's favor, but scarce believed him able to raise Lazarus by his own power; had her faith extended to a belief that Christ was equal with the Father, and that the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him, she would not have questioned his power to raise him from the grave; for though Christ as Mediator did apply himself by prayer to God at the raising of dead Lazarus, ver. 41, 42, yet as God, he had a power of himself to raise Lazarus, an Almighty power, communicated with his essence from the Father, by an eternal and ineffable generation.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live.

26 And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

Here observe, 1. Christ's meek answer to Martha's passionate discourse. He takes no notice of the forementioned failings, but comforts her with a promise of her brother's resurrection; *Thy brother shall rise again.* Thence learn, That the knowledge and belief of the general resurrection is, and ought to be, a sufficient support under the loss of our endeared friends, who die in the Lord. Observe, 2. That the

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doctrine of the general resurrection was no new doctrine; Job believed it, chap. xix. 26. Daniel published it, chap. xii. 1. The pharisees had a notion of it; but Martha here makes it an article of her faith, *I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* Observe, 3. How Christ particularly instructs Martha in the cause of her resurrection, acquainting her, that he himself is the author and efficient cause of it; *I am the resurrection and the life*; that is, I am the author and principal efficient cause of the resurrection; and this with respect to both natures: 1. His divine nature is the efficient cause of the resurrection; he shall raise our bodies out of the dust, by the power of his godhead. 2. His human nature is the exemplary cause or pattern of the resurrection; for which reason Christ is called the *first born from the dead*. For though some were raised before him, yet was his resurrection the cause of their resurrection. Hence St. Paul argues, from Christ's resurrection, the certainty of the resurrection of his members: Christ and believers are one mystical body, therefore is not Christ perfectly risen till all his members are risen with him. Indeed Christ's personal resurrection was perfect when he arose, and all believers arose representatively in him: yet till all believers arise personally, the resurrection of Christ has not received its utmost perfection; but there is somewhat behind of the resurrection of Christ. Most fitly then might our Saviour assert, *I am the resurrection and the life.* Observe, 4. That Christ not only asserts himself to be the resurrection, but also the life; *I am the resurrection and the life*; that is, I am the cause of life natural, spiritual, and eternal; *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die*; that is, eternally! though his body shall die because of sin, yet his spirit shall live because of righteousness.

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 And, when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

29 And as soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 The Jews then, which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up hastily, and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,

Observe here, 1. The full confession which Martha makes of her faith in Christ: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* A confession which comes nearest to that of St. Peter, (Matt. xvi. 16.) of any that we meet with in scripture; nay, it seems more full than Peter's confession; for those additional words, *Which should come into the world,* are not in his confession; the sum is, she believed Christ to be the very Messiah who was typified and prefigured, prophesied of, and promised to, the Old Testament saints, as the person that in the fulness of time should come into the world for the redemption and salvation of it. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Hence learn, That Christ is never rightly believed in, nor regularly depended upon, for salvation, except he be owned and acknowledged to be the eternal Son of God. Martha was now fully persuaded of Christ's divine nature, of which the best of the disciples, till after our Saviour's resurrection, had but a faint and uncertain persuasion. Observe, 2. How earnest and intent our Saviour was to dispatch the errand he came upon, namely, to raise Lazarus from the grave, and to comfort the two mournful sisters: he would not so much as enter the house, till he had effected his work; and therefore he goes straight to the grave, which probably was the place where Mary met him: Lord! It was thy meat and drink to do the will of thy Father: it was thy meat and drink by day, thy rest and repose by night. How unlike are we to thyself, if we suffer either our pleasures or our profits to divert us from our duty! Observe, 3. What haste and speed Mary makes to attend upon our Saviour; she arose quickly, and came unto him. Mary's love added wings to her motion. The Jews observing her hasty motion, have a loving suspicion that she is gone to the grave to weep there; but their thoughts were too low; for whilst they supposed that she went to a dead brother, she was waiting upon a living Saviour. And she that used to sit at Jesus' feet, now falls at his feet, with an awful veneration; the very gesture was supplicatory. And her humble prostration was seconded with a doleful lamentation, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Where observe, a mixture of faith with human infirmity. Here was strength of faith in ascribing so much power to Christ, that his presence could preserve from death; but here was infirmity in supposing the necessity of Christ's presence for this purpose. Certainly he that did raise him from death, being present, could have preserved him from dying, being absent, had he pleased. This was Mary's moan, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;* full of affection, but not free from frailty and infirmity; however Christ takes no notice of her errors and infirmity: but all the reply we hear of is a compassionate groan, which the following verses acquaint us with.

33 When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died.

Observe here, 1. The condolency and tender sympathy expressed by our Saviour upon this occasion: *He groaned in his spirit, and was troubled;* or, as the original has it, he troubled himself, intimating that our Saviour's passions were pure and holy, not like ours, muddy and mixed with sinful imperfection. The commotions of his affections were like the shaking of pure water in a chrysal glass, which still remains clear; and they arose and were calmed at his pleasure; he was not overpowered by them, but had them at his command. Learn hence, That as Christ took upon him the human nature, so he did assume also human affections, thereby evincing himself to be our brother and near kinsman, according to the flesh. Learn, 2. That the passions and affections which our Saviour had, and expressed, were always holy and innocent; he was not without them, but he was above them; they did never violently and immoderately trouble him, but when he pleased he troubled himself. *Jesus groaned in spirit,* and troubled himself. Observe, 2. How our Saviour manifests his condolency and tender sympathy with Martha and Mary, by his weeping. *Jesus wept:* partly from compassion, and partly for example; in compassion first to humanity, to see how miserably sin had debased the human nature, and rendered man like unto the brute beasts that perish. Secondly, in compassion to Lazarus, whom he was now about to bring back into a sinful and troublesome world. Thus St. Jerome, *Non flevit Christus lachrymus nostras,* &c. "Christ, says he, did not weep for our tears, he mourned over Lazarus, not because dead, but because now to be brought again to life." Again, Christ wept for our example, to fetch sighs and tears from us, at the sight of others' miseries, and especially at the funerals of our godly friends. Learn hence, That mourning and sorrow, and this expressed by tears and weeping, is an affection proper for those that go to funerals, provided it be decently kept within due bounds, and be not excessive; for immoderate sorrow is hurtful to the living, and dishonorable to the dead; neither is it an argument of more love, but an evidence of less grace. Note, 3. How the Jews, observing Christ's sorrow for, admire his love to dead Lazarus: *Behold, how he loved him!* Christ's love to his people is admirable and soul-amazing: such as see it may admire it, but can never fully comprehend it. Note, 4. How some of the malicious Jews attempt to lessen the reputation of our Saviour, not willing to own him to be God, because he did not keep Lazarus from dying: as if Christ could not be the Son of God, because he did not at all times, and in all cases, exert and put forth his divine power. Whereas Christ acted freely, and not necessarily, governing his actions by his own wisdom, as he saw most conducing to the ends and purposes of his own glory.

38 Jesus, therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith

unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been *dead* four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said *it*, that they may believe that thou has sent me.

43 And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

In these verses we find our Lord addressing himself to the miracle of raising Lazarus from the grave. First, he commands them to take away the stone. But could not that voice which raised the dead, remove the stone? Yes, no doubt; but it is always the will of Christ that we put forth our utmost endeavours, and do what we can in order to our own deliverance. To remove the stone and untie the napkin, was in their power; this, therefore, they must do; but to raise the dead was out of their power; this, therefore, Christ will do alone. Our hands must do their utmost before Christ will put forth his help. The stone being thus removed, his eyes begin; they are lifted up to heaven, his Father's throne, from whence he expects to derive the power: his tongue seconds his eyes, and prays unto his Father. Christ, as God, wrought this miracle by his own power. Consider him as a Mediator, and so he looks up to his Father by prayer, yet we hear of no prayer, but a thanksgiving only. Christ's will was his prayer; whatever Christ willed, God granted; Christ and his Father having one essence, one nature, and one will. Neither was it fit for Christ to pray vocally and audibly, lest the unbelieving Jews should say, he did all by intreaty, nothing by power: Observe farther, That as Christ, when he spake to his Father, lifted up his eyes; so, when he spake to dead Lazarus, he lifted up his voice, and cried aloud. This Christ did, that the strength of the voice might answer the strength of the affection, since we vehemently utter what we earnestly desire: also, that greatness of the voice might answer to the greatness of the work; but especially that the hearers might be witnesses that this mighty work was performed, not by any magical enchantments, which are commonly mumbled forth with a low voice, but by an authorative and divine command. In a word, might not Christ utter a loud voice at the raising of Lazarus, that it might be a representation of that shrill

and loud voice of the last trumpet at the general resurrection which shall sound into all graves, and raise all flesh from the bed of dust? Observe next, As the manner of our Lord's speaking with a loud voice, so the words spoken by him; *Lazarus, come forth*. Mark, Christ doth not say, Lazarus revive; but, as if he supposed him already alive, he says, *Lazarus, come forth*: to let us know that they are alive to him who are dead to us. Mark also, What a commanding word this was, *Come forth*. Not that it was in the power of these loud commanding words to raise Lazarus, but in the quickening power of Christ which attended these words. O blessed Saviour! it is thy voice which we shall, ere long, hear sounding into the bottom of the grave, and raising us from our bed of dust. It is thy voice that shall pierce the rocks, divide the mountains, and echo forth throughout the universe, saying, *Arise ye dead, and come to judgment*. Observe lastly, How readily obedient Lazarus was to the call and command of Christ; *He that was dead came forth*: and if Lazarus did thus instantly start up at the voice of Christ in the day of his humiliation, how shall the dead be roused up out of their graves by that voice which will shake the powers of heaven, and move the foundations of the earth, in the day of his glorification! *Question*. But where was Lazarus' soul all that while he was dead? If in heaven, was it not a wrong to him to come from thence? If not, doth it not prove that the soul sleeps as well as the body? *Ans*. Souls go not to heaven by necessitation, as the fire naturally and necessarily ascends upwards; but are disposed of by God as the supreme Governor; those that have served him to go to heaven, and those that have served the devil to go to hell, and those that are not adjudged to either place, but are to live presently again upon earth, as Lazarus was, are reserved by God accordingly: whether shut up in the body as in a swoon, or whether kept in the custody and hands of an angel not far from the body, waiting his pleasure, either to restore it to the body, or to return it to its proper place of bliss or misery, the scripture has not told us whether; and it would be too great curiosity to inquire, and greater presumption to determine.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

46 But some of them went their ways to the pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

47 ¶ Then gathered the chief priests and the pharisees a council, and said, What do we: for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation.

Observe here, 1. The different effects which this miracle had upon these Jews who were present at the raising of Lazarus; some of them believed on Christ; but others, persisting in their unbelief, went to the pharisees and informed against him. Notwithstanding all the evidence which our Saviour gave of his being the Messias, by the miracles which

he wrought, yet many rejected him, and refused to believe in him, to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation. Observe, 2. How greatly disturbed the pharisees were upon the account of our Saviour's miracles: knowing how proper an argument they were to convince men, they concluded, that if Christ were suffered to go on and work miracles, he would draw all men after him. Learn hence, That Jesus proved himself to be the true Messiah by the miracles which he wrought, his enemies themselves being judges. For we find here, the worst of our Saviour's enemies were afraid of his miracles, that by them he would draw all men after him; *If we let him alone, all men will believe on him.* Observe, 3. What was the ground of the pharisees' fear, if they let Christ go on to work miracles, that he would have so many followers as would alarm the Romans, and awaken their jealousy, and cause them to come upon them with an army, to deprive them of the little liberty they indulged them, and take away their place and nation: *their place*; that is, their place of worship, the temple: *and their nation*; that is, bring the whole body of the Jewish nation to utter destruction. Learn hence, How vain the enemies and opposers of Christ and his kingdom do endeavour to color their quarrel with some specious pretences, that they may hide the odiousness of their practices from the eye of the world, and may not be openly seen to fight against God. Thus the pharisees here persecute our Saviour, not as the Messiah (though the miracles he wrought were a sufficient evidence that he was such) but as one who would bring ruin upon their nation. "If we let him alone, the Romans will come, and take away both our place and nation."

49 And one of them, *named Caiaphas*, being the highpriest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all.

50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being highpriest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation:

52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The foregoing verses acquainted us with the apprehension which the chief priests had of the necessity of taking away the life of our blessed Saviour; "Lest the Romans should take away both their place and nation." Now here in these verses Caiaphas, the highpriest, delivers his opinion for the preventing of this danger; he tells the rest, that they ought not to boggle at the matter, but come to a positive and peremptory resolution to provide for the public safety, right or wrong; and that it is a great folly to prefer one man's life, though ever so innocent, before a nation's welfare; a most wicked and devilish speech! as a judge he regarded not what was lawful, but as a wicked politician he consulted what was expedient; he declares, that one man, though ever so good and holy, though ever so just and innocent, had better die than a whole nation suffer; as where it is in any case unlawful to do evil that good may come. Learn

hence, That although it be the duty of all persons to pray for, and endeavour after, the public welfare of a church and nation, whereof they are members: yet it is altogether unlawful to promote the greatest national good, by wicked and unlawful means. Observe farther, How God, overruled the tongue of Caiaphas beyond his own intention, prophetically to foretel that great good which, by our Saviour's death, should redound to the world, and that the fruit and benefit of his death should not only extend to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also: and that he should gather in one body, or church, all that truly believe in him, though far and wide dispersed upon the face of the earth. Hence learn, 1. That the spirit of prophecy did fall sometimes upon very bad men, and God has been pleased to reveal some part of his mind to the worst of men. Thus Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar had in their dreams a revelation from God, what things he intended to do. Learn, 2. That it is consistent with the holiness of God, sometimes to make use of the tongues of the worst of men, to publish and declare his will. Caiaphas here, though a vile and wicked man, was influenced by God to prophecy and speak as an oracle. Almighty God may, when he pleases, employ wicked men this way without any prejudice to his holiness. "This Caiaphas spake not of himself, but being highpriest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."

54 Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

55 ¶ And the Jew's passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem, before the passover, to purify themselves.

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

57 Now both the chief priests and the pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show *it*, that they might take him.

Observe here, 1. How baneful and destructive evil counsel is, especially out of the mouths of leading men, and how soon embraced and followed. Caiaphas no sooner propounds the putting of Christ to death, but from that day forward they lie in wait to take him. The highpriests had satisfied their consciences, and now they make all possible speed to put their malicious designs and purposes in execution. Observe, 2. The prudential care and means which our Lord used for his own preservation: to avoid their fury, he withdraws himself privately into a place called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. Learn, As Christ himself fled, so is it lawful for his servants to flee, when their

life is conspired against by their bloody enemies, and the persecution is personal. Observe, 3. When the time was come that he was to expose himself, when the time of the passover drew near, in which he, being the true Paschal Lamb, was to be slain, to put an end to that type, he withdraws no more, but surrenders himself to the rage and fury of his enemies, and dies a shameful death for shameless sinners, as the next chapter more at large informs us.

CHAPTER XII.

THEN Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, Where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the prudential care of Christ in withdrawing from the fury of his enemies in and about Jerusalem, who were consulting his destruction: his time not being fully come, he gets out of the way of his persecutors: but now the passover being at hand, which was the time that this Lamb of God was to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, our Lord comes forth, first to Bethany, and then to Jerusalem, not fearing the teeth of his enemies, but with a fixed resolution to encounter death and danger for the salvation of his people. His example teacheth us, That although we are bound by all lawful means and prudential methods to prevent ourselves from the unjust violence of our persecutors, yet when God's time for our sufferings is come, and we evidently see that it is his will that we suffer, for his sake, we ought to set our faces very cheerfully towards it, and resign up ourselves to the wisdom and will of God. Thus did Christ here, chap. xi. 54. we find he withdrew from suffering, his hour not being then come: but now when the passover was nigh at hand, which was the time when he was to suffer, he sets his face towards Jerusalem, and withdraws no more.

2 There they made him a supper, and Martha served: But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment, of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor: but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7 Thensaid Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

In these verses, an account is given of our Saviour's entertainment at Bethany after he had raised Lazarus. A supper is made for him, at which Martha served, and Lazarus sat with him, but Mary anoints Christ with precious ointment. Where note, 1. The action which this holy woman performed; she pours a box of precious ointment upon our Saviour's head, as he sat at meat, according to the custom of the eastern countries at their feasts. I do not find that any of the apostles were at thus much charge and cost to put honor upon our Saviour as this poor woman was. From whence learn, 1. That where strong love prevails in the heart, nothing is adjudged too dear for Christ, neither will it suffer itself to be out-shined by any examples. The weakest woman that strongly loves her Saviour will vie with the greatest apostle, and piously strive to express the fervour of her affection towards him. Observe, 2. How this action was resented and reflected upon by murmuring Judas, who valued this ointment at three hundred pence, and grudged the bestowing of it upon Christ. He accused this holy woman of needless prodigality. Lord! how doth a covetous heart think every thing too good for thee? He that sees a pious action performed, and seeks to lessen or undervalue it, shows himself possessed with a spirit of envy. Judas' invidious spirit makes him censure an action, which Christ highly approved. Hence learn, That men, who know not our hearts, may, through ignorance or prejudice, censure and condemn those actions which God doth commend, and will graciously reward. Happy was it for this poor woman, that she had a more righteous judge to pass sentence upon her actions than wicked Judas. Observe, 3. How readily our holy Lord vindicates this poor woman: she says nothing for herself, nor needs she, having such an advocate who gives the reason for her action: *she did it for my burial*. As kings and great persons were wont in those eastern countries, at their funerals, to be embalmed with odours and sweet perfumes, so, saith our Saviour, this woman, to declare her faith in me, as her King and Lord, doth with this box of ointment, as it were beforehand, embalm my body for its burial. True faith will put honor upon a crucified as well as a glorified Saviour. This holy woman accounts Christ worthy of all honor in his death, believing it would be a sweet smelling sacrifice unto God, and savour of life unto his people.

9 Much people of the Jews, therefore, knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Observe here, It was not zeal, but curiosity, which brought these persons at this time to Christ; they had an itching desire to see Lazarus, to inquire after the truth of his death, and possibly after the state of the dead, and the condition that separated souls are in after death. Thus the miracles of

Christ drew many followers of his person, who were never converted by his doctrine. It was the sin of many, when Christ was here, upon earth, that they flocked after him, rather out of curiosity than out of conscience, and chose rather to gaze upon his works, than to fall in love with the worker. The multitude here came to Bethany, not for "Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also."

10 ¶ But the chief priests consulted, that they might put Lazarus also to death;

11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The unreasonableness of that rage and madness, which was found in the chief priests against Lazarus; "They consulted together how they might put Lazarus to death." But supposing that Christ had spoken blasphemy, in making himself equal with God, supposing that he had broken the sabbath, by curing the man that was born blind, on that day; yet what had Lazarus done, that he must be put to death? But from hence we learn, That such as have received special mercy and favor from Christ, or are made the instruments of his glory, must expect to be made the mark and the butt of malicious enemies. Christ had highly honored Lazarus, by raising him from the grave: and here there is a resolution against his life, whom Christ had thus highly honored: "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death also." Observe, 2. The cause why the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death; namely, "Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus." That is, many of the Jews seeing the miracle of Christ's raising Lazarus from the grave, were drawn thereby to believe in Jesus Christ; and this so enraged the chief priests against Lazarus, that they sought to put him to death. Learn hence, That nothing so engages the enemies of Christ, as the enlargement of his kingdom, and the sight of the number of believers daily increasing. This provokes the devil's wrath, and his servants' rage.

12 ¶ On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord.

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Sion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these

things were written of them, and *that* they had done these things unto them.

Here we have recorded the carriage of the multitude towards our Saviour, when he came near the city of Jerusalem: they take palms in their hands, and go forth to meet him, and cast their garments on the ground before him to ride upon: yea, they do not only disrobe their backs, but expend their breath in joyful acclamations, and loud hosannas, wishing all manner of prosperity to their meek but mighty King. In this prince-like, yet poor and despicable pomp, doth our Saviour enter the famous city of Jerusalem. Lord! how far wast thou from affecting worldly greatness and grandeur? Thou despisest that glory which our hearts fondly admire: yet because Christ was a King, he would be proclaimed such, and have his kingdom confessed, and applauded, and blessed: yet, that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world, he abandons all worldly magnificence.

17 The people, therefore, that were with him, when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

19 The pharisees, therefore, said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

20 ¶ And there were certain Greeks among them, that came up to worship at the feast:

21 The same came therefore to Philip, which *was* of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again, Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Observe here, 1. How the multitude at Jerusalem came forth to meet Christ, when he was making his public entry into the city, hearing the fame of his miracles; "For this cause the people also met him, for that they had heard that he had done this miracle." Observe, 2. How, amongst others who came forth to meet our Saviour, certain Greeks, or Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship in the outward court of the temple, apply themselves to Philip, that he would help them to a sight of Jesus. *Sir, we would see Jesus.* It is probable that this desire to see Christ, in these persons, proceeded from curiosity only. But if it did produce true faith in them, we may hence infer, that a spiritual sight of Christ, by the discerning eye of a believer's faith, is the most glorious, and consequently the most desirable sight in the world; and so must needs be, for it is a soul-ravishing, a soul-satisfying, a soul-transforming, and a soul-saving sight. This sight of Christ by faith will constrain a soul highly to ad-

mire, and greatly to commend him. It will incline a soul to choose him, and cleave unto him, and will set a soul a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him. Luke ii. 29. *Mine eyes have seen thy salvation; now let thy servant depart.* Observe lastly, How the envious pharisees were galled, and cut to the heart, to see such a multitude, both of Jews and Greeks, crowding out of the city to meet Jesus in his triumphant entrance into the city. *The pharisees said, behold the world is gone after him.* Learn hence, That in the day of Christ's greatest solemnity and triumph, there will not be wanting some persons of such a cankered disposition, that they will neither rejoice themselves, nor can they endure that others should. This was the case of the wicked pharisees here.

23 ¶ And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.

Observe here, 1. How our blessed Saviour entertains his followers with a discourse concerning his approaching death and suffering: *The hour is coming that the Son of man shall be glorified.* Observe, 2. How he arms his disciples against the scandal of the cross, by showing them the great benefit that would redound by his death unto all mankind; and this by a similitude taken from grain. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone.* That is, as corn unsown, lodged in the barn, or laid up in the chamber, never multiplies nor increases: but sow it in the field, and bury it in the earth, and it multiplies and increases, and brings forth a plentiful crop; so if Christ had not died, he had remained what he was, the eternal Son of God, but he had had no church in the world; whereas his death and sufferings made him fructify: that brought a plentiful increase of exaltation to himself, and salvation to his people. Observe, 3. How plainly our Saviour dealt with his followers; he did not deceive them with a vain hope and expectation of temporal happiness, but tells them plainly, that all that will be his disciples, must prepare for sufferings, and not think their temporal life too dear to lay down for him when he calls them to it, this being the surest way to secure unto themselves life everlasting. *“He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.”* Learn hence, That the surest way to attain eternal life is cheerfully to lay down our temporal life, when the glory of Christ, and the honor of religion, requires it at our hand.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

That is, “If any man assumes the title, and enters into the sacred engagement of being Christ's servant, let his conversation correspond with his profession, and let him be willing to follow me in the thorny path of affliction and sufferings from this assurance, That all his grievous sufferings shall end in eternal joys: “Where I am there shall my servant be, and him will my Father honor.” Learn hence, 1. That all that will be Christ's servants, must be his followers: they must obey his doctrine, and imitate his example. 2. That Christ's servants must not expect better usage at the hand of an unknown world, than he their master met with before them. 3. That such as serve Christ by following of him, shall at death see him as he is, and be with him where he is: *Where I am, there shall also my servant be.* 4. That God will crown the fidelity and constancy of Christ's servants, with the highest dignity and honor: “If any man serve me, him will my father honor.”

27 Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Whilst our Saviour was thus preaching of his own death and sufferings, a natural horror of his approaching passion (though such as was without sin) seizes upon him; his Father giving him a taste of that wrath which he was to undergo upon the cross for our sins. Hereupon he betakes himself to prayer, *Father, save me from this hour*; this was the harmless inclination of his sinless nature, which abhorred lying under wrath, and therefore prays against it; yet (as it were) recalling himself, he submits to what his office, as our surety, required of him, and prays again unto his Father to dispose of him as may most and best conduce to the purposes of his glory; *Father, glorify thy name.* Learn hence, 1. That mere trouble is no sin; Christ's soul was troubled; Christianity doth not make men senseless; grace introduceth no stoical stupidity. 2. That fear of death, especially when accompanied with apprehensions of the wrath of God, is most perplexing, and soul amazing. *My soul is troubled, and what shall I say?* 3. No extremity of sufferings ought to discourage us from laying claim to that relation, which God stands in to us as a Father; Our Saviour, in the midst of his distress, calls God Father: *Father, save me from this hour.* 4. In the extremity of our sufferings, we may be importunate, but must not be peremptory in our prayers; as Christ in his agony prayed more earnestly, so may we in ours, but always submissively; “*Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.*” 5. That our exemption from suffering may sometimes be inconsistent with the glory of God, *Father, save me from this hour; Father, glorify thy name.* Observe lastly, The Father's answer to the Son's prayers: “There came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” That is, as God the Father had been already glorified in his Son's life, doctrine, and miracles; so he would farther glorify himself in his death, resurrection, and ascension; as also by the mission of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the gospel for the conversion of the Gentiles to the ends of the earth. Learn hence, That the whole work of Christ from the lowest de-

gree of his humiliation, to the highest degree of his exaltation, was a glorifying of his Father; he glorified his Father by the doctrine which he taught, he glorified his Father by the miracles which he wrought, by the unspotted innocency of his life, and by his unparalleled suffering at his death; by his victorious resurrection from the grave, and by his triumphant ascension into heaven.

29 The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered; others said, An angel spake to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

33 (This he said, signifying what death he should die.)

Observe here, 1. The way of God in speaking to his people by a voice in thunder for the greater declaration of his glory and majesty. Thunderings and lightnings usually attended the voice of God, even in consolations, and when he spake comfortably to his own servants. Oh! how dreadful and terrible then must the voice of God be to his enemies, when he shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance to them! If there were such dread and terror, such thunderings and lightnings at the giving of the law: Lord! what will there be another day, when thou comest to punish the violation of that law! Observe, 2. The end why God the Father now spake with an audible voice to Christ his Son: it was for his consolation, and the people's confirmation. His soul being troubled, he stood in need, as Mediator, of comfort from his Father: and the people had here a farther and fuller confirmation of his being the promised and true Messiah, that so they might believe in him, *This voice came not because of me*: that is, not only or chiefly because of me, but to confirm your faith in the belief of this great truth, that I am the Son of God, by whom the Father hath glorified, and will further glorify his name. Observe, 3. Our Saviour declares a double effect and fruit of his death and passion. 1. The judgment of this world; "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." That is, my death will be the devil's overthrow; will bring down sin, and deliver the world from the tyranny and dominion of sin and Satan. Thence learn, 1. That Satan is the prince and ruler of all those who live in sin; not a prince by legal right, but by tyrannical usurpation. 2. That this usurper, Satan, will not quit his possession, unless he be cast out. 3. That Christ by his death has cast out Satan, dethroned him, and deprived him of his tyrannical usurpation. *Now is the prince of this world cast out*, that is, I will shortly by my death deliver the world from the slavery of sin, and dominion of Satan, and particularly from that idolatry, which the greatest part of the world

was then in slavery under. The second effect and fruit of Christ's death which is here declared, is his drawing all men unto him: *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me*. There is a twofold lifting up of Christ: the first ignominious, when he was hung upon the cross; the second glorious in the preaching of the gospel: by this he draws all men unto him; that is, by the preaching of the gospel, he calls and invites all persons to himself; he offers the benefits of his death to all, and gathereth a church to himself out of the Gentiles as well as the Jewish world. Learn, 1. That all persons are naturally unwilling to come to Christ, they must be drawn. 2. That Christ meritoriously by his death, and instrumentally by the preaching of the gospel, draws sinners unto himself. 3. That it is not a few, or small number, but a very great number, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, persons of all nations, sexes, ages, and conditions, whom Christ draweth: not that all are effectually drawn to Christ, so as savingly to believe in him: but, by the preaching of the gospel, they are called and invited to him, and the benefits of his death are offered to them. Thus Christ being lifted up upon his cross, and on the pole of his gospel, draws all men unto him; that is, doth what is sufficient to prevail with all men to believe on him, and to render those that do not so, everlastingly inexcusable.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?

35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Observe here, 1. The objection which the Jews make against our Saviour's being the true Messiah. Their argument runs thus: "It was foretold under the law, that Christ or the Messiah abideth for ever; but thou sayest, the Son of man must be lifted up and die. How then canst thou be the promised Messiah?" The answer is, "In his state of humiliation unto death, he was lifted up; but, in his state of exaltation, he abideth for ever." Learn hence, that Christ's lifting up by death, and his abiding for ever, do very well consist together; for both are true of him, the one in his state of humiliation, the other in his state of exaltation. Observe 2. Our Saviour returns no answer to their cavilling objection, nor doth he undertake to demonstrate how his sufferings and his abiding for ever are consistent: but gives them intimations that he was the light of the world, and advises them, whilst they had

the light with them, to prize it highly, and improve it faithfully. "Yet a little while is the light with you, walk whilst ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Note here, 1. A choice and singular privilege enjoyed; *the light is with you*, a personal light, Christ; a doctrinal light, the gospel; both these brought with them a light of knowledge, answering our darkness of ignorance; a light of grace and holiness, answering our darkness of sin, which we had brought upon ourselves; and a light of joy and comfort, answering the darkness of misery and horror, which we lay under by reason of our guilt. Note, 2. The time of enjoying this privilege limited: *yet a little while is the light with you*. The time of a people's enjoying the light and liberty of the gospel, is a limited time, it is a short time. Note, 3. A duty enjoined by Christ answerable to the privilege enjoyed by us; *Walk whilst ye have the light*. An uniform and constant course of holy walking, according to the rule of the gospel, is the indispensable duty and obligation of all those that enjoy the light and liberty of the gospel; namely, to walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel, answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to the glorious hope and expectation which the gospel raises us unto. Note, 4. A danger threatened to the neglecters of this duty; *lest darkness come upon you*; namely a darkness of ignorance and judicial blindness, a darkness of error and seduction, a darkness of horror and despair, and the fatal and final darkness of death and hell; for all contempters of gospel-light, there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, where sin and torment run parallel; their torment makes them sin, and their sin feeds their torment.

37 ¶ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts: that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

The place which our Evangelist alludes to, is Isa. vi. ver. 3. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." From whence a clear argument for Christ's divinity may be thus drawn. He whom Isaiah saw environed with seraphims, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; for such acclamations belong

to none but the great Jehovah, God blessed for evermore. But, says St. John, it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw in his vision, it was Christ whom he called, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts*; therefore Christ is undoubtedly God, blessed for evermore. For the evangelist was not speaking of the Father, but the Son, and cites these words out of Isaiah; so that it was the glory of the second person that Isaiah saw and spake of, if the words of the Evangelist be of any credit. Besides, the angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but him that is God. Observe here, 1. The astonishing infidelity and unbelief of the Jews who heard our Saviour's doctrine, and were eye witnesses of his miracles; *though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him*. Let not the faithful ministers of Christ be discouraged, and over much dejected, at their want of success in dispensing the gospel, when they observe and consider the small success of our Saviour's own ministry in the hearts and lives of his hearers: yea though his ministry was accompanied with miracles, and though his miracles were many in number, mighty in nature, clear and obvious to sense, being wrought before their eyes, yet his ministry succeeded not, and his miracles prevailed not: Lord, what little success has the offer of Christ in the gospel met with, from the first original tender to this day! Obstinate infidelity, and cursed hypocrisy, draw more souls to hell than all the devils in hell. Observe, 2. How the present infidelity of these unbelieving Jews was long before foretold, and prophesied of, by the prophet Esaias, chap. liii. 1. *Lord, who hath believed our report?* That is our preaching, Where note, That Isaiah's complaint of the small success of his preaching, was a prophecy and prediction of the like success that Christ and his ministers should have under the gospel. Learn hence, That the gospel in all ages has met with more that have rejected it by unbelief, than have savingly entertained it by faith. Isaiah complained before Christ, and his apostles and ministers in every age since, that few have believed their reports. Observe, 3. That though the present unbelief of the obstinate Jews was long foretold by the prophets of God, yet the prophets' prediction was no cause of their unbelief, or that which laid them under an impossibility of believing: but the fault lay in their own obstinate will, with respect to which, by the just judgment of God, they were blinded and hardened, for their contempt of Christ the promised Messiah. When men close their eyes wilfully, and say, they will not see, it is just with God to close their eyes judicially, and say, they shall not see. *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, &c.* Learn hence, That the infidelity of the people is to be resolved into the perverseness of their own wills, and the evil disposition of their own hearts, not to any judicial blindness or obduration wrought by God upon them, antecedent to their own sin: God's act of hardening was consequential upon their sinning.

42 ¶ Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him: but because of the pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Observe, 1. That though the generality of the Jews were thus hardened under Christ's ministry and miracles, yet there were some, and those of the chief rank, even rulers, that did believe on him; that is, they were under strong and powerful convictions, that he was the true and expected Messias. Even in times and places where obstinacy and infidelity most prevail, the ministry of the word shall not be altogether without its fruit; Christ here had some, and those of the rulers too, who believed on him, when others under the same word were hardened; *Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him.* Observe, 2. That though many of the chief rulers had a secret belief, or an inward persuasion, that Christ was the promised and expected Messias, yet it was not sufficient to make them openly own and confess, and avow him to be such, for fear of excommunication from the pharisees; *They did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* Slavish fear of men, and suffering by them, has hindered many from believing on Christ, and kept more from an open owning and confessing of him. *Because of the pharisees they did not confess him.* Observe, 3. As the fear of suffering on the one hand, so the love of reputation on the other, kept them from owning and confessing Jesus to be the Christ; *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;* that is, they valued honor and applause from men, more than honoring and approving them. There is no greater snare to draw persons from their duty, than inordinate love and affection to their own credit and reputation. Oh! how often is the applause and commendation of men preferred before the testimony and approbation of God! Here was their snare; *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

44 ¶ Jesus cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the World, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment

is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

In these verses we have our Saviour's farewell sermon to the Jews, concerning his person, office and doctrine; as touching his person, he acquaints them with his divine nature, his oneness and equality with the Father; and accordingly challenges not only the assent, but also the obedience and adoration of their faith. "Jesus cried, saying, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." That is, he that believeth on me, doth not believe on a mere man, but on him that is truly and really God, as well as man; and therefore he being true God, one in essence, and equal in power and glory, with the Father, their believing in him was believing in God the Father that sent him. Observe, 1. The argument which our Saviour uses, to prove that believers in Christ do believe in the Father: *He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.* That is, "He that seeth me spiritually, and by faith, seeth my Father to be one with me in essence, though not in person; and he that seeth me in my miraculous works which I do, seeth him also that sent me, by whom I do these mighty works. Learn hence, That we do not see Christ aright with the eye of our faith, unless we see him, and believe him to be truly and really God; one with, and equal to the Father; *He that seeth me, seeth in me him that sent me.* Learn, 2. That the Father is not to be seen but in the Son; nor can believers know what the Father is, but by seeing what the Son is; and what they see the Son to be, that the Father is in him; *For he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.* Observe, 3. The dreadful judgment which Christ denounces against all unbelievers; and such as reject him, by rejecting of his gospel; for though, at Christ's first coming, his errand was not to judge the world, but to save the world, that is, to offer the tenders of salvation to lost sinners; yet at his second coming he would judge them at the last day: when the word preached to them, and rejected by them, will give a judicial testimony against them. Learn hence, 1. That Christ and his doctrine are inseparable: to receive his doctrine, is to receive him; and to reject his doctrine is to reject him. 2. That such rejecters of Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, shall not escape the judgment of Christ at the great day. 3. That at the great day, were there no other witness against the rejecters of Christ and his gospel, but the word preached, yet that alone will be sufficient both for their conviction and condemnation. *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* The word is now the rule of living, and it shall be hereafter the rule of judging: now it is the rule by which we must live to Christ, then it shall be the rule by which we shall be judged of Christ. Observe, 4. The argument and reason which our Saviour produces, to prove that the word of God, and the doctrine of the gospel, slighted and rejected, should condemn sinners at the great day; namely, from the divine authority of his doctrine; for albeit his doctrine was his own, as he was true God, yet as man and as Mediator, it was not his own, but the Father's which sent him; so that his word and doctrine being divine, and the Father's as well as his (for he did not speak of himself, that is, of himself and alone without the Father) it is sufficient to judge and condemn all the rejecters and despisers of it.

Learn thence, 1. That though the doctrine of the gospel be Christ's own, as he is truly and really God, yet it was not his own as mere man, exclusive of the Father, who is one God with him, and who gave him a commission and instruction, as Mediator, to preach and publish the glad tidings of the gospel: For, says he, *I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me gave me a commandment.* 2. That the doctrine which Christ delivered by command from the Father, doth point out the way to eternal life, and will bring lost sinners thereunto, if they sincerely believe it and obey it: *I know that his commandment is life everlasting.* 3. That therefore sinners who reject the doctrine of Christ contained in the gospel do highly dishonor, offend and affront both the Father and Son, and bring upon themselves a just and righteous judgment; and expose themselves to unutterable and inevitable condemnation. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

CHAPTER XIII.

NOW, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 And supper being ended, (the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.)

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

In this chapter is recorded the history of our Saviour's washing his disciples' feet, an action full of humility and condescension, and propounded to his followers' imitation. The circumstance of the time is here noted, when this act was done; namely, at the feast of the passover, when the time of our Saviour's departure is at hand; and having constantly and immutably loved his own, he expresses the permanency of his love towards them to the end, by this action of his, in washing their feet. Here note, How Christ chose the time of the Jewish passover to suffer in, that he might prove himself to be the substance of that type; that he was the true paschal Lamb, who by the sacrifice of his death, did atone divine pleasure, and taketh away the sins of the world. Observe, 2. The means which the wisdom of God permitted, to bring the Lord of life to an ignominious death: and that was the treason and perfidiousness of one of his own disciples, *Judas Iscariot*.—Where observe, 1. The person betraying, *Judas*; *Judas* a professor and a preacher; *Judas* an apostle, being one of the twelve, whom Christ had chosen out of all the world to be his dearest friends. Can we wonder to find friends unfriendly or unfaithful towards us, when our Saviour had a traitor in his own house? Observe, 2. The heinousness of *Judas*' sin in betraying Christ; he betrayed Christ Jesus a man, Christ Jesus his Master, Christ Jesus his Maker! the first was murder, the second treason. Lord! it is no strange and uncommon thing for the vilest of sinners, and most horrid impieties, to be acted by per-

sons making the most eminent profession of thy holy religion. Observe, 3. What hand the devil had in the sufferings of our Saviour: he put it into *Judas*' heart to betray Christ, that is, he did suggest and inject such thoughts into his mind, which *Judas* instantly closed with. The devil, being a spirit, has a quick access to our spirits, and can instil his suggestions into them. As Christ did breathe upon his disciples, and they received the Holy Ghost, and were filled with the Spirit; so satan breathes filthy suggestions into the spirits of men, and fills them with all manner of wickedness, even with the spirit of hell itself. "The devil put it into the heart of *Judas* to betray him."

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Observe here, The admirable humility and great self-denial of our Lord and Master: he arises from supper, whilst his disciples sat still, and he that came in the form of a servant, performs all the offices of the meanest servant to his disciples; he lays aside his supper garments, he girds himself with a towel, pours water into a bason, and begins to wash and wipe their feet, which lay out behind them, as they leaned at the table, all which was a most servile employment. Learn hence, That the wonderful humility of Christ inclined him to do the meanest office of service unto his people, even to become a servant to them in the day of his humiliation; and though now glorified in heaven, he retains the same compassionate heart towards them as when here on earth; hereby instructing us, that it is our duty in whatever station Providence shall place us in the world, to stoop to the lowest offices of love and service towards our fellow-brethren.—Lord! thou hast left the most amazing instance of self-denial for our encouragement and example. Quest. But how far doth this example bind us? Ans. It does not oblige to the individual act, but to follow the reason of the example; that is, after Christ's example, we ought to be ready to perform the lowest and meanest offices of love and service to one another.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered, and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet: Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.

10 Jesus saith unto him, He that is

washed needeth not, save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him : therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

Observe here, 1. How Simon Peter refuses to admit of such a condescending act from Christ, his Lord and Master, as the washing of his feet. *Lord ! thou shalt never wash my feet :* it is a sinful humility to refuse the offered favors of Christ, because we are unworthy to receive them. Though we are not worthy of Christ and of his love ; yet Christ is worthy of us and of our faith. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's reply to Peter's refusal. 1. He tells him, That there was more in it than the bare act of washing did at first sight import, and that he should know hereafter what he did not understand now. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Learn hence, 1. That the servants of God themselves are oftentimes much to seek, and cannot apprehend and understand at present the actings and dealings of God with them : they understand not either the intent or the even of God's dispensations. 2. That although God's dealings with his children and people are for a while in the dark, and are not presently made known ; yet there will come a time for the clearing and evidencing of them, when they shall understand that all his dispensations were in mercy to them. The second part of our Saviour's reply to St. Peter follows, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me ;* as if Christ had said, "Peter, this external act of mine in washing thy feet, doth signify something farther, and imports my washing of thy soul from the guilt and defilement of sin, without which thou canst neither have interest in me, nor communion with me." Learn hence, 1. That so universal is the pollution of sin, that every soul stands need of washing. 2. That Christ washeth all that have a part and interest in him, both from the guilt and pollution of all their sins. Observe, 3. That St. Peter now understanding better what was meant by this outward washing : namely, that it did signify and represent the cleansing of the soul from the defilement of sin ; he is so far from refusing that Christ should wash his feet, that he offers his hands and head, and all to be washed by him ; *Lord, not my feet only, &c.* Learn hence, That so thoroughly sensible are the saints of the filthiness and pollution of sin ; that they desire nothing more than an inward, thorough, and prevailing purification of their whole man, by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Observe, 4. Our Saviour's reply to St. Peter's last request, *He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet ;* plainly alluding to the custom of those countries, where going abroad barefoot, or with thin sandals, covering only a small part of their feet, they had frequent occasion to wash their feet, but need not to wash their whole bodies ; in like manner, the saints and servants of God who are already washed and cleansed by the blood of Christ from the guilt of their sins, and have a real work of renovation and sanctification begun in them by the Spirit of Christ, they ought to be daily purging and purifying their affections and actions, and laboring daily after further measures and degrees of sanctification. Learn hence, 1. That the holiest, the wisest, and the best of saints, whilst here in a world of temptation, do stand in need of a daily washing by repentance, and according to their renewed and repeated acts of

sin. 2. That all justified persons are in God's account clean persons ; *Ye are clean, but not all ;* that is you are justified and pardoned, sanctified and cleansed, all of you, excepting Judas, whose heart was known to Christ, though his hypocrisy was hid from the disciples.

12 So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you :

13 Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well, for so I am,

14 If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily. I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

In these words our Saviour declares to his disciples his intention and design in washing of their feet ; namely, to teach them, by his example, the duty of humility : that as he had performed that act of abasement towards them, so should they be ready to perform all offices of love and humble condescension one towards another : "Behold, I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." Learn thence, That humility and mutual condescension amongst the members and ministers of Jesus Christ, is a most necessary grace and duty, which the Son of God not only taught by his doctrine, but recommended and enforced by his example. Observe farther, The argument which Christ makes use of to press the imitation of his example upon them ; and that is drawn from the titles given to him by his disciples ; *Ye call me Master, and Lord, and so I am.* Now servants ought to imitate their masters, and subjects to obey their Lord and King. Christ is a Master to teach and direct : a Lord to govern and protect. As he is a Master, we are to learn in his school : as he is a Lord, we are to serve in his house : he must be submitted to as a Prince, as well as relied upon as a Saviour. It is in vain to expect salvation from him, if we do not yield subjection to him. Another argument which our Lord makes use of to press his disciples to imitate his example, is drawn from the dignity and superiority over them : "The servant is not greater than his Lord." As if Christ had said, "Though you, my disciples, are to have a very high and honorable station in the gospel-church, yet let not this swell you with pride, but be you mutually condescending to each other, remembering you are yet but servants to myself, and ought to be so to one another, and the servant is no greater than his Lord." Learn hence, 1. That whatever dignity Christ confers upon his servants and officers, yet he is over them all, superior to them, and above them. 2. That the consideration of Christ's dignity, and his ministers' meanness, ought to keep their minds humble and lowly, and far from affecting superiority

over their brethren; "The servant is not greater than his Lord; nor he that is sent, greater than he that sent me."

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Our Lord here intimates unto us these two things: 1. The necessity of knowledge, in order unto practice. 2. The necessity of practice, in order unto happiness. A man may know the will of God indeed, and not do it; but he can never do the will of God (acceptably) and not know it. The knowledge of God's will and our duty, is necessary to the practice of it. The knowledge of our duty, and the practice of it, may be and too often are separated; but the practice of religion, and doing what we know to be our duty, is the only way to true happiness. Learn thence, 1. That Christ doth not approve of a blind obedience in his people, but requires that their practice and obedience be founded upon understanding and knowledge. 2. That the first care of those that will be Christ's disciples and followers must be this, with all seriousness to apply themselves to the knowledge of their Master's will. 3. That next to the knowledge of our duty, our first and chief care must be, to practise every thing that we understand and know to be our duty. That a right knowledge and practice of our duty, will certainly make us happy: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

18 ¶ I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

If the choosing spoken of here be understood of eternal election, a choosing to everlasting life, then it affords a strong argument to prove Christ to be God: thus, he that is the author of eternal election, is God; but Christ is such; "I know whom I have chosen." Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him; consider him as Mediator, and so we are chosen in him." If the choosing here be meant of choosing to the work of the apostleship, then our Saviour tells his disciples, that it need not seem strange to them, that he chose one to be an apostle, whom he knew would prove a traitor; for hereby that scripture prophecy, Psalm xlii. 9. would be fulfilled: "He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me;" which though it was literally spoken of Achitophel's treachery against David, yet was it prophetically spoken of Judas's treason against Christ; and the expression of "lifting up the heel," is metaphorical, taken from a fed beast, that kicks against his master. Learn hence, That Christ did, as his followers do, daily suffer, not only from open enemies, but from bosom and familiar friends. Lord! how many are there in the world, who by profession lift up their hand unto thee, who yet by reason of rebellion lift up their heel against thee!

19 Now, I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*.

Here another argument occurs, to prove the divinity of our blessed Saviour, from his foreknowledge of Judas's trea-

son! The person who, the time when, and the place where were all known to Christ; "I tell you before it come to pass." The argument lies thus: he that foresaw the future actions of men, and infallibly foreknew the future events and issues of things, is certainly God; but Christ did this, therefore he is really God. And he tells us here, That for this very reason he foretold now the treason of Judas: "Now I tell you before, that when it comes to pass, ye may believe that I am he." What he doth He mean? What He could foretell so many things to come, which did not depend upon necessary, but contingent causes only! This He was not a mere man surely, for he knows not what will be done on the morrow; but must be real God, because he knew all things, not by revelation, as the prophets knew things to come, but by immediate inspection, and simple intuition: so that we may say with Peter, "Lord thou knowest all things;" because thou "knowest all things," thou art God.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

Let his apostles should think that for the treachery of one of them, they should all become odious and abominable to the world, our Saviour encourages and gives them an assurance, that there should be those that should receive them, and that he would take it as kindly as if they received himself: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." Learn hence, That it is a sweet encouragement to the ministers of Christ unto a faithful discharge of their duty, that Christ and the Father account that the respect paid to the ministers of the gospel, is paid to themselves: and on the contrary, that all the contempt cast upon them, reflects upon themselves: He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."

21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me.

22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

Oh what an astonishing word was this, "One shall betray men!" one of "my disciples" shall betray me! yea, "One of you," my disciples and apostles, shall do it! well might they look one upon another with sorrow and amazement, to hear that their master should die, that he should die by treason, and that the traitor should be one of themselves; yet do they not censure one another, but suspect themselves, saying, Master is it I? not, Master, is it Judas? Learn hence, 1. That it is possible for secret wickedness to lurk, yea, for the greatest villany to lodge in the hearts of professors, in whose conversation appeareth nothing that may give a just suspicion to others. Learn, 2. That it is both the duty and property of the disciples of Christ, to have so much candour and brotherly love, as not rashly to censure, and judge one another, but to hope the best of others, and to fear the worst of themselves.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spoke.

25 He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

26 Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon.

27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest do quickly.

28 Now, no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

29 For some of *them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast: or, That he should give something to the poor.

30 He then, having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.

Observe here, 1. The character given of St. John the beloved disciple: he leaned on Christ's bosom: that is, he had most intimate converse with Christ, one whom Christ treated with greater freedom and familiarity than the rest, and one that knew more of his heart than most of his disciples. We commonly call a very near friend, a bosom friend. Learn, That although Christ had an endeared love for all his disciples and followers, yet there were degrees in Christ's own love, and he had a familiarity with some disciples beyond others, whilst he was here upon earth, even as now in heaven, though his heart be towards all his children here on earth, yet he is pleased to let out more kind manifestations of himself, and more sensible evidences of his love towards some than towards others. John was the disciple that lay in Jesus' bosom. Observe, 2. The way which our Saviour took to discover Judas to the rest of his disciples, not by naming him, but by giving him a sop; partly because he would not give Judas any provocation by mentioning his name, and partly because the sign of eating the sop was most agreeable to the prophetic prediction, Ps. xli. 9. "My own familiar friend, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Observe, 3. The time when Judas received the sop, and the consequence that followed upon his receiving of it; it was at that time when he had, with an unbelieving heart, and an unthankful spirit, been eating the passover, which was a type of Christ. Now "Satan enters into him;" that is, takes fuller possession of him, and he gives himself up more freely and fully to the devil's conduct

and suggestion. Satan gets possession of wicked men gradually and by degrees; not all at once; the only way to be safe is to resist the beginnings of sin; for, when Satan once gets footing, it is hard to prevent a more full possession. Observe, 4. The place where Judas now was, namely, at Bethany, some miles from Jerusalem, and it was now night; yet so intent was he upon the devil's work, that away he trudges to Jerusalem, and at that time of night repairs to the high priests, and sells his Saviour into their hands. O what a warmth and zeal was here in the devil's cause! Men given over by God, and possessed by Satan, are so restless and unwearied in sin, that neither by day nor by night can they cease from the contrivance and execution of it.

31 ¶ Therefore when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

Observe here, 1. Our blessed Lord calls his death his glory; "Now is the Son of Man glorified;" that is, now is the time at hand when I am to die, and shall by my death finish the work of man's redemption, and thereby eminently glorify God. God the Father was eminently glorified in the obedience and sufferings of his dear and only Son. It is true that the sufferings of Christ were ignominious in themselves, yet were they the way to his own glory, and his Father's also; for by them he redeemed a lost world, trampled upon Satan, triumphed over sin; and the Father was exceedingly glorified by the Son's giving obedience to his will, and so cheerfully suffering: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you, Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

Observe here, An endearing appellation, a sweet title given by Christ to his disciples, "Little children;" intimating that tender affection which he bears unto them, though now upon the point of departing from them. Learn thence, That whatever Christ's dealings are or may be with his people, in respect of his removing or withdrawing from them, yet he still retains the relation of a Father to them, and will in his absence from them, exercise such a care over them, as parents have of their young and tender children; so much doth the title of little children imply and import. Observe farther, The plain intimation which our Saviour gives to his disciples of his death being very nigh, (for it was the very next day) he tells them he is going to heaven; "and whither he went, they could not come;" that is, not presently; they should follow him, their forerunner, afterwards; but at present he had a great deal of work for them to do, though his own work was done; and till they had finished their work, "whither he went they could not come." Learn hence, That though it be rest which the saints may lawfully desire, an everlasting rest with Christ in glory, yet must they not refuse to labor, whilst their Lord will have

it so. Till their work be done, whither Christ is gone they cannot come: "Ye shall seek me; but whither I go," at present "ye cannot come."

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Our Saviour having mentioned his departure from his disciples in the former verse; "I go away, and, whither I go ye cannot come:" in this and the following verses, he gives them a strict charge, that in his absence they should love one another. This he calls a "new commandment:" not that it was new in regard of institution, but of restitution: not new in regard of the substance of it, for it was a branch of the law of nature, and a known precept of the Jewish religion; but he calls it a new commandment, 1. Because purged from the cold corrupt glosses of the pharisees, who had limited this duty of love, and confined it to their own countrymen; whereas Christ enlarges the object, and obliges his disciples to love all mankind, even their very enemies. 2. Because this duty of love was so greatly advanced and heightened by our Saviour, as to the measures and degrees of it, even to the laying down of our lives one for another. 3. It is called a new commandment, because urged from a new motive, and enforced by a new example, "As I have loved you," that ye also love one another. Never was this duty so effectually taught, so mightily encouraged, so much urged and insisted upon, by any teacher, as our Saviour; and never was there such an example given of it as his own. 4. It is a new commandment, because with the rest it was never to wax old; but to be always fresh in the memory and practice of Christ's disciples to the end of the world.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

To recommend the foregoing duty of loving one another, with the greater advantage, our Saviour tells us here, that it will be the best evidence of our relation to him as sincere disciples: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.* The disciples of John were known by the austerity of their lives, the disciples of the pharisees by their habit and separation from other men. Christ will have his disciples known by their profound affection to each other, which in the primitive times was so conspicuous, that the very heathens did cry out and say, See how the christians love one another! Here observe, 1. Our Saviour doth not say, By this men shall conjecture and guess that you belong to me, as being my disciples, but they shall certainly know it. 2. He doth not say, By this shall ye know yourselves to be my disciples, and one another to be so; but by this shall all others know it as well as yourselves. 3. He doth not say, By this shall all men know that ye look like my disciples, but that you are indeed what you pretend to be, namely, by your loving one another. 4. Christ doth not say, by this shall the world know that ye are my disciples; namely, by your assembling often together in my house of prayer, by your frequent fastings, by your reading the scriptures daily, by your hearing sermons weekly, by your receiving sacraments monthly; all these put together, will be no sufficient evidence of your discipleship, if you keep up a secret grudge in your hearts

one against another; but "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. Learn hence, That one of the best proofs and evidences we can have of our relation to Christ, as his sincere disciples, is a hearty love and good will one towards another.

36 ¶ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow until thou hast denied me thrice.

Here we find Peter reflecting upon what our Saviour had said just before, verse 33. "Whither I go, ye cannot come:" he is inquisitive to know of Christ whither he went. Our Lord tells him that for the present he could not follow him, but should hereafter; he was not yet strong enough to suffer for him, as he should and did afterwards. St. Peter, grieved at this, rashly resolves to follow him, though he should die for his sake. Christ advises him not to be over confident of his own strength and standing, for he should deny him thrice, within the time of cock crowing. Observe here, 1. How that fond conceit, which our Lord's disciples had of his temporal kingdom here in this world, did abide and continue with them to the very last; for when Christ spake of leaving them, by ascending into heaven, Peter understands him of a removal that was earthly, from one place to another, whereas Christ intended it of a removal from earth to heaven. The opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and that his kingdom should be of this world, was so deeply rooted in the minds of the Jews, that they stumble at it fatally; and Christ's own disciples had so drank in the notion, that they wonder to hear Christ say, that he is going from them, and that whither he goes they cannot come. Observe, 2. That Christ's disciples shall certainly follow their Master afterwards, and be for ever with the Lord; but they must wait their Lord's time, and finish their Lord's work; they must patiently wait for their change, and not peevishly wish for it; for, though they do not follow Christ presently to heaven they shall follow him afterwards. Observe, 3. The greatness of St. Peter's self confidence: *I will lay down my life for thy sake.* Good man! he resolved honestly, but too, too much in his own strength. Little, O little did he think what a fever he should be in the wind of temptation, if once God left him to the power and prevalency of his own fears! The holiest of men knows not his own strength, till temptation brings him to the trial. Observe lastly, How detestable St. Peter's presumption and self-confidence was to Christ, and how fatal and pernicious to himself; *Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?* As if Christ had said, "Peter, thou savest more than thou canst do; thine own strength will fail thee, and thy self confidence deceive thee; I know thy heart better than thou dost thyself; and I foresee, that

"before the cock crows thou shalt deny me thrice." Thence learn, that none are so near falling, as those that are most confident of their own standing.

CHAPTER XIV.

LET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it *were* not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you (I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am *there* ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Our blessed Saviour in the foregoing chapter, having acquainted his disciples with his approaching death, by the treachery of Judas, their hearts were thereupon overwhelmed with grief and trouble. Accordingly in this chapter, by sundry arguments, he comforts his disciples against the perplexity of their fears and sorrows. Observe, 1. How Christ addresses himself to his disciples in a very endearing and affectionate manner; "Let not your hearts be troubled." Whence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's children and servants, whilst here in an imperfect state, are subject to desponding, and disquieting, and distrusting fears. 2. That no work is more delightful to our Saviour, than to comfort the troubled and perplexed spirits of his servants. Observe, 2. The remedy Christ prescribes for the calming their present fears, and for arming them against future troubles, and that is, Faith in the Father and in himself: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Hence learn, 1. That God is the supreme object of faith: his unchangeable love and faithfulness, with his infinite power in the accomplishing of his promises, is the security of believers. Learn, 2. That Christ, as Mediator between God and guilty creatures, is the immediate object of our faith. Learn, 3. That Christ's being the true and proper object of our faith is a proof of his being truly and really God. Christ doth here assert his own deity in the substance of the command, in making himself an object of faith in conjunction with God the Father: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Observe next, The arguments of consolation which Christ propounds for the support of his disciples, under the sorrow which they had conceived for his approaching departure. 1. He tells them, That heaven, whither he was now going, was his father's house, a place of happiness, not designed for himself alone, but for many more to enjoy perpetual rest and abode in, as in everlasting mansions: "In my Father's house are many mansions." Heaven is God's house, in which he will freely converse with his domestics, his children and servants, and they shall enjoy full glory there, as in a quiet and capacious habitation. A second ground of comfort is, that he assures them, he will come again and receive them to himself, that they may live together with him in the heavenly mansions. This promise Christ

makes good to his saints, partly at the day of their death, and perfectly at the day of judgment, when he shall make one errand for all, and take up all his children to himself, and make them completely happy, both in soul and body, with himself. Learn hence, That though Christ has removed his bodily presence from his friends on earth, yet his love to them is not ceased, nor will he rest satisfied till he and they meet again, eternally to solace themselves in each other's company: "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." A third argument for consolation is, that notwithstanding Christ was to leave them, yet they knew whither he went: namely, to heaven, and which was the way thither; "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." It contributes much to the comfort of believers, as to know God and heaven, so to know the way that leads thither, that so they may be armed against all the difficulties of that way.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Observe here, 1. How Thomas, and probably divers others of the apostles, notwithstanding all that Christ had said to the contrary, did still dream of a temporal kingdom, and supposed him to speak of some earthly palace which he was going to, and therefore he tells our Saviour, he knew not whither he was going; but Christ meaning not a temporal but a heavenly kingdom, tells them that if they intended to follow him, and be with him in heaven, he himself was the only way thither; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life:" that is, I am the true and living way to the Father; And; "no man cometh to the Father, but by me!" that is, no man can have any access to God by prayer, or any other act of religious worship here on earth, or any access to God in heaven, but by me, as Mediator. As if Christ had said, "I am the Author of the way that leadeth unto life, that Teacher of the truth which directs to it, and the Giver of that life which is to be obtained by walking in it: I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself;

but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that *I am* in the Father; and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Observe here, 1. What a gross conception the apostles had, and St. Philip in particular, of the divine nature and being, as if God the Father could be seen with mortal eyes. "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. It is not easy to determine what degrees of ignorance may consist with saving grace; doubtless, as the degrees of revelation and means of knowledge are more or less, so a person's ignorance is more or less excusable before God. Observe, 2. How meekly our Saviour reproves their ignorance, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" and then proceeds to instruct them in; and further acquaint them with the oneness of himself with the Father, and the personal union of the divine and human nature in himself. Learn hence, That the Father being invisible in his essence, to know or see him with mortal bodily eyes is impossible; but he was seen in his Son, who is the express image of the Father, being one in essence with him, and one in operation also:—"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto my Father.

Here Christ gives his disciples a promise of enduring them with power after his departure to work miracles, in some respects greater than what he wrought himself: not greater in regard of the manner, for he wrought by his own power, and they wrought all in his name, but greater in regard of the matter of them; particularly, their speaking with strange tongues, their giving the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands, their healing diseases by the very shadow of the bodies, but especially by their wonderful conversion of the Gentiles from idolatry to serve the living God. When St. Peter converted three thousand at one sermon, then Christ made good his promise, the disciple at that time appeared to be above his Master; Christ all this time was angling for a few fishes, and caught but an hundred and twenty, Acts i. 15. whilst Peter comes with his drag net, and catches three thousand at one cast; the reason might be because Christ was not properly to be the builder, but the foundation itself. He subjoins the reason of all this: "Because I go unto my Father; that is, to send down, and pour forth upon you my apostles, the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; which was the great cause of the apostles' miraculous operations. Hence learn, That it pleased the wisdom of Christ to do greater things by the hands of his weak servants here in the world, than he was pleased to do himself, who was God over all blessed for evermore.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

No. 27.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

In these words our Saviour produces another argument to quiet his disciples' hearts under their perplexity and trouble for the loss of his bodily presence; he assures them, that whatever comforts they enjoyed by his presence, they shall obtain by their prayers. Observe here, 1. The qualification requisite in prayer; we must pray in Christ's name, that is, for the sake of his merits and mediation, in obedience to God's command, and with an eye to his glory, and for things agreeable to his will, and for things which his wisdom sees good for us. To pray in Christ's name, is more than to name Christ in prayer. It implies three things; 1. To look up unto Christ as having purchased for us this privilege, that we may pray; for it is by the blood of Christ that we draw near to God, and that a throne of grace is open for us. 2. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the strength of Christ, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit of Christ. 3. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the virtue of the present mediation of Christ: believing that what we ask on earth, Christ obtains in heaven. To pray thus is no easy matter: yet unless we do pray thus, we do not pray at all. Observe, 2. The promise made to such prayers; "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do;" he saith not, that will my Father do; but that will I do, to testify his divine power and oneness with the Father. This evidently proves him to be God. Observe, 3. The repetition of the promise for the further confirmation of it: "If ye will ask any thing in my name, I will do it;" The promise is doubled for the confirmation of it, that so we might be free from all fears and doubts of being heard, when we put up our prayers to God, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, for things agreeable to his will. Learn hence, That although the children of God have sometimes many jealousies and fears arising in their minds concerning the answer of their prayers, yet they are altogether groundless; for it is most certain their desires shall be granted them, so far as the wisdom of God sees fit and convenient for them; and for that reason our Saviour redoubles the promise: "If ye will ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

15 ¶ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

In these words our Saviour implicitly reproves his disciples for their fond way of expressing their love to him, by doating upon his bodily presence, and sorrowing immoderately for his absence, and he expressly warns them to evidence their love to him by their obedience to his commands; "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Where observe, Christ requires an obedient love, and loving obedience.—Love without obedience is but dissimulation; obedience without love is but drudgery and slavery. Such a love as produces obedience, must be a dutiful love; a love of reverence and honor to him as a commander, and an operative and working love, a labor of love, as the apostle calls it: Not waiters, but workers, are the best servants in Christ's esteem. And such an obedience as is the product of love, will be a willing, easy, and cheerful obedience, a pleasing and an acceptable obedience, a constant and abiding obedience: all other motives without love are servile and base,

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and beget in us the drudgery of a slave, but not the duty of a son: He that fears God only, is afraid of smarting; but he that loves God is afraid of offending. Learn hence, That the best and surest evidence we can have of our love to the Lord Jesus Christ, is an humble, cheerful, universal, and persevering obedience to his commands: "Keep my commandments;" that is, endeavour without reserve; for though we cannot keep the commandments to a just satisfaction, yet we may perform them to a gracious acceptance. And the word *My*, my commandments, is a sweetening and alleviating word.—Moses' law, an unsupportable load, but Christ's law an easy burden. The law from Sinai, dreadful: the law from Zion, gracious; it pardons weakness, and accepts sincerity.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Christ comforteth his disciples here, with a promise of the mission of the Holy Spirit, to supply the want of his bodily presence. Where observe, 1. The procurer of this blessing, and that is Christ, by his prevailing prayer, and powerful intercession; "I will pray;" it runs in the future tense; and so it is a promise of Christ's continual intercession. As long as Christ is in heaven, a christian shall not want a supply of comfort and consolation here on earth. Observe, 2. The author and donor of the blessing, and that is, God himself, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give." The Father, that is my Father, your Father, and he that is the Father of comfort and consolation: "I will pray, and he will give." It is an expression of great assurance. Observe, 3. The blessing itself; the Holy Ghost, called here; "Another Comforter." Where note, 1. The divinity of the Holy Ghost; he that will supply the comforts of Christ's presence must be as Christ is, the God of all comfort. Note, 2. The person of the Holy Ghost: he is a divine person, not a divine quality or operation; then we might call him a comfort, but not a comforter. Note, 3. The office and employment of the Holy Ghost; "He is a comforter;" that is an advocate and intercessor to sue for us; an encourager, and one that administers consolation to us; and as he is an Holy Spirit, so are his comforts holy comforts. Observe, 4. The stability of this blessing; "That he may abide with you for ever;" The best of our outward comforts are sudden flashes, not lasting flames; but the consolations of the Holy Spirit are strong consolations, they are abounding consolations, and everlasting consolations; especially the Holy Spirit will be the comforter of good men in the day of affliction, in the day of temptation, and at the hour of death, when all other comforts flag and fail.—Observe lastly, The additional title given to the Holy Ghost, he is called "the Spirit of truth;" partly in opposition to satan, who is called a lying spirit, partly because he teacheth and revealeth the truth, leadeth his people into all truth, and sealeth and confirmeth truth to the

souls of believers; he is the spirit of truth, both in his essence and his operations. Learn hence, That as the Holy Spirit is true in his essence and nature, so is he true in his office as a comforter to good men: all his consolations being real and solid, and free from imposture and delusion.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you.

Here observe, 1. The condition which the disciples were in upon the account of Christ's removal from them, and that was sad and comfortless; fatherless or orphans, as the word signifies. Learn hence, That Christ's departure, or the loss of his gracious presence, is very sad and comfortless to a pious soul; well might the disciples here lament and mourn upon the occasion of Christ's leaving of them, seeing thereby they should be deprived of his doctrine and instructions, of his advice and counsel, and of the benefit of his holy and instructive example. Observe, 2. The care of Christ for his disciples in reference to this their sad and disconsolate condition: "He would not leave them comfortless." Where note, He doth not say, I will not suffer you to be comfortless, but I will not leave you so; that is, he will not desert or disown them in their comfortless condition; he will not leave them, either in point of affection, or in point of activity; he will not cease to love them, nor cease to bestir himself for them.—Learn hence, That Christ will not leave his friends in a sad and comfortless state and condition, though for a time they may be brought into it: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." Christ coming here unto them, is to be understood of his coming to them by his Holy Spirit; in the gifts of it, in the graces of it, and in the comforts of it: thus he did not long leave them comfortless, but at the feast of Pentecost came to them again.

19 Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Here our Saviour foretels his approaching death, that within a little time the men of the world should see him no more; for though he rose again, the world saw him no more after his death: for we read of no appearance of him after his resurrection to any, but to his disciples only. Indeed the hour is coming when the world shall see him again; namely, at the day of judgment, when every eye shall behold him with terror and amazement. Observe farther, The consolation given to his disciples, "Ye shall see me; and because I live, ye shall live also." Because I am raised from the grave, I will quicken your dead bodies in the grave, and ye shall live also; and as I live by my ascension into heaven, so shall you my disciples live a life of grace here, and a life of glory with myself hereafter. Learn hence, That a believer's spiritual life is derived from Christ, who, by his spirit, communicates a quickening virtue to all his members; "Because he lives, they shall live also." See how Christ binds up their life together with his own! As if he had said, "Whilst there is vital sap in the root, you that are

branches in me shall not wither and die." Observe, lastly, A farther privilege insured to believers after Christ's ascension, and the spirit's mission; they should more perfectly understand the essential union betwixt Christ and the Father, and the mystical union betwixt Christ and his members! "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, &c. The knowledge which the saints now have of the mysterious and mystical union, is but dark and imperfect; but in heaven they shall understand these things clearly; then and there the essential union of Christ and his Father, and the mystical union between Christ and believers, will be more clearly understood, than we are capable to understand them in this our imperfect state.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Our blessed Saviour in these words repeats what he had before enjoined at verse 15, namely, to evidence the sincerity of our love to him, by the universality of our obedience to his commands: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Where note, 1. The necessity of knowledge in order unto practice. 2. The necessity of practice in order unto happiness. We must first have Christ's commandments, before we can keep them: we must have them in our understandings and judgments, in our wills and affections; not have them only in our eyes to read, in our ears to hear, or in our mouths to talk of them, but to hide them in our hearts, that we may not sin against Christ, in the wilful violation of them. Farther, we must keep, as well as have these commandments. This denotes an universal, diligent and persevering obedience to them. Hence learn, That although many loose professors pretend love to Christ, because they hear, read, know, and can talk of, his commandments; yet in Christ's account none do truly love him, but those who make conscience of their obedience to him: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Observe next, the gracious promise of Christ to such as thus express their love unto him. 1. "He shall be loved of my Father and of myself." And shall he not be loved of the Holy Ghost too? Yes, no doubt, but why is he not named then? Because the Son dwelleth in us by the Spirit, and sheds his love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." 2. "I will manifest myself unto him;" that is, such obedient christians shall not only enjoy the fruit and benefit of my love, but they shall enjoy the sense of my love, and experience the sensible manifestations and inward diffusions of my love in their own souls. Learn hence, That the only way to have Christ love us, and to let out his love upon us, and to know that he loves us, is to look diligently to our obediential walking with him and before him. We may as rationally think to nourish our bodies with poison, as to enjoy the manifestation of Christ's love in a way of sin.

22 Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?

Some understand these words of a temporal manifestation, and think that Judas the brother of James, who spake them, still expected that Christ should be a temporal prince, and have such a kingdom as should be conspicuous to all the world, and therefore puts the question, How he could possibly show himself to his disciples, and the world not see him? Others understand it of a spiritual manifestation; as if he had said, "Lord! who or what are thy disciples, that we should enjoy more special manifestations of thy love to us, than to the rest of the world? Why should we be dignified by such distinguishing favors upon others?" Learn hence, 1. That there is a real difference put by Christ betwixt his own children and the world, in the matter of special manifestations. 2. That there being no cause from the creature why Christ should make this difference, his discriminating grace is matter of just and great admiration. Well might the apostle out of a deep admiration, say, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

23 Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Observe here, How our Saviour still goes on to direct and encourage his disciples to evidence the sincerity of their love to his person, by the universality of their obedience to his commands; and tells them how great their advantage would be by so doing. For first, "The Father would love them;" that is manifest his favor to them in farther dispensations of grace and comfort. Learn thence, That all the manifestations of divine love to the souls of believers, depend upon their close walking with God in the paths of holiness and strict obedience. Secondly, "We will make our abode with him." He shall have Father and Son's company. An allusion to a parent that has many children: he will be sure to live with them that are most dutiful to him; and most observant of him. The expression of "making their abode" with us, denotes that sweet and intimate fellowship which shall be betwixt God and us, and the perpetuity and constancy of it at all times; till we are taken up by him into heaven, he will make his abode with us, by the indwelling presence of his Holy Spirit, the graces and comforts whereof shall abide with us for ever.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,

and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Here we have a repeated promise of the mission of the Holy Ghost, called "The Comforter," and his special office declared; namely, to teach and to bring to remembrance what Christ had taught: "He shall teach you all things." As the Spirit of God is the great Comforter, so he is the Special Teacher of his children; he teacheth condescendingly, stooping to the meanest capacities; he teacheth efficaciously, inclining the heart to receive instruction, as well as opening the ear to hear it; he teacheth plainly and clearly, unerringly and infallibly; he is truth itself, and therefore his teachings are most true. And as the Holy Spirit is the saints' Teacher, so is he also their Remembrancer: "He shall bring all things to your remembrance;" that is, all truths needful to be known and necessary to salvation. Here note, That the Holy Spirit teaches nothing but what Christ himself taught; the Spirit teaches in the word, and by the word, but never teaches any thing contrary to the word: "He shall teach and bring to remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

As if our Lord had said, "Whatever outward trouble the world gives you, be not afraid of it before it comes, nor troubled at it when it is come, for I will give you inward peace in the midst of all your outward troubles. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Where note, That Christ's peace is vastly different from that peace which is given or enjoyed by the world; the world may wish peace, yet never intend it; or they may wish it, yet not be able to give it; but Christ's peace is real and effectual, solid and substantial; the world's peace is only a freedom from outward trouble, but Christ's peace is a deliverance from inward guilt; and though it does not give us an exemption from outward troubles, yet it gives us a sanctified use and improvement of them, and assures us of a joyful issue and deliverance out of them.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I.

That the disciples of Christ might neither be overset with fears nor overwhelmed with grief, he tells them that they ought to entertain the news of his departure rather with joy and exultation, than with sorrow and dejection: "If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I go to the Father." True love to Christ will make us rejoice in his advancement and exaltation, although it be to our own disadvantage. These words, "My Father is greater than I," must be understood with reference to his human nature, as mediator; for so he was the Father's servant, and the Father, as God, was greater than he; as man,

Again the Father may be said to be greater than Christ, in regard of his paternity, as being the fountain of the deity; the Father is of himself, but the Son is begotten of the Father; but, being of the same substance with the Father, he is consequently God, as the Father is God; for the inequality arises not from the essence, but from the order and manner of subsistence. Thus the Father was greater than he; greater than he as to his original, the Son being begotten by him; and greater is he that gives, than he that receives; but, as to his essence, they are both one God, and so equal. Three ways the Father was greater than Christ: 1. With respect to his human nature. Who can doubt but a dependant creature is inferior to that Almighty Being that made him? 2. With respect to the eternal generation of his divine person; as he was begotten of the Father, who is therefore called the fountain of the deity. 3. With respect to his office as Mediator, for thus he was the Father's servant. O wonderful condescension! that the eternal word, who, as such, was equal with the Father, should in compassion to us accept a station, and sustain a character, in which the Father was greater than he! Now, though under each of these considerations, God the Father is greater than the Son, yet none of them are inconsistent with the Son's being God by nature.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

The time of our Saviour's death now nearer and nearer approaching, he prepares the expectation of his disciples for it, because evils that surprise us suddenly, do sink our spirits sadly; whereas what we fear, for that we prepare. Accordingly our Lord arms his disciples against all disquietude and overwhelming sorrow for his departure from them; "I have told you before, that when it comes to pass, ye might believe;" that is, be assured that I am not mere man, but truly and really God, and depend upon me for life and salvation. Observe, 2. How our Saviour points out the cause of his suffering; namely, satan and his instruments: "the prince of this world cometh;" that is, by Judas, the soldiers, and the high priests: "But he has nothing in me;" that is, He will find no sin or corruption in me to side with his temptation, or no guilt upon me to give him any advantage against me, for I shall die as a perfectly innocent person." Christ in suffering for our sins, did not only conflict with the wrath of God, but with the rage of men and devils; yet all the power and policy, all the malice and cruelty of Satan, cannot prevail against Christ, any farther than he voluntarily yields and submits himself unto it: "The prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me." Observe, 3. That it was Christ's love and obedience to his Father, that carried him forth so cheerfully to the work of sufferings, supported him under it, and carried him through it: "That the world may know that

I love the Father, as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." True love to God will draw all men to obedience in the hardest services and sufferings; the grand motive of Christ's suffering was love to his Father, obedience to his commands, and a regard to his glory. Lord, let thy love and obedience to thy father, in all thy sufferings, be the subject of our admiration, and the matter of our imitation also. As the Father gives us commandment, so let us always do.

CHAPTER XV.

I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Observe here, How our blessed Saviour, under the metaphor of a vine, elegantly sets forth himself in his relation to his visible church, showing, under that similitude, what his Father meant to do with Judas, and with all unfruitful branches like unto him, even take them away, cut them off, and throw them into the fire; but such as are fruitful, he purges by his word and spirit, by ordinances and providences, by mercies and afflictions, that they may be more abundantly and abidingly fruitful. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ, in his offices for, and relation to, his people, doth most fitly resemble a vine. As the vine is weak, mean, and small, in outward appearance, not like the cedar for height, or like the oak for strength; so was Christ in his state of humiliation: there was no beauty in him, Isa. liii. As the vine is a fruitful plant, though it has little pomp, yet it has much plenty, and is only useful for fruit bearing, and brings forth plenty and a variety of sweet fruit to make glad the heart of man: thus the fruits of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and intercession, are many and great, delightful and sweet. In a word, as the fruit of the vine is pressed, that it may be drink unto men, so Christ submitted to be trod in the wine-press of God's wrath, that thereby the sweetest fruit and benefit might redound to his people. Finally, as the vine is the root from which all the branches derive their nourishment and fruitfulness, in like manner is Christ the stock into which all his members are ingrafted, the root in which they all subsist, and the fountain from whence their spiritual life and fruitfulness doth proceed and flow. Learn, 2. That as Christ is the vine, so his Father is the husbandman: he ingrafts and implants all the branches into this vine; the plants of righteousness are his own planting: he takes notice what store of fruit every branch doth bring forth; and it is his daily care to dress and dung, to purge and prune, to support and shelter his vineyard, that it may bring forth abundantly. Learn, 3. That there are two sorts of branches in this vine, some fruitful, others unfruitful; some have the visibility, but not the reality of branches; some are branches only by external profession, others are so by real implantation. Learn, 4. That the true touch-stone whereby to discern one sort of branches from another, is not by the fair leaves of profession, but by the substantial proofs of an holy and righteous conversation. Learn, 5. That in the most fruitful branches, in the best

and holiest of Christians, there remains much corruption to be purged out, in order to future and farther fruitfulness.— Learn, 6. That the husbandman's hand (God the Father's) manages the pruning knife of affliction, in order to his people's improvement in grace and holiness: he had rather see his vine bleed than see it barren. Lastly, that such branches as, after all the husbandman's care and cost, remain unfruitful, shall be finally cut off and cast away, as was Judas here; who, in this discourse of our Saviour, seems particularly and especially to be aimed at: he was a branch in him that bore no fruit, who was shortly after taken away, and went to his own place.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Our Saviour having in the former verses distinguished his disciples into two sorts; some that were members of his body the church, and branches of him the true vine, by outward show and visible profession only: others that are spiritually ingrafted into him, and do bring forth much fruit: now in this third verse Christ tells his disciples which number they were of: Now (saith he) ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you; that is, now that Judas, the traitor, that dead, rotten, fruitless branch, is cut off, and cast out, ye are all clean through the cleansing power and virtue of my word and doctrine. Learn hence, 1. That such as are justified by the blood, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, are in Christ's account clean, notwithstanding their many spots and manifold imperfections "Now are ye clean." 2. That as the blood of Christ is the meritorious, and the Spirit of Christ the efficacious, so the word of Christ is the instrumental cause of a believer's purification and cleansing: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." *Abide in me, and I will abide in you*; that is, abide in me, not only by an outward and visible profession, but by a real and fiducial adherence, and I will abide in you by the influences and operations of my Holy Spirit. The union and conjunction between Christ and his members is mutual; they abide in him by faith and dependence, and he abideth in them by the indwelling presence of his grace and spirit: *Abide in me, and I will abide in you*. Observe farther, The reason which Christ gives why they should thus abide in him, because without union with him, without interest in him, without influences of grace derived from him, they could bring forth no fruit for him, nor do any thing that is truly acceptable and well-pleasing to him: As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me, for without me ye can do nothing: That is, "As branches severed from the vine cannot live and bear fruit, so neither can

christians, separated from Christ, and without deriving *i*-
tue from him, do any thing spiritually good and well-pleasing
in the sight of God." Learn hence, That not only unregene-
rate men do labor under an impotency to that which is
spiritually good, but even disciples themselves, without daily
dependance upon Christ, and without constant communica-
tions of grace from him, can do nothing in a lively and ac-
ceptable way and manner unto him: "Without me ye can
do nothing:" you that are branches of me the true vine. As
Christians, without me, that is, without my spirit, abiding in
you, and uniting to me your head, you can do nothing ac-
ceptable to me, or worthy of my gospel. Again: as apo-
stles, it may denote, that, without the gifts and powerful as-
sistance of the Holy Spirit, they could do nothing to convert
the world to christianity: in both respects might Christ truly
say, "Without me ye can do nothing."

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast
forth as a branch, and is withered; and
men gather them, and cast *them* into the
fire, and they are burned.

Here our holy Lord discovers the sad and deplorable
condition of such professors, who pretending relation to
Christ, do yet bring forth no fruit unto him: he calls them
withered branches, fit only for the fire. Learn hence, that
such as have had a long standing in God's vineyard, and con-
tented themselves with a withered profession, are in great
danger of having God's blasting added to their barrenness.
All their parts and gifts, and common graces, will wither,
and their fair blossoms of profession will drop off, and at
the great day the angels will gather these fruitless branches
together, and cast them into hell-fire.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide
in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it
shall be done unto you.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege declared: "Ask what
ye will and it shall be done unto you." Not that we are
hereby warranted to ask what we please at God's hand, but
our will must be limited by the word and will of God; we
must pray in faith, and in the name and mediation of Jesus
Christ, and with a single eye at the glory of God. Observe,
2. The condition upon which this privilege is attainable: "If
ye abide in me, and my words abide in you;" that is, prac-
tically and experimentally. If my doctrine and commands
abide in your hearts, and dispose you to an holy fruitfulness
in your lives, then shall all your just requests be granted.
Learn, That such as by faith embrace the promises, and by
obedience live up to the precepts of the gospel, may in pray-
er humbly ask of God what they will, with a due submission
to the wisdom and will of God.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that
ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my dis-
ciples.

Our Lord here exhorts his followers to an holy fruitful-
ness in good works, by a double argument. One drawn from
the glory of God: "Herein is my Father glorified. The

other from their own advantage; "So shall ye be my disci-
ples;" that is, hereby ye shall evidence and prove yourselves
to be my disciples. Learn hence, That a christian's aboun-
ding fruitfulness in good works will abundantly conduce to
the honor and glory of God, and also his own peace and
comfort, by being the best evidence of his discipleship.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have
I loved you: continue ye in my love.

Lord, what a comparison is here! As the Father hath
loved me, so have I loved you: he doth not say. As the Fa-
ther hath loved me, so have I loved him; but so have I loved
you: nor doth he say. As God hath loved me, so have I
loved you; but, "As the Father." It is *verbum dilectionis*,
a word importing dearness of affection; nor doth he say,
The Father hath loved me, and I love you; but "As the
Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: nor doth he say,
As the Father hath loved me, so will I love you; but so have
I loved you. This shows the priority of Christ's love, that
he loved us first, and also denotes the invincible constancy of
his love, and the indubitable certainty thereof: "I have lo-
ved you:" follow me from heaven to earth, and from earth
to heaven again, and you will find that every step I have ta-
ken hath been in love. Learn, 1. That the Lord Jesus
Christ hath given full and ample demonstration of his great
and wonderful love unto his church and people. 2. That
it is the duty, and ought to be the singular care of every
christian, to preserve the sweet sense and inward diffusions
of Christ's love in their own souls: "Continue ye in my
love."

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye
shall abide in my love: even as I have
kept my Father's commandments, and
abide in his love.

Christ had told his disciples in the foregoing verse, that he
had "loved them, even as the Father had loved him:" that
is, with an eternal love, with a real and operative love, with
an immutable and constant love. In this verse he directs
them how they may continue in the sense of his love; name-
ly, by their constant obedience to his commands, as his obe-
dience to his Father's commands had secured him a continu-
ance in his Father's love: "If ye keep my commandments,
ye shall abide in my love:" that is, in the sense of my love,
and under the sweet apprehensions of it. Learn hence,
That as our obedience to Christ is the best evidence of our
love to him, so is it the best mean to preserve and keep us
in the sense and assurance of his love to us.

11 These things have I spoken unto
you, that my joy might remain in you,
and *that* your joy might be full.

In these words our Saviour declares the ground and reason
why he did so earnestly press and urge the duty of being
universally fruitful upon his disciples, and that was two-fold:
1. "That his joy might remain in them;" that is, that the
joy which he had in their holiness and obedience might re-
main with him; nothing is more desired by Christ, than that
he may have cause continually to rejoice in the faith and

fruitfulness of his people. 2. "That their joy in him might be full." This latter arises from the former: our joy in Christ results from Christ's joy in us: his delight in us causes us abundantly to delight in him. Learn hence, That nothing is more desired by Christ, than that the joy of his people should be a full, solid, constant, and uninterrupted joy. 3. That the only way and mean, in order thereunto, is by an holy fruitfulness in good works; "All these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The observation of God's commandments does give a christian here the fullest and most perfect joy.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Our Lord had often in this farewell sermon of his to his dear disciples, pressed upon them the duty of loving one another, chap. xiii. and xiv. And yet here he enforces it from his own example: As I have loved you, so, love you one another; that is, as truly and as sincerely for the manner, though not in the same proportion and degree. Learn thence, That for the disciples of Christ to love one another upon such grounds, and in such a way as he loved them, is that which his heart greatly desires, and is very much set upon. 2. That Christ's love unto believers is both an obligation unto mutual love, and also a pattern and example for it. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Here our Saviour gives his disciples an evidence of the greatness of his love unto them; namely, in his readiness to lay down his life for them, which is the highest expression of love to our dearest friends, because life is the greatest earthly blessing. Learn hence, That Christ's love, in laying down his life for his people, was a matchless love; for whilst they were enemies to him, he had a friendly respect for them; and never ceased till he had brought them into a covenant of friendship with him.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Here Christ invites his people to obedience, by the honorable title of friends: "Ye are my friends." 1. Actively, you will declare and manifest yourselves to be my friends. 2. Passively, I will declare myself to be your friend. Learn hence, 1. How condescending is the love of Christ in calling his servants by the name of friends. 2. How glorious is the believer's relation to Christ in being one of his friends. 3. How grateful is obedience to Christ, seeing it dignifies the practisers of it with the title of his friends. 4. Our conformity to Christ consists not so much in imitation of what he did: as in obedience to what he prescribed. Some actions of Christ are inimitable, but all his commands are obeyable. 5. That nothing short of an humble, uniform, cheerful, and constant obedience to the commands of Christ, will evidence the truth of our relation to him, and the sincerity of our friendship with him: "Then only are ye my friends, when ye do whatsoever I command you."

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

By these words Christ declares the reason why he was pleased to change his style, and call his disciples friends instead of servants: namely, because of his communication of secrets to them, which servants are not admitted to the knowledge of: "Henceforth I call you not servants; that is, not mere servants; not that they were to be exempted from obedience; (for that is called for in the foregoing verse) but Christ treated them now with the kindness and familiarity of friends; being about to leave them, he unbosoms himself unto them saying, "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Note as if Christ had communicated the infinite treasures of knowledge to them, which the Father had imparted to him; but he speaks here as the prophet of his church, that as such he had revealed all things needful for them to know in order to salvation, all things belonging to their case and state; as a counsellor doth not impart all his knowledge to his clients; but all that is necessary for his client to understand and know, that he makes known unto him, relating to his own case. Learn hence, 1. That all Christ's disciples are his servants, and all his servants are his friends, in regard of intimate communion and tender usage: "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends." And after his resurrection he called them brethren, John xx. 17. The dignity of believers is a growing dignity, the longer they follow Christ, the higher privileges are indulged to them. Learn, 2. That all the Father's counsel concerning our salvation, and so far as it is needful and necessary for us to know, is faithfully revealed by Christ to his Church, he being constituted by God the Father to be the great prophet and instructor of it: "All things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you:" that is, all things fit for them at present to know; namely, concerning his passion, resurrection, ascension, mission of the Holy Ghost, a future judgment, and the promises of eternal life.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: and whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Here our Saviour gives another instance and evidence of his love to his disciples; he tells them, that his mercy and free goodness had prevented them in their election to eternal salvation, and in their vocation unto the office of apostleship: "Ye have not chosen me," to be your Master and Lord, but I have chosen you, to be my disciples, friends, and servants. 2. He acquaints them with the end, design, and intention, of his choosing of them: namely, that they should bring forth fruits, and persevere therein, even in all the fruits of holiness and obedience, which are to the praise and glory of God by Jesus Christ; "I have ordained you, that you should

bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." 3. He directs them, that in order to their being fruitful, they should have access to the Father through him, for whatsoever they wanted and stood in need of: "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Learn hence, That all those whom God hath chosen, and called to the knowledge and service of Jesus Christ, ought to make it their care and endeavour to bring forth fruit, and to persevere therein to their lives' end: "I have chosen you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated you*.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Observe here, 1. With what frequency and importunity our Lord inculcates and presses the duty of mutual love upon his disciples: "I command you to love one another." It denotes the great importance of the duty, and the great averseness and backwardness of our hearts to the performance of it. And if we consider the disciples as apostles and ministers of the gospel, it intimates to us the necessity of mutual love amongst the dispensers of the gospel, as conducting exceedingly to the welfare and benefit of the church of God, over which he hath set them. Observe, 2. The argument which our Saviour makes use of to press his disciples in general, and his ministers and ambassadors in particular, to love each other; and that is, because the world would certainly hate them. Learn hence, That the world's hatred of the members and ministers of Christ is, and ought to be esteemed by them a strong argument to excite and persuade them to love one another; for this is subjoined as an argument to press mutual love, that we are sure to meet with the world's hatred. Observe, 3. The several arguments by way of encouragement which Christ propounds to comfort his members and ministers against the world's hatred. The first argument is taken from his own lot and usage; when here, in the world, he met with the very same before them: "The world hated me before it hated you." Learn hence, That hatred and persecution from the world need not seem hard to the saints, if they consider what a stock Christ had before them upon him; he is the prime object of the world's hatred, and they who hate his members much, do hate him more, because of their likeness to him, and resemblance of him. A second argu-

ment of comfort under the world's hatred is this, that it will evidence they are not of the world, but chosen out of the world, ver. 19. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Hence learn, 1. That the children of God, though in the world, yet they are not of the world, they have not the spirit of the world in them, nor is the conversation of the world led by them. That the difference betwixt them that are of the world, and those that are chosen out of the world, is of God's making: "I have chosen you out of the world." 3. That such Christians as are separated from the world in judgment, affection and practice, must for that reason expect to be hated and persecuted by the world: "Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hates you." The third argument for consolation and support under the world's hatred, is taken from our relation to Christ, as servants to a master, ver. 20. "Remember that the servant is not greater than his lord:" as if Christ had said, "Is it equal that you should expect better treatment than myself, either as to your persons or ministry, or that you should expect that the world should better receive your doctrine than it did mine before you?" Learn hence, That neither the members nor ministers of Christ can or ought to expect better treatment in and from the world, than their master found before them: "The servant is not above his master, nor greater than his lord." A fourth argument to support them under the burden of the world's hatred, is taken from the goodness of the cause for which they were to suffer: namely, for Christ's name sake, ver. 27.—"All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." Hence learn, 1. That it is the duty of all, but especially of the ministers of Christ, to own the name of Christ, to stand up in defence of his name and truth, his glory and honor, what opposition soever they meet with for the same. Learn, 2. That the great quarrel of the world against the disciples of Christ, is for the name of Christ: whatever may be pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel.

22 If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

These words are not to be understood absolutely, but comparatively; as if Christ had said, "Had not I come amongst them in my incarnation, and preached personally to them the doctrine of salvation, and confirmed that doctrine by miraculous operations, they might have pleaded ignorance in some measure, and they had not had sin; that is, they had not had the sin of unbelief and gospel-contempt to answer for, nor had not had so great a measure of any kind of sin to answer for as now they have; but would have had more to say in excuse, or for a cover for their sin, than now they can: "But now they have no cloak for their sin;" that is, they are totally inexcusable, and have not the least color or pretence for their obstinate unbelief. Learn hence, 1. That sins of ignorance are, as it were, no sins committed against light and knowledge.—2. That sins committed against gospel light are of a heinous nature, and aggravated guilt, as being committed against the very remedy. 3. That the gospel, where it is plainly preached, doth take away all pretence and excuse from sinners. "Now they have no cloak for their sin."

23 He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

These words declare the heinous nature of the pharisees' sin, in hating and persecuting Christ, who had done before their eyes such works as no man besides him, or before him, ever did; he acting by his own power. Peter healed the lame man, Acts iii. but it was in the name of Jesus of Nazareth: but Christ healed the sick, and raised the dead in his own name, and by a special word of command: "I say unto thee, arise:" yet did the pharisees hate him and his Father, according to the prediction, Ps. xxxv. 19. "They hated me without a cause." Which being spoke of David in type, received a more evident accomplishment in Christ, the Son of David. Learn thence, 1. That let men pretend to ever so much holiness or respect to God, yet if they hate Christ, and despise his gospel, they are haters of God, who is one in essence and nature with the Son. "He that hateth me hateth my Father also. Learn, 2. That no miracles wrought by mortal men were ever comparable with the miracles wrought by Christ, the Son of God; he did surpass them all in number, kind, and manner of doing them; by his own authority, in his own name, and not as others who obtained their power by prayer from God: "I have done amongst them the works which none other man did." Learn, 3. That Christ having confirmed his doctrine by such unparalleled miracles as the world was never before acquainted with, doth aggravate the sin of those that are haters of his person, despisers of his doctrine, and reproachers of his miracles: it being just with God, when men obstinately shut their eyes, and will not see, judicially to close their eyes, and say, They shall not see.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Here our holy Lord confirms himself, that, though he had laid them under many aspersions and scandals from the world, yet all these should be done away by the coming of the Holy Spirit, who should testify of him, and make his person and doctrine to be acknowledged in the world; and that they themselves should bear witness of him who had been with him from the beginning; that is, since he first began to exercise his prophetic office. Observe here, 1. That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three distinct persons in the Godhead. 2. That the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son: here the Son is said to send him: and as to the Father, he is said to proceed from him. If the Holy Ghost doth not proceed from the Son, why is he called "The Spirit of the Son," Gal. iv. 6? Why is he said here to be sent by the Son? "The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the

Father." And if the Spirit doth not proceed from the Son, what personal relation can we conceive between the Son and the Spirit? Observe, 3. That it is the highest dignity and honor of the apostles and ministers of Christ, that the Spirit beareth no testimony unto Christ, but with and according to the testimony given by them; for here it is conjoined, "He shall testify of me! and ye shall also bear witness, who have been with me from the beginning."

CHAPTER XVI.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, our blessed Saviour had acquainted his disciples with the hatred and hard usage which they were likely to meet with in the world, and here he intimates to them the reason why he did so much insist upon that subject; namely, not to sadden their hearts, and grieve their spirits, before their sufferings came, but that they might not be offended, discouraged or scandalized at them, when they came, but prepared for them, and armed against them. Hence learn, 1. That all afflictions, but especially persecutions, are so searching and trying, that the best of Christians have need to be guarded against them, that they be not offended at them. 2. That it was the great design of Christ to arm his disciples against the scandal of the cross, lest atumbling at what they expected not, they should fall from the profession of Christianity: "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended." Observe, 2. How our Saviour instances in two particular sorts and kinds of suffering, which his disciples were to expect in the world, and from the world; namely, excommunication and martyrdom, verse 2. "They shall put you out of their synagogues:" that is, exclude them from all their assemblies, both civil and religious, and shall not only think it lawful, but a very acceptable service to God, to put them to death: "Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." Observe, 3. How Christ discovers to his dear disciples the cause and ground of the world's hatred against them, and enmity towards them: namely, their ignorance of the Father and himself, verse 3. "These things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me." From whence we may learn, That all the persecutions of the saints do speak in persecutors, an ignorance of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ his son. All persecutions spring from igno-

rance as well as from malice. And men who continue ignorant of God and Christ are in danger of turning persecutors, if they have a temptation to it. Observe, 4. How our Lord again forewarns his disciples of their approaching sufferings, to the intent that they might remember that he had foretold them of them, and would not fail to support them under them. He had often told them in general of persecutions and troubles which they must expect to meet with, but did not till now intimate the kinds and degrees of those sufferings, with respect to their weakness; and because, whilst he was with them, he himself bore the brunt of all, the world's rage falling upon him, letting them alone; but after his ascension, when the malice of satan and wicked men could not reach him, then did the storm fall upon them. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is so tender of his disciples' weakness, that he will not put them upon the hardship of sufferings till they be trained up and prepared for them. 2. That it may encourage the saints in and under their sufferings that Christ himself is the great object of the persecutors' malice, and they only so for his sake; for, could they reach him, they would not concern themselves with them. Learn, 3. That the saints of God, after long exemption and freedom from sufferings, must expect that storms will arise, clouds gather thick, and trials come on apace: and their being under one trial will not hide or shelter them from another.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Observe here, How our Saviour again intimates to his disciples his speedy departure from them, and reproves them for being so saddened at it, and concerned for it, without considering the end and design of it, and the benefit and advantage they were to receive by it. Here we see how the disciples' thoughts were wholly taken up about themselves, what they should do for want of Christ's bodily presence; without being instant with him, to know whither he was going, and what benefit he should reap, and they might expect, from his departure. Learn hence, That Christ's disciples ought not so much to have lamented the loss of his bodily presence, as to have rejoiced in his glorious exaltation, and in their own advantages by his death, resurrection and ascension; "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But sorrow hath filled your heart."

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away; the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart I will send him unto you.

In these words our Saviour urges his disciples to submit to his departure, as that which would make way for his sending the Comforter to them; which he assures them, would be of more advantage to them than his own stay and continuance amongst them. Thence learn, That the presence of the Holy Spirit with us is a greater comfort and advantage to us than the presence of Christ in the flesh amongst us. The benefit of Christ's conversation was great; but the advantage of the Spirit's renovation and holy inspiration is much greater; the

one encourages and incites us to be holy, but the other quickens and enables us to be holy. Therefore well might Christ say, "It is expedient," or highly necessary and advantageous, "for you, that I go away." He subjoins a reason: "If I go not away the Comforter will not come: but if I depart, I will send him to you." Whence we learn, That Christ's ascension was indispensably necessary, in order to the Spirit's mission; the Spirit could not have descended, if Christ had not first ascended; the Spirit could not come, but by the gift and mission of the Mediator. Now the sending of the Spirit being a part of Christ's royalty, as Mediator, it was not convenient that the Spirit should be sent, till Christ was crowned, and sat down on his throne in his kingdom: then the Spirit was to make application to us, of the redemption purchased for us.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin because they believe not on me:

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more:

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

In these and the following verses our Saviour acquaints his disciples with the advantages that will redound by the coming of the Comforter. First, The advantage to the world, Secondly, To the apostles. And, thirdly, To himself. To the world, 1. "He shall convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment." Of sin; that is, of their sinful state and nature, of the large extent of sin, and particularly of the sin of unbelief. Learn hence, 1. That the Spirit of God is the author of conviction of sin, and that all convictions of sin do either medately or immediately flow from him. 2. That unbelief is a sin of the greatest malignity against Christ, and of the greatest danger to a christian's soul: "He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me." Secondly, Of righteousness; that is, of the insufficiency of all human righteousness, and of the necessity of the righteousness of a mediator; by which alone we are to expect acceptance with God; or of a complete and perfect righteousness in me, imputable to sinners for their perfect justification: and that it is so, appears "because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more." As if Christ had said, "Hereby you may be satisfied that by my active and passive obedience I have fully satisfied my Father's justice for you, and you shall never be charged or condemned; because when I go to heaven, I shall abide there in glory with my Father, and never be sent back again; ye shall see me no more, as I must have been, if any thing had been omitted by me." Note farther, That none are convinced of righteousness who are not first convinced of sin. None will come to Christ by faith, till convictions of sin have awakened and distressed them. Thirdly, Of Judgment: that is, the Spirit shall convince the world, that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, that he had power to judge satan the prince of the world, and that he did by his death put down the kingdom of darkness. Learn hence, 1. That satan is a prince who by unjust usurpation, and sinners' vol-

luntary consent, has exercised a tyrannical power over the world. 2. That Christ by his death did judge, condemn, and overcome, this mighty prince, and hath made his conquest evident to the consciences of men, by the convictions of his holy Spirit: "The Spirit shall convince of judgment:" that is, "that satan the prince of this world is judged."

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth:—

The second benefit which our Saviour declares was to be expected by the coming of the Holy Spirit, relates to the apostles themselves: "He shall guide you into all truth;" that is, into all truth necessary for you to know in order to salvation. This is a principal text which the papists bring for their doctrine of infallibility, but groundlessly: for this promise was made to all the apostles, as well as Peter; nay, not only to the apostles, but to all the successors: yea, not to the apostles only and their successors, but to all believers also: for they are led by the Spirit of God, and that into all truth too; not absolutely, but into all necessary truth: and so far as a private christian follows the conduct and guidance of the divine Spirit, he is more infallible than either pope or council, who follow the dictates and directions of their own spirits only.

—For he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.

That is, he shall not teach you a private doctrine, or that which is contrary to what you have learned of me, but whatsoever he shall hear of me, and receive from me, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." This affords an argument to prove the Holy Spirit to be God: he that can show us things to come, he that clearly foreseeth and infallibly foretelleth what shall be, before it is, is certainly God. But this the Holy Spirit doth: "He will show you things to come." Men and devils may guess at things to come, but none can show things to come, but he that is truly and really God: and therefore the Spirit is so.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

Here Christ shows the advantage which would redound to himself by the coming of the Comforter; he declares that the Spirit should glorify him by his testimony, gifts, and miracles, and shall in all things accord with him, and thereby evidence that he hath his mission from him: "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." And "all things that the Father hath are mine." Hence learn, That although the union in essence amongst the persons in the Trinity is the same, yet the order of their subsistence and operation is distinct: the Son being from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son; "For all things that the Father hath are mine; And the Spirit, shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Observe farther, That these words afford

a strong argument to prove the divinity of Christ: "All things which my Father hath are mine." Where Christ challenges to himself the incommunicable attributes of God, and consequently that essence which is inseparable from them. Doth the Father know the secrets of all hearts? So doth Christ, Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts." Is the Father eternal? So is Christ, Prov. viii. 23 "I was set up from everlasting, &c."

16 A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said *some* of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, A little while and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, A little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

In these words our holy Lord proceeds to comfort his disciples with a promise, that, however he was now to be removed from them, yet they should shortly see him again, namely, after his resurrection; it being impossible that he should be held by death, but must arise and go to his Father. His disciples not understanding what he meant, but abiding under the prejudices of their national errors, concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, knew not what to make of those words. "A little while and ye shall not see me." Our Saviour therefore explains himself to his disciples, telling them that they shall have a time of sad sorrow and grief of heart, during some of his sufferings and absence from them, but their sadness shall soon be turned into joy, when

they shall see him alive again after his resurrection. This he illustrates by the similitude of a travailing woman, who soon forgets her sorrow after she hath brought forth a child. Thus will their hearts revive upon the sight of him risen from the grave; and no man shall be able to take their joy away from them, because he shall die no more, but go to heaven, and there live for ever, to make intercession for them. Learn hence, 1. From the apostles not understanding Christ's words concerning his departure, though so often inculcated upon them, "A little while and ye shall not see me, because I go to the Father," Hence note, How unreasonable it is to arrogate to man's understanding a power to comprehend spiritual mysteries, yet, to understand the plainest truths, till Christ enlightens the understanding; lest the doctrine be delivered ever so plainly, and repeated ever so frequently, yet will men continue ignorant, without divine illumination. How often had this plain doctrine of Christ's departure to the Father been preached to the disciples by Christ's own mouth! Yet still they say, "What is it that he saith? We cannot tell what he saith." Learn, 2. The different effects which Christ's absence should have upon the world, and upon his disciples; "the world will rejoice, but ye shall weep and lament." Note, 1. That it is the wretched disposition of the world to rejoice in the absence and want of Christ out of the world. When I am gone, the world will rejoice. 2. That nothing is the cause of so much sorrow and sadness to sincere disciples, as Christ's absence and removal from them: such is their estimation of the worth of him, so great is their apprehension of the want of him, that there is no loss comparable to his absence and removal from them: ye shall weep and lament at my departure, though the world will rejoice. Learn 3. That the believer's sorrow for Christ's absence, though it be very great, yet it shall not be perpetual; "Ye have now sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you." The joy of the saints may be interrupted; it shall never be totally extinguished: it is a permanent joy, of which they shall never be totally deprived, till they enter into the ocean of eternal joy; "Your joy no man taketh from you."

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

At the first reading of the 23d verse there seems to be a contradiction in the words. Christ tells them in the former part of the verse, that they shall ask him nothing in that day; and yet promises that whatever they ask shall be given them, in the latter part of the verse. To resolve this, know that there is a twofold asking, one by way of question, the other by way of petition. The former is asking that we may know, or be informed in, what we doubt; the latter is asking that we may receive, and be supplied with what we want. Now when Christ saith, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing;" it is as much as if he had said, "At present you understand but little of the mysteries of religion, and therefore ye put questions about many things: but, in that day, when the

Comforter comes, ye shall be so clearly enlightened by him, that ye shall not need to ask me any more questions." But when Christ saith, "Whatever ye ask of the Father in my name, he will give it;" the meaning is, "In that day when I have left the world, and ascended to my Father, you shall not need to address your prayers to me, but to my Father in my name." But what is it to pray in the name of Christ? Answer, It is more than to name Christ in prayer; it is easy to name Christ in prayer, but no easy thing to pray in the name of Christ. To pray in the name of Christ is, 1. To look up to Christ, as having purchased for us this privilege, that we may pray: for it is by the blood of Christ that we draw near to God, and that a throne of grace is open to us. 2. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray in the strength of Christ, by the assistance of his grace, and the help of his Holy Spirit. 3. To pray in the name of Christ, is to pray by faith in the virtue of Christ's mediation and intercession, believing that what we ask on earth, he intercedes for and obtains in heaven. To pray thus is no easy matter: and unless we do pray thus, we do not pray at all, ver. 24. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; that is; explicitly and expressly in my name, or by me, as mediator betwixt God and man, and with respect to my merits. Do this after my death, resurrection, and intercession at the right-hand of God, and you shall receive such answers as will fill you with joy; for the saints of God under the O'd Testament, and the apostles themselves under the New, had hitherto put up all their petitions in the name of the Messiah, though not in the name of Jesus. But now he exhorts them to eye his mediatory office in all their addresses to God, and promises them whatsoever he had purchased of the Father, by his sufferings and satisfaction, they should obtain it for the sake of his prevailing intercession. Learn hence, That it is a mighty encouragement to prayer, that now under the gospel, the person of the Mediator is exhibited in our flesh, has satisfied divine justice in our nature, and in that nature intercedes as mediator, for whatever he purchased as our surety. Hence is the encouragement; "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

Here our Saviour tells his disciples, that although he had spoken many things to them in dark parables and figurative expressions, yet now the time was approaching, namely, the Comforter's coming, when he would, by the Holy Ghost, clearly enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of divine mysteries, and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and particularly in the knowledge of God as his Father, and their Father in him. Hence learn, 1. That the clearest truths will be but parables, proverbs, and dark mysteries, even to disciples themselves, till the Holy Spirit enlightens their understandings. 2. That the clear and full manifestation of divine truth was reserved till the coming of the Comforter, who did communicate it to the apostles, and by them to the church or body of Christians: I, by him, "will show you plainly of the Father."

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name;

and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you;

27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

At that day ye shall ask in my name; that is, after I have ascended into heaven, and have sent down the Holy Ghost upon you, you shall put up all your prayers and requests to God in my name; "and I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you;" that is, I need not tell you (though I shall certainly do it) that I will intercede with the Father for you, for he of himself is kindly disposed and affected towards you for my sake. When Christ says, "I do not say that I will pray the Father for you," the meaning is, not that he will lay aside his office as intercessor for believers, but that they had not only his intercession but the Father's love, upon which to ground their hope of audience. Learn hence, 1. That the christian's prayers, put up in Christ's name, cannot fail of audience and acceptance for the sake of the Mediator's intercession, and the Father's love. 2. That in our prayers we ought so to eye and look up to Christ's intercession, as not to overlook and forget the Father's love, but ground our hopes of audience upon both; "I say not that I will pray the Father for you," though I shall assuredly do it, "for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me."

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest from God.

Here observe, 1. A proof of our Saviour's godhead; "he came forth from the Father into the world;" he came but from the Father in his incarnation, and came into the world to accomplish the work of our redemption. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ is true God, equal with the Father: for he was not only sent by him, but came forth from him; "I came out from the Father." Observe, 2. That it pleased Christ, out of love to his people, to leave the Father, and come into the world; not by being separated from the deity, but by obscuring the deity with the veil of our flesh, in order to the finishing the great and glorious work of redemption for us: "I came from the Father, and am come into the world." Observe, 3. That Christ having finished his suffering work here in earth, ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Spirit to apply unto his church the redemption purchased by his blood: "Again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Observe lastly, How the apostles argue from the knowledge of Christ's omnipotency to a certainty of his divinity: "Now

are we sure that thou knowest all things; by this we believe thou camest forth from God." The knowledge and experience of Christ's omniscieny, may and ought fully to confirm us in the belief of his deity; for that attribute of the deity cannot be communicated to any person without the communication of the divine nature.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

In the foregoing verse, the apostles make a full profession of their faith in Christ's divinity, and in Christ's omnipotency: "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and that thou camest forth from God." In this verse Christ intimates to them that their faith should be put to a great trial very shortly, namely, when his sufferings came on; and that then they should all forsake him, and take care of themselves: "Ye shall be scattered and leave me alone." Learn hence, 1. That Christ was forsaken and left alone by his own disciples in the day of his greatest distress and danger. 2. That when the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. 3. That when all forsook Christ, and left him alone, he was far from being simply alone, because God was with him: "Ye shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." God was with Christ, and will be with Christians, in a suffering hour, in his essential presence, in his gracious and supporting presence: "He that sent me," says Christ, "is with me: the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please my Father."

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

*These words are the conclusion of our Saviour's farewell sermon to his disciples, in which he declares to them, the inevitable necessity of the world's troubles: *in the world ye shall have tribulation*; that is, while ye have to do with the men of the world, while ye have any thing to do with the things of the world, nay, while you have a being in the world, you must look for trouble both from within and from without, from friends and foes, in the body, soul, name, estate; heart-breaking troubles, soul-rending troubles, such troubles as will make the heart to break, and the back to bend; and you, my disciples, must expect it as well as others: *In the world ye shall have tribulation*. Hence learn, That the disciples of Christ, in this world, may, yea, must expect and look for trouble. Observe, 2. The remedy provided by Christ against this malady: *In me ye shall have peace*: when in the world ye have tribulation. *Ye shall have peace*: that is, serenity of mind, a quiet and calm temper of spirit within, when the world, like a tempestuous air, is full of storms without. Learn thence, That though in the world Christ's own disci-*

ples must look for and expect troubles, yet he has taken effectual care, that amidst all their troubles, in him they may have peace; Christ's blood has purchased peace for them, his word hath promised it to them, and his Holy Spirit seals it up to their souls. Observe, 3. The cordial provided by Christ for the support of his disciples' spirits under the sinking burden of the world's tribulations and troubles: *But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world; I have taken the sting out of every cross, and the venom out of every arrow.* Learn hence, That it is a great comfort to a christian, under all the troubles of this world, to consider that Christ has overcome the world, that is, all things in the world, which may hinder his people's comfort and consolation here, and their eternal happiness and salvation hereafter; namely, the princes of the world, the rulers of the world, the wicked men of the world, the troubles of the world, the temptations of the world, the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Now Christ having overcome the world, all persons and things in it are at his disposal, and can do nothing but by his permission: and as he has overcome the world himself, so he will enable us through faith in him to overcome it also. 1 John v. 4. *This is the victory over the world, even our faith.*

CHAPTER XVII.

THESE words spake Jesus; and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.

Our Saviour having ended his consolatory and valedictory sermon, contained in the three foregoing chapters; in this chapter we have recorded his last prayer, with and for his disciples; before he left the world, which is a copy left upon earth, of what he doth now intercede for, as an advocate in heaven. "It is good (saith one) to compare scripture with scripture, but not to prefer scripture before scripture: all scripture being written by inspiration of God;" but if any part of scripture be to be magnified above another, this chapter claims the pre-eminence; it contains the breathings out of Christ's soul for his church and children before his departure; not for his disciples only, but for the succeeding church to the end of the world. In the verse before us, observe, 1. The order of our Saviour's prayer: *These words spake Jesus;* that is, after he had finished his excellent sermon, he closes the exercise with a most fervent and affectionate prayer: teaching his ministers by his example to add solemn prayer and supplication to all their instructions and exhortations: if every creature of God be to be sanctified by prayer, much more the word of God, which works not as a natural agent, but as a moral instrument in God's hand. Now as God sets the word on work, so is it prayer that sets God on work. Observe, 2. As the order of Christ's prayer, so the gesture on which he prayed; *He lifted up his eyes to heaven,* as an indication of his soul's being lifted up to God in heaven; to signify his reverence of God whose throne is in heaven; and to denote his confidence in God, and raised expectation of aid and help from God, and not from any creature. Learn, that the gestures which we use in prayer, should be such as may express our reverence of God, and denote our affiance and trust in him. Observe, 3. The person prayed to, God, under the appellation of a Father: it intimates a sweet relation; it is a word of en-

dearing affection, and implies great reverence towards God, and great confidence and trust in him. Learn, It is very sweet and comfortable in prayer, when we can come and call God Father. Observe, 4. The mercy prayed for, "The hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." The hour is come; that is, "The hour of my sufferings, and by satisfaction: the hour of my victory, and of thy glory; the hour, the sad hour, determined in thy decree and purpose." No calamity can touch us till God's hour is come; and when the sad hour is come, the best remedy is prayer; and the only person to fly unto for succour is our heavenly Father. Father, the hour is come, the doleful hour of my death and passion; glorify thy Son, glorify him at his death, by manifesting him to have been the Son of God; glorify him in his death, by accepting it as the death of thy Son for the sins of the world; glorify him after his death, by a speedy resurrection from the grave, and triumphant exaltation at thy right hand. Here note, How the glory of the Father and the Son are inseparably linked together: it was the Father's design to glorify the Son, and it was the Son's desire to have glory from the Father, for this end, that he might bring glory to the Father: "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Observe here, 1. The dignity which Christ was invested with, *power over all flesh;* that is, authority to judge and sentence all mankind. Observe, 2. How Christ came to be invested with this power; it was given him by his Father: *Thou hast given him power over all flesh.* Hence the Socinians would infer, that he was not God, because he received all from God; but the text speaks not of his divine power, as God, but of his power as Mediator. And the note is, that all mankind are under the power and authority of Jesus Christ as mediator: he has a legislative power, or a power to give laws to all mankind; and a judiciary power, or a power to execute the laws that he hath given. Observe, 3. The end for which Christ was invested with this power: "That he might give eternal life to as many as God hath given him." Here note, 1. That believers, that is, all sincere and serious christians, are given by God the Father unto Christ; they are given to him as his charge, to redeem, sanctify, and save: and as his reward, Isa. liii. 10. 2. All that are given to Christ, have life from him: a life of justification and sanctification on earth, and a life of glory in heaven. 3. The life which Christ gives to them that are given him, is eternal life. 4. That this eternal life is a free gift from Christ unto his people; though they do not work for wages, yet they shall not work for nothing; *I give unto them eternal life.*

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

That is, "This is the true way and means to obtain eternal life, namely, by the true knowledge of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Mediator, who was commissioned and sent by his Father, to accomplish the work of redemption

for a lost world." Here observe, Christ calls God the Father the *only true God*, not in opposition to the Son and Holy Ghost, who, being one in essence with the Father are truly and really God, as well as the Father; but in opposition to idols and false gods. There is a great difference betwixt these two propositions: the Father is the *only true God*, and the Father only is true God. Christ saith the former; *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*. The Socinians say the latter; this is life eternal, to know only thee to be the true God, and that neither Jesus Christ nor the Spirit are God, but the Father only. But how comes eternal life to depend as well upon the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as of God the Father, if Jesus Christ be only man, and not truly and really God? For thus our Saviour affirms, *This is life eternal, to know thee and Jesus Christ*. Whence learn, 1. That the beginning, increase, and perfection, of eternal life, lieth in holy knowledge. 2. That no knowledge is sufficient to eternal life, but the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ, who is also God; for who can think that the knowledge of a mere creature should be accounted equally necessary to salvation, with the knowledge of the great and mighty God? Surely, if our happiness consists equally in the knowledge of God and Christ, then God and Christ are of the same nature, equal in power and glory. The comprehensive sense of the words seems to be this, "That the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ the Mediator, is the life of grace, and the necessary way to the life of glory."

4 I have glorified thee on the earth :—

Learn hence, That the whole life of Christ, while here on earth, was a glorifying of his Father; he glorified his Father by the doctrine which he preached; he glorified his Father by the miracles which he wrought; he glorified his Father by the unspotted purity and innocency of his life, and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death.

—I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

That is, I am now about to finish it: he speaks of what he was resolved to do, as already done. Here note, 1. That it is the work that glorifies God. 2. That every man has his work, his proper work, assigned him by God. 3. This work must be finished here upon earth. 4. That when we have done our proportion of work, we may expect our proportion of wages. 5. That it is a blessed thing at the hour of death to be able to say in sincerity and uprightness, that we have glorified God in the world, and have finished the work which he appointed us to do: *Father I have glorified thee on earth, and have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

From the connection of this with the former verse, learn, 1. That whosoever expects to be glorified with God in heaven, must glorify him first here upon earth. 2. That after we have glorified him, we may expect to be glorified with him, and by him. *I have glorified thee. And now, O Father, glorify thou me; it follows, with the glory I had with thee be-*

fore the world was. Here note, 1. That Christ, as God, had an essential glory with God the Father before the world was: he had this glory not in the purpose and degree of God only, as the Socinians would have it: for he doth not say, "Glorify me with the glory, which thou didst propose and prepare for me before the world was; but "which I had and enjoyed with thee before the world was;" by which words our Lord plainly asserts his own existence and being from eternity, and prays for a re-exaltation to that glory which he enjoyed with his Father before his incarnation. Note, 2. That Christ, as Mediator, did so far humble himself, that he needed to pray for his Father to bestow upon him the glory which he wanted: namely, the glory of his ascension and exaltation; *Now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self*. As if Christ had said, Father, glorify me, embrace and honor me, as thy Son, who have been, in the eyes of the world, handled disgracefully as a servant:" it is an actual glory that Christ speaks of, not in degree and purpose only, for that believers had as well as he: but this was a glory when no creature was in being.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

By the name of God we are here to understand his nature, his properties and attributes, his designs and counsels for the salvation of mankind; Christ, as the prophet of his church, made these known unto his people. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ has made a full and complete discovery of his Father's mind and will unto his people: *I have manifested thy name unto them, which thou gavest me. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word*. Learn, 1. That all believers are given unto Christ, as his purchase, and as his charge: they are given him as his subjects, as his children, as the wife of his bosom, as the members of his body. Learn, 2. That all those that are given unto Christ, do keep his word: they keep it in their understandings, they hide it in their hearts, they feel the force of it in their souls, they express the power of it in their lives; *They have kept thy word*.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee :

Observe here, 1. The faithfulness of Christ, in revealing the whole will of his Father to his disciples. 2. The proficiency of the disciples in the school of Christ, they knew all the things that Christ had told them; namely, that whatsoever he had was given him of the Father, and that he had these things from him to be a Mediator. Learn hence, That Christ hath approved himself a faithful prophet to his church, a faithful messenger from his Father to his people, in that he hath added nothing to his message, nor taken any thing from it. 2. That it is our duty to know and believe on Christ, as the only Messenger and Mediator sent of God; *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee*.

8 For I have given unto them the words

which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

As if Christ had said, "The message by thee, my Father, committed to me, I have communicated to them, my disciples, and they have received it, and will communicate it from thee to the world, being sufficiently assured that my coming and preaching was all my commission from thee." Hence learn, 1. That the doctrine of the gospel, which was revealed by Christ, was received from the Father. 2. That faith is receiving of the word of Christ, and of Christ in and by the word. Receiving is a relative term, and presupposes an offer. God offers on his part, and we receive on our part, the whole word with the whole heart. 3. That the ministers of the gospel are to preach that, and only that, which they have out of the word of God: *I have given them the words which thou gavest me.*

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

That is, I now offer up a prayer particularly: 1. For my apostles, designed for so great a work as the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to the obdurate Jews and Gentiles. 2. I intercede also for all believers at this time for their perseverance in the faith, and constancy in persecution; but I do not now intercede for the wicked and impenitent world, they not being capable (whilst such) of these mercies and blessings; though at other times we find him praying for the world, yea, for his very crucifiers; *Father forgive them, &c.* nay, in this very prayer, at the 20th verse, he prays for the world; that is for the Gentile world; all those that, by the preaching of the apostles and their successors, should be brought to believe on him to the end of the world. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great and gracious intercessor. 2. That all believers are the children of God in general, as under the fruit and benefit of Christ's intercession. 3. That as all the members of Christ in general, so the ministers and ambassadors of Christ in special, have a peculiar interest in Christ's intercession; and great are the advantages of his intercession for them. 4. From the person interceding, Christ; consider the dignity of his person, God-man; the dearness of his person, God's Son. 5. From the manner of his intercession, not by way of intreaty, but meritorious claim. 6. From the sublimity of his office, our intercessor is near to God, even at his right hand. 7. From the fruits of his intercession; it procures the acceptance and justification of our persons, the hearing and answering of our prayers, the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, our preservation in grace, and our hopes of eternal glory.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

We may understand this two ways: 1. Of all persons, all my friends, all my disciples are thine as well as mine. Hence learn, That the Father and the Son have a like share and property in all believers. 2. The words in the

original being of the neuter gender, signify all thy things are mine, and all my things are thine; Christ and his Father are one, and they agree in one; they have the same essence and nature, the same attributes and will; Christ hath all things that the Father hath, willeth all things that the Father willeth, and doeth all things that the Father doeth, he is therefore really and essentially God. It followeth, *and I am glorified in them*; that is, I am made glorious by their owning and receiving me, by their believing in me, and accepting of me for their Lord and Saviour. Thence note, That the Lord Jesus Christ is eminently glorified in and by all those that believe in him, and belong unto him.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Here observe, 1. Our Saviour's present condition, *I am no more in the world*; that is, I shall continue on earth but a small time longer, and then ascend to my Father in heaven. Learn thence, That Jesus Christ, as he is man, he is gone out of this lower world into the immediate presence of his Father; he had been abased before, he must be exalted now; he had no more work to do on earth, but much to do in heaven; therefore he left this earth to go to heaven. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's prayer to his Father for his apostles, before he left the world: *Holy Father, keep them*; that is, preserve them by thy divine power and goodness for the glory of thy holy name. Here note, 1. The title and appellation given to God: *Holy Father*. Hence learn, That when we go to God in prayers, especially for grace and sanctification, we must look upon him as an holy Father, as essentially and originally holy, as infinitely and independently holy. Note, 2. The supplication requested of God: *Keep through thy name those whom thou hast given me*. Thence learn, That the perseverance of the saints in a state of grace, is the sweet effect and fruit of Christ's prayer; Christ has begged it, and it cannot be denied, there being such an harmony and sweet consent betwixt the will of the Father and the will of the Son. Three things concur to the believers' perseverance, On the Father's part, there is everlasting love, and all-sufficient power. On the Son's part, there is everlasting merit, and constant intercession. On the Spirit's part, there is a perpetual inhabitation, and continual influence. Observe, 3. The end of Christ's supplication on behalf of his people: *That they may be one, as we are one*. Here note, 1. That the heart of Christ is exceedingly set upon the unity and oneness of his members. 2. The believers' union with Christ their head, and one with another, has some resemblance to that unity that is betwixt the Father and the Son. For it is an holy and spiritual union, a close and intimate union, an indissoluble and inseparable union.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition: that the scripture might be fulfilled,

Observe here, 1. That those which shall be saved, are given unto Christ, and committed to his care and trust. 2. That none of those that are given unto Christ, as his charge, and committed to his care and trust, shall be finally lost, "Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." It follows, "but the son of perdition." A person may be said to be a son of perdition two ways; actively and passively—Actively he is so, who makes it his work and business to destroy others. Passively, he is a son of perdition, who, for his wickedness in destroying others, is destroyed himself. Judas was a son of perdition in both these senses; his heart was maliciously set upon destroying Christ, and wilfully set upon his own destruction; his covetousness and hypocrisy prompted him to betray our Saviour, his despair provoked him to destroy himself.

13 And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

In these words our Saviour declares the great reason why he did at this time so publicly and solemnly pray for his disciples; it was to fill them with joy and comfort, that their joy might not be diminished by Christ's departure, but rather increased by the coming of the Comforter: "That they may have my joy fulfilled in them;" that is, the joy which they take in me, and the joy which they have from me: there is a double care which Christ takes of his people; namely, a care of their graces, and a care of their joy and comfort: how solicitous was he to leave his disciples joyful before he departed from them! He delights to see his people cheerful; and he knows of what great use spiritual joy is in the christian's course, both to enable us for doing, and to fit us for suffering. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is the author and original of the joy of his people: "My joy." 2. That it is Christ's will and desire, that his people might be full of holy joy: "that my joy may be fulfilled in them." 3. That the great end of Christ's prayer and intercession was, and is, that his people's hearts might be full of joy: "These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

"I gave them thy word," partly external revelation, and partly by internal illumination; and for thy word's sake "the world hates them," as also "because they are not of the world." Learn, 1. That christians, especially ministers, to whom Christ has given his word, must expect the world's hatred. Few of the prophets or apostles died a natural death; as their calling is eminent, so must their sufferings be exemplary. The best ministers, and the best men, are usually most hated. There is an antipathy against the power of godliness, or a cruel, causeless, implacable, and irreconcilable hatred against the saints, because of their strictness in religion, and contrariety to the world. 2. That it is to the honor of believers, that they are like unto Christ, in being the objects of the world's hatred: "The world hates them; because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world." This Christ adds both for information and consolation: for

information, that they should look for such hatred, misery and trouble, as they saw him grapple with; and for consolation, to think that the world can never hate us so bad as it hated Christ.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Here observe, 1. That the wisdom of Christ sees fit to continue his children and people in the world, notwithstanding all the perils and dangers of the world. He has work for them, and they are of use to him, for a time, in the world: till their work be done, Christ's love will not, and the world's malice cannot remove them from hence. Yet Christ prays that his Father would keep them from the evil; that is, from the sins, temptations and snares of this wicked world. Thence note, That a spiritual victory over evil is to be preferred before a total exemption from evil; it is a far greater mercy to be kept from sin in our afflictions, than from the afflictions themselves. Learn farther; How necessary divine aid is to our preservation and success even in the holiest and best of enterprizes, and how necessary it is to seek it by fervent prayer. Note also, That such as sincerely devote themselves to Christ's service, are sure of his aid and protection, whilst so employed.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

Sanctify them, not initially, for so they were sanctified already, but progressively: Let them increase more and more in grace and holiness. Learn hence, 1. That such as are already sanctified, must labor, and ought to endeavour after further measures, and higher degrees of sanctification: That the most holy may yet be more holy. 2. The word of God is the great instrument in God's hand for his people's sanctification. 3. That the word of God is the truth of God; "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The word of God is a divine truth, an eternal truth, an infallible truth, an holy truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Observe here, 1. Christ's mission: the Father sent him into the world. Christ's sending implies the designation of his person, his qualification for the work, his authority and commission. Learn hence, That Christ himself did not of himself undertake the office of a Mediator, but was sent; that is, authorized and commissioned of God so to do: *Thou hast sent me into the world.* Observe, 2. As Christ's mission, so the apostle's mission: *As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them.* Learn thence, That none may, or ought to, undertake the office of the ministry, without an authoritative sending from Christ himself; not immediately and extraordinarily by voice or vision, but mediately by the officers of the church. And such as are so sent, are sent by Christ himself, and if so, it is the people's duty to reverence their persons, to respect their office, to receive their message. *As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them.*

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

The word sanctify here, is not to be taken for the cleansing, purifying, or making holy that which before was unclean; but Christ's sanctifying himself imports, 1. His separation or setting himself apart to be a sacrifice for sin. 2. His consecration or dedication of himself to this holy use and service. Hence learn, That Jesus Christ did dedicate and solemnly set himself apart to the great work and office of a Mediator.—Learn, 2. That the great end for which Christ did thus sanctify himself, was, that he might sanctify his members; therefore did he consecrate and set himself apart for us, that we should be consecrated to, and wholly set apart for him.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word:

Hitherto our Saviour had been praying for himself and his apostles; now he prays for all persons, both Jews and Gentiles, that should believe on him, throughout the world, by the preaching of the gospel: Hence learn, 1. That all believers have a special interest in Christ's prayer. 2. That in the sense of the gospel they are believers, who are wrought upon to believe in Christ through the word. 3. That such is Christ's care of, and love to his own, that they were remembered by him in his prayer, even before they had a being: "I pray not for these alone, but for all that shall believe in me."

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The special mercy and particular blessing which Christ prays for, on behalf of believers, is a close and intimate union betwixt the Father, himself, and them, and also betwixt one another; such an union as doth in some sort resemble that union which is betwixt God and Christ; not an unity of essence and nature, but of wills and affections. Hence note, 1. That the mystical union betwixt Christ and his members carrieth some resemblance with that union which is betwixt the Father and the Son. 2. That union amongst the ministers and members of Jesus Christ is of so great importance, necessity and consequence, that he did in their behalf principally and chiefly pray for it. An unity of love and affection, of faith and profession, an unity of practice and conversation, are mercies which Christ earnestly prayed for, and has dearly paid for; and nothing is more desired by him now in heaven, than that his disciples should be one among themselves here on earth; "Father, may they be one, as we are one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here Christ intimates one special advantage that would redound to the world by this desirable union betwixt the ministers and members of Christ; it will, if not convert, yet at least convince the world, that I and my doctrine came from God. Thence note, That union amongst Christ's disciples is one special mean to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, and to cause the world to have better thoughts

of him and his doctrine; "By their being one, as we are one, the world will believe that thou didst send me."

22 And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

Here observe, 1. Christ's communication of that glory to believers, which he had received of the Father; that is, not his essential glory, but his mediatorial glory: "The glory which thou gavest me." Now Christ hath no glory given him as God, but much glory bestowed upon him as Mediator, Observe, 2. The end of this communication, why he gave his disciples that glory which the Father had given him: namely, that "they might be one." Learn, 1. That God the Father hath bestowed much glory on Christ his Son, as he is man and mediator of the church. 2. That the same glory for kind and substance, though not for measure and degree, which Christ as mediator has received from the Father, is communicated to true believers. 3. That the great end of this communication was, and is, to oblige and enable his people to maintain a very strict union among themselves: "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one." 4. That unity amongst believers is part of that glory which Christ as Mediator hath obtained for them.

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Observe here, 1. That as the Father is in Christ, so is Christ in believers, and they in him; the Father is in Christ in respect of his divine nature, essence, and attributes; and Christ is in believers, by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit. Observe, 2. That the believers' happiness consisteth in their oneness, in being one with God through Christ, and one amongst themselves: "That they may be made perfect in one." Observe, 3. That God the Father loved Christ his Son; "Thou lovest them as thou hast loved me." God loveth Christ, first as God; so he is *Primum Amabile*, the first object of his love, as representing his attributes exactly. Secondly as Mediator, John x: 17. "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life for my sheep." Observe, 4. That God the Father loves believers, even as he loved Christ himself: that is, he loves them upon the same grounds that he loved him; namely, for their nearness, and for their likeness to him. 1. For their nearness and relation to him; he loveth Christ as his Son, believers as his children, 1 John iii. 1: "Behold what manner of love the Father bestoweth upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!" 2. The properties of the Father's love towards Christ and believers are the same: Doth he love Christ with a tender love, with an unchangeable love, with an everlasting love? So doth he love believers also. Observe, 5. That Christ would have the world know that God the Father loveth the children of men, as well as himself: Christ is not ambitious to ingross all our love unto himself, but would have the world take notice of the good-will of his Father, as well as of himself, to lost mankind: of the Father's love, in sending him, as well as of his own love in coming; "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

24 Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Our Saviour had prayed for his disciples' sanctification before, here he prays for their glorification; 1. "That they may be where he is; now Christ is with them in his ordinances, in his word, and at his table: ere long they shall be with him, as his friends, as his spouse, as his companions in his kingdom." 2. That they may be with him where he is; that is, more than the former; a blind man may be where the sun is, but not with the sun, because he doth not enjoy the light and benefit of it; To be with Christ where he is, imports union and communion with him. That being with him where he is, "they may behold his glory;" that is, to see it, and everlastingly to possess and enjoy it. Learn, 1. That all those that are given to Christ as his charge, and as his reward, shall certainly come to heaven to him; "Father, I will that they be with me;" because I have merited that they should be with me: I will that they behold my glory, because I have purchased it at so dear a rate. Learn, 2. That the work and employment of the saints in heaven chiefly consists in seeing and enjoying Christ's glory; for it will be a possessive sight; the language of every look will be, 'This happiness is mine, this glory is mine.' 3. That the top and height of the saints' happiness in heaven consists in this, that they shall be with Christ; "Father, I will that they may be with me, to behold my glory."

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Observe here, 1. The appellation given to God; "O righteous Father." This is the sixth time that Christ in this prayer has called God Father, it being so sweet a relation, and producing all love, delight, joy and confidence in God, by him that practically improves it. But observe, that at ver. 11. when Christ prayed for his people's sanctification, he said, holy Father, making use of that attribute which is the cause of all holiness in the creature; but now praying for their glorification, he says, "O righteous Father;" righteous in making good thy promises both to me and them. Observe, 2. What it is that our Saviour affirms concerning the wicked and unbelieving world, that they have not known God; "the world hath not known thee;" not as if the world hath not known him at all, but not known him aright; the unbelieving and unsanctified part of the world having no saving knowledge of God, not living answerable to what they know to be their duty. Observe, 3. What Christ affirms concerning himself: "But I have known thee, and these have known thee." Intimating thus much unto us, that Jesus Christ knows God immediately, and all others know him by the means of Christ; Christ is the original and fountal cause of all the saving knowledge that believers have of God. There is not the least ray of saving illumination, that doth not descend from Christ and the Spirit of Christ: "I have known thee, and these have known that thou didst send me."

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.—

That is, "I have made known unto them thy nature, attributes, counsels, will and commands, and I will continue the manifestation of the same unto the end." Learn thence, That the saving knowledge of God was not attainable by natural abilities, but cometh to us by the special revelation of Jesus Christ; "I have declared unto them thy name." Learn, 2. That they that have the name of God, his nature and will savingly declared to them, do not stand in need of any farther declarations and discoveries of God's nature and will to be made unto them: "I have declared unto them thy name, and I will declare it."

—That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

That is, "That the love which is originally in thyself, as the fountain of all grace, may be communicated and dispensed from thee to them, and become inherent in them." Learn hence, That it is not enough for the people of God that they are beloved of him, and that his love is towards them; but they must endeavour to have it in them; that is, experience it in the effects of it, and in the sense and feeling of it in their own souls. The safety of a christian lies in this, that God loves him; but the joy, the comfort, and happiness of a christian, consists in the knowledge, in the sensible apprehension and feeling of this love; therefore Christ closeth his prayer for his members, with this affectionate and comprehensive petition, "Let the love wherewith thou hast loved me be in them, and I in them."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.

No sooner had our dear Lord ended his divine prayer, recorded in the foregoing chapter, but he goes forth to meet his sufferings with a willing cheerfulness. He retires with his disciples into a garden, not to hide and shelter himself from his enemies; for if so, it had been the most improper place he could have chosen; it being the accustomed place where he was wont to pray, and a place well known to Judas, who was now coming to seek him: "Judas, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples;" so that Christ repaired to this garden, not to shun, but to meet the enemy, to offer himself a prey to the wolves, which in the garden hunted him, and laid hold upon him: he also resorted to this garden now for privacy, that he might freely pour out his soul to God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ was praying to his Father in the garden, when Judas with his black guard came to apprehend him. As the

sin of the first Adam, which brought destruction upon his posterity, was committed in a garden, so the salutary passion of the second Adam, which was to rescue us from that destruction, did begin in the garden also.

3 Judas then having received a band of men, and officers from the chief priests and pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons.

Observe, 1. What a multitude were here employed by the chief priests and pharisees, for apprehending a single person; gown men and sword men, young and old, Jew and Gentile; all sorts of persons contriving his death, as all conditions of people were afterwards to receive a benefit by it. But what need of these lanterns and torches, it being then, as some observe, full moon, when they sought him in the garden? All this argued their zealous industry for our Saviour's apprehension, that they might be sure to find him, in case he should hide himself in any holes or corners of the garden. Learn hence, That persecutors and wicked apostates are not asleep in their designs and actions, but very vigilant and active; when at the same time Christ's own disciples and followers are asleep and careless: how active was Judas, and how watchful was his bloody crew, even at the time when Christ's disciples could not keep their eyes open!

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Observe here, 1. How our Lord's sufferings were all fore-known to himself, before they came upon him, and yet how willingly and cheerfully did he go forth to meet them. Should our sufferings be known unto us before they come upon us, how would it disquiet and disturb us! yea, not only discompose us, but distract us! In great wisdom, therefore, and in tender mercy, has God concealed future events from us. But it was otherwise with Christ; he had an exact knowledge of those bitter sufferings which he was to undergo, and yet with a composed mind he goeth forth to meet them; "Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth." Lord, how endearing are our obligations to thyself, that when thou knewest before-hand the bitterness of that cup which the justice of God was about to put into thy hand, thou didst not decline to drink it off for our sakes. Observe, 2. That it was not man's power, but Christ's own permission, which brought his sufferings upon him. How easily could Christ have delivered himself out of his enemies' hands, who with a word from his mouth, caused them to go backward and fall to the ground! Christ in speaking those words did let out a little ray or beam of his Deity, and this struck them down,

Mark what a strange power was here in the word of Christ, and that not an angry word, neither: He did not chide them, and say, "You wretches, how dare you lay your hands on me, and carry me to judgment, who shall one day be your judge?" Christ only said, I am he, and down they fell. O what fear will Christ send out when he cometh to judge the world, who could send forth such a fear when he yielded up himself to be judged and condemned in the world! If there was so much majesty in the voice of Christ, in one of the lowest acts of his humiliation, what will the voice of a glorified Christ be to sinners, when he shall come as a Judge to condemn the world.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.

9 That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none.

Here note, 1. How voluntarily and freely Christ laid down his life. When his enemies were fallen to the ground, he suffered them to rise again, and offers himself to them, to take him and carry him away. Note, 2. How the sight of this glorious miracle of the soldiers falling to the ground, did not deter or discourage them from their wicked purpose; they get up again, and go on with their bloody design. Learn hence, That obstinate and obdurate sinners will not be reclaimed by the most evident and convincing, by the most miraculous and surprising appearances of God against them. Note, 3. How mindful, in the midst of his sufferings, Christ was of his dear disciples, to secure them, at this time, from death and danger, "If ye seek me; let these go their way;" that is my disciples, against whom ye have no warrant at this time. Learn hence, That Christ is so tender of his followers, that he will not put them upon trials, or call them forth to sufferings, till they are ripe and ready fitted and prepared for them. The disciples yet were weak and feeble, timorous and fearful, and Christ had much work and service for them to do in the world; namely to plant and propagate the gospel in foreign countries: he therefore resolves not to lose any one of them by persecution at this time; and thus was his word fulfilled, "Of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none."

10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the highpriest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into thy sheath?

Observe here, St. Peter's love unto and zeal for his Lord and Master, in defence of whom he now draws his sword; but why did he not rather draw upon Judas than upon Malchus! Possibly, because though Judas was most

faulty, yet Malchus might be most forward to carry off our Saviour. Oh, how doth a pious breast swell with indignation at the sight of an open affront offered unto its Saviour! Observe farther, The rebuke which Christ gave St. Peter for what he did; though his heart was sincere, yet his hand was ash; good intentions are no warrant for irregular actions; Christ will thank no man for drawing a sword in defence of him without a warrant and commission from him: To resist a lawful magistrate, even in Christ's own defence, is rash zeal, and discountenanced by the gospel.

—The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

¶ Here observe, 1. A metaphorical description of Christ's sufferings: they are a cup put into his hand to drink of, and that by his own Father. They are a cup, and but a cup; God will not overcharge his people; and this cup is from the hand of a Father, yea, from the hand of our Father: *The cup which my Father hath given me.* Observe, 2. Our Lord's resolution to drink off this cup, how bitter soever, being put to his mouth by his Father's hand: *Shall I not drink it?* that is, I will drink it. Learn hence, 1. That oftentimes the wisdom of God is pleased to put a cup, a very bitter cup, of affliction, into the hand of those to drink, whom he doth most sincerely love. 2. That when God doth so, it is their duty to drink it in silence and submission: *Shall I not drink it?* that is I will certainly drink it with cheerfulness and resignation.

12 Then the band and the captain, and officers of the Jews, took Jesus, and bound him,

13 And led him away to Annas first, (for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the highpriest that same year.)

14 Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Judas having made good his promise to the chief priests, and delivered Jesus a prisoner bound unto their hands, those ravening wolves no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to suck his innocent blood: yet, lest it should look like a downright murder, they allow him a mock-trial, and abuse the law, by perverting it to injustice and bloodshed. How impossible is it for the greatest innocence and virtue to protect from slander and false accusation! and no person can be so innocent or good, whom false witness may not condemn.

15 ¶ And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the highpriest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the highpriest.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the highpriest, and
(No. 29.)

spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then said the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? he saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals (for it was cold) and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

All the four evangelists give us an account of Peter's fall in denying his Master. And therein we have observable, 1. The sin itself which he fell into, the denial of Christ, and this backed with an oath; he swore that he knew not the man. Lord! how may the slavish fear of suffering drive the holiest and best of men to commit the foulest and worst of sin! Observe, 2. The occasion of his fall. 1. His presumptuous confidence of his own strength and standing: *Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.* Lord! to presume upon ourselves is the ready way to provoke thee to leave us to ourselves. If ever we stand in the day of trial, it is, the fear of falling most enable us to stand; we soon fall, if we believe it impossible to fall. 2. His being in bad company, among Christ's enemies; Peter had better have been a-cold by himself alone, than warming himself at a fire which was compassed in with blasphemies of the soldiers, where his conscience, though not seared, was yet made hard. Observe, 3. The reiteration or repetition of this sin; he denied Christ again and again: he denied him first with a lie, then with an oath and curse. O, how dangerous it is not to resist the beginnings of sin! If we yield to one temptation, satan will assault us with more and stronger. Observe, 4. The heinous and aggravating circumstances of Peter's sin. 1. From the character of his person, a disciple, an apostle, a chief apostle; yet he denies Christ. 2. From the person whom he denies, his Master, his Saviour. 3. The time when he denied him; soon after that Christ had washed his feet; yea, soon after he had received the sacrament from Christ's own hand. How unreasonable then is their objection against coming to the Lord's table, that some who go to it, dishonor Christ as soon as they come from it! Such examples ought not to discourage us from coming to the ordinance, but should excite and increase our watchfulness after we have been there, that our after-deportment may be suitable to the solemnity of a sacramental table.

19 ¶ The highpriest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

Our Saviour being brought before Caiaphas the highpriest, he examines him concerning his doctrine and his disciples, pretending him to be guilty of heresy in doctrine, and sedition, in gathering disciples and followers. Our Saviour answers, That, as to his doctrine, he had not delivered it in holes and corners, but had taught publicly in the temple and synagogues, and that in secret he had said nothing: that is, nothing contrary to what he had delivered in public; Christ never willingly affected corners; he taught openly, and propounded his doctrine publicly and plainly in the world. A convincing evidence that both he and his doctrine were of God. Learn hence, 1. That it is not unusual for the best of doctrines to pass under the odious name and imputation of error and heresy. Christ's own doctrine is here charged; *The highpriest asked Jesus of his doctrine.* 2. That the ministers of Christ, who have truth on their side, may and ought to speak boldly and openly; *I speak openly unto the world.* "Veritas nihil erubescit præterquam abscondi." Truth blushes at nothing, except at its being concealed. In secret, says Christ, have I said nothing.

22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the highpriest so?

23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

24 (Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the highpriest.)

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself: They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

26 One of the servants of the highpriest (being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off) saith, did I not see thee in the garden with him?

27 Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew.

Observe here, 1. How insolently and injuriously an officer strikes our Saviour in this court of judicature: *One of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.* What had the holy and innocent Jesus done, to deserve these buffetings? He only made use of the liberty which their law did allow him, which was not to accuse himself, but to put them upon the proof of these accusations which were brought against him.—But, from this instance of our Saviour's sufferings, we learn, That Christ did endure painful buffetings, ignominious and contemptuous usage, even from inferior servants; *giving his cheek to the smiters*, to testify that shame and reproachful usage which was deserved by us, and to sanctify that condition to us, whenever it is allotted for us. Observe, 2. The meek and gentle reproof which the Lord Jesus gives to this rude officer; he doth not strike him dead upon the place, nor cause that arm to wither which was

stretched forth against the Lord's anointed: but only lets him know, that there was no reason for his striking of him. Where note, That though our Saviour doth not revenge himself, yet he vindicates himself, and defends himself, both with law and reason: *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* Hence we learn, 1. That we are not literally to understand the command, Mat. v. of turning the cheek to him that smites us. For Christ himself did not this, but defends the innocency of his words. 2. That to stand up in defence of our own innocency, is not contrary either to the duties of patience or forgiveness, or to the practice and example of our Lord Jesus. Note, 3. That when the soldier had struck Christ upon one cheek, he did not turn to him the other also, according to Mat. v. 39. Which evidently shows, that that precept, *If they smite thee on one cheek turn the other also*, commands only this, that, rather than take revenge, we should bear a second injury. Christians ought rather to suffer a double wrong than to seek a private revenge. Christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently, rather than to avenge one privately; but though it binds up our hands from private revenge, yet it doth not shut our mouths from complaining to public authority. Christ's own practice here expounds the precept elsewhere, Mat. v. 39. For he complains here of the officer's injustice in smiting him before the judicatory, and challenges the man to bear witness of the evil.—Observe lastly, How our Lord was not only buffeted, but bound, and sent bound from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate again: and all this on foot through the streets of Jerusalem, from one end of the city to the other; partly to render his passion more public, being made a gazing-stock to the world, and a spectacle both to angels and men. And his condescending to go bound from one highpriest to another, and from one tribunal to another, teaches his people what delinquents they were before the tribunal of God, and what they deserved by reason of sin; even a sentence of eternal condemnation at the tribunal of the just and holy God.

28 ¶ Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early, and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled: but that they might eat the passover.

There were two courts of judicature which our blessed Saviour was brought before and condemned by: 1. The ecclesiastical court or sanhedrim, in which the highpriest sat as judge: here he was condemned to death for blasphemy. 2. The civil court or judgment-hall, where Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, sat judge, who, because he was a Gentile, they would not go into his house, lest they should be defiled; for they accounted it a legal pollution, to come into the house of a Gentile. Where observe, The notorious hypocrisy of these Jews; they scruple the defiling of themselves by coming near the judgment-hall, where Pilate sat, but make no scruple at all to defile themselves with the guilt of that innocent blood which Pilate shed. When persons are over-zealous for ceremonial observations, they are oftentimes too remiss with reference to moral duties. They brought him to the judgment-hall; but they themselves went not in, lest they should be defiled.

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring you against this man?

30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we should not have delivered him up unto thee.

Observe here, 1. How Pilate humors these Jews in their superstition. They scruple to go into the judgment-hall to him; he therefore goes out to them, and demands what accusation they had against Christ. They charge him here only for being a malefactor, or an evil doer in the general; but elsewhere (Luke xxiii.) they particularly accuse him. 1. "For perverting the nation." 2. "For forbidding to pay tribute to Cesar." 3. "For saying that he himself was Christ a King." All which was filthy calumny; yet Christ underwent the reproach of it without opening his mouth:—Teaching us, when we lie under calumny and unjust imputation, to imitate him, who opened not his mouth, but committed his cause to him that judgeth uprightly.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;

32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

The Jews being now under the power of the Romans, though they had a power of judging and censuring criminals in smaller matters, yet not in capital cases; they could not pronounce a sentence of death upon any person, say some; they might, and did, say others, punish blasphemers, by stoning them to death; but then their sentence is to be ratified by the Roman power: accordingly, here they had in their ecclesiastical court condemned Christ for blasphemy, now they bring him to Pilate the Roman governor to confirm the sentence of death. From hence it appears, That Christ was the true Messias, being sent into the world when the sceptre was departed from Judah, according to that ancient prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come.* The Jews had no power absolutely to condemn any man or put him to death; but this power the Roman emperor reserved to his own deputy. This contributed towards the fulfilling of our Saviour's words, Mat. xx. 19. *That he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and should be crucified:* which was not a Jewish but a Roman punishment. Had the Jews put him to death, they had stoned him. But Christ was to be made a curse for us by hanging upon a tree; and accordingly the Jews execute the counsel of God, though they knew it not, by refusing to put him to death themselves. Learn hence, How willing Christ was to undergo a shameful, painful, and accursed death, that he might testify his love unto, and procure a blessing for his people. Thus the saying of Jesus was fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Observe here, 1. Pilate's ensnaring question, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* How jealous are great men of Jesus Christ, and how afraid are they of his Kingdom, power and authority, as if it would be prejudicial to their authority and power in the world, which was far enough from Christ's thoughts? Observe, 2. The wisdom and caution of our Saviour's answer, he neither affirms nor denies. Though whenever we speak we are bound to speak the truth, yet we are not bound at all times to speak the whole truth. Christ tells him therefore, that upon the supposition that he was a king, yet his kingdom was not earthly, but a spiritual kingdom; he was no temporal king, to rule over his subjects with temporal power and worldly pomp, but a spiritual king in and over his church only, to order the affairs, and look after the government thereof. Learn hence, That Christ as God hath an universal kingdom of power and providence even over the highest of men, and as a Mediator, hath a spiritual kingdom in and over his church. 2. That it is a clear evidence that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, inasmuch as it is not carried on by violence and force of arms, as worldly kingdoms are, but by spiritual means and methods: *If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight for me: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

37 Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth: Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate asks him again directly and expressly, *Art thou a King or not?* Our Saviour answers, *"Thou sayest that I am a King,* and so it is indeed as thou sayest, I am a King, and the King of the Jews too; but not a temporal King, to rule over them after the manner of earthly Kings, with temporal power, and worldly pomp and splendor; but I am a spiritual King, to rule and govern, not only the Jews,

but my whole church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, after a spiritual manner." Observe here, 1. The dominion and sovereignty of *Jesus Christ*, he has a kingdom: *My kingdom*. Observe, 2. The condition and qualification of this kingdom, negatively expressed: *My kingdom is not of this world*. Observe, 3. The use and end of this kingdom, that the truth may have place among the children of men for their salvation: *To this end was I born, and came into the world, to bear witness unto the truth*. Observe, 4. The subjects of Christ's kingdom declared: *Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice*; That is, every one who is by divine grace disposed to believe and love the truth, will hear and obey Christ's doctrine.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, *I find in him no fault at all*.

39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Observe here, 1. The question Pilate put to Christ, *What is truth?* A most noble and important question, had it been put forth with an honest heart, with a mind fairly disposed for information and satisfaction: but it is evident Pilate's inquiry was not serious; nay, it is generally thought that Pilate asked this question in scorn, contempt and derision: for he stays not for our Lord's answer, but as soon as he started this query, went off the bench in haste. Learn hence, That this question, *What is truth?* or how may we come to the knowledge of the truth? is of unspeakable use and importance, and a question whereon the whole frame and constitution of religion depends: because truth is claimed by all parties of men, by all professors of religion. Ask the different parties from the old gentleman at Rome to the poorest Quaker and Muggletonian, *Where is truth?* and they will all tell you, They are in the possession of it: every sect hath thus much of popery with it, that the professors of it think themselves infallible, and every one cries out, *Here is truth*. But God has given us a two-fold light to search for truth; namely, the light of reason, and the light of scripture, or divine revelation. The former Solomon calls the *candle of the Lord*, set up in our breasts by God, on purpose to discover truth unto us. God allows us, yea, enjoins us, the free and impartial use of our understandings and judgments, in order to the finding out of divine truth; but because nature's light or the light of natural reason is not clear and bright enough to give us a prospect of supernatural truths, (for nature and reason can never dictate those things which depend only upon God's free grace and good pleasure; such as the doctrines of a Saviour and Redeemer, and the method of man's salvation by the sufferings of the Son of God,) it had been blasphemy once to have supposed such things, had not God revealed them in scripture: therefore the second standard of divine truth, is the infallible word of God. The gospel of Christ is the way, and the truth:

Truth came by Jesus Christ. And would men be ruled and conducted by these unalterable standards of truth, namely, right reason and divine revelation, they would easily agree in their judgments what is to be believed, and all duties and controversies would vanish. Right reason and inspired scriptures are the best judges of controversies; they being the fixed standards and measures of divine truth, can best resolve Pilate's question here, and tell us *What is truth*. Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: he came forth three several times, and tells the Jews that he finds no fault in him: he bids them take him, and judge him according to their law. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 3. Pilate having absolved Christ, *I find no fault in him*, endeavours next to release him, and takes occasion from their custom of having a prisoner released to them at their feast, to insinuate his desire that they should choose Christ: *I have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover*. Observe lastly, How the Jews prefer Barabbas, a robber, before the holy and innocent Jesus: *They all cry out, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas*.—Learn hence, That no persons, how wicked and vile soever, are so odious in the eyes of the enemies of God, as Christ himself was, and his friends and followers now are: Christ did find it thus in his own person when on earth: Barabbas; a robber, was preferred before him: and now he is in heaven, he suffers in his members, the filth of the world being preferred before them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Observe here, 1. That as the death of the cross was a Roman punishment, so it was the manner of the Romans to whip their malefactors before they crucified them. Accordingly *Pilate took Jesus and scourged him*. Oh! amazing sight, the great God of heaven and earth is lashed and scourged like a base slave. Behold! hard-hearted sinner, the lashes wherewith thy Redeemer is cruelly tormented, were to preserve thee from the severer lashes of thine own accusing and condemning conscience, and to save thee from being lashed by the rage and fury of devils to all eternity. Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: it is very evident, that he had a mind to release him; and it is concluded, that Pilate was thus forward to scourge Christ, hoping that the Jews would have been satisfied with this lighter punishment, and to have dismissed him. From this instance we may gather, that hypocrites within the pale of the visible church, may be guilty of such tremendous acts of wickedness, as the conscience of an infidel and pagan may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a pagan, absolves Christ, and seeks to release him, whilst the hypocritical Jews, who had heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, condemn him. Observe, 3. How wretchedly Pilate suffers himself to be overcome with the Jews' importunity, and contrary to the light of his own reason and conscience, delivers the holy and innocent Jesus first to be scourged, and then crucified. Learn thence, That it is a vain apology for sin, when persons pretend that it was

not committed with their own consent, but at the instigation and importunity of others: for such is the frame and constitution of man's soul, that none can make him either wicked or miserable, without his own consent: *Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.*

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe.

3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews: And they smote him with their hands.

Behold here, 1. The crown which they have prepared for him, a crown of thorns, and with great cruelty they press it close to his sacred temples, whilst those sharp pointed briars piercing those tender parts, let out that blood, which in a short time was to be more freely poured forth for the redemption of captive souls. The next part of our Saviour's sufferings consisted of cruel mockings: Christ had owned himself to be the King of the Jews; that is, a spiritual King, in and over his church: but the Jews expecting that the Messiah should have appeared in the pomp of an earthly prince, and finding it to be quite otherwise in our Saviour, they look upon him as a deceiver and impostor, and accordingly treat him as a mock-king, with all the marks of derision and scorn: For, first, they put a crown upon his head, but a very ignominious and painful one; *A crown of thorns.* They put a sceptre in his hand, but it was that of a reed: a robe of scarlet or purple upon his body, and then bowed their knees unto him, as they were wont to do before their princes, crying, Hail, King! Thus were all the marks of scorn imaginable put upon our dear Redeemer; yet what they did in jest, God permitted to be done in earnest; for all these things were ensigns and marks of sovereignty, and Almighty God caused the royal dignity of his Son to shine forth, even in the midst of his greatest abasement. Whence was all this jeering and sport, but to flout majesty? And why did the Son of God undergo all this ignominy, disgrace and shame, but to show what was due unto us for our sins; as also to give us an example, to bear all the scorn, reproach, and shame imaginable, for the sake of him who for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame, as well as endured the cross? Verily nothing was omitted that either the malice of men, or the rage of devils, could possibly invent, either to torment or reproach him. But with what a lamb-like meekness, with what an astonishing patience did he undergo all these trials, both for our good, and in our stead.

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe — And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man.

6 When the chief priests therefore, (No. 29.)

and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, *Crucify him, crucify him.* Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

Observe here, 1. The great variety of our Saviour's sufferings; he is made the foot-ball of cruelty and scorn; his sacred body is stript of his garments, and his back disguised with purple robes; his tender temples wounded with a thorny crown; his face spit upon, his cheeks buffeted, his head smitten, his hand accepted with a reed. By his wearing a crown of thorns, he took away the bitterness of that curse, which our sins brought upon the earth, Gen. iii. 18. *Thorns and briars shall it bring forth.* Christ, by his bitter and bloody sufferings, has turned all the curses of his people into crowns and blessings. Observe, 2. The noble testimony given of Christ's innocency, by the mouth of Pilate, *I find in him no fault at all:* he doth not say, I find him not guilty of what is laid to his charge; but gives an universal testimony of our Lord's innocency: *I find no fault at all in him.* In spite of all malice, innocency shall find some friends and abettors. Rather than Christ shall want witnesses, Pilate's mouth shall be opened for his justification; how fain would he have freed Jesus, whom he found faultless! Our Lord found more compassion from Pilate, an Heathen, than he did from them of his own nation. Pilate would have saved him, but they cry out for his blood: Hypocrites within the visible church may be guilty of such monstrous acts of wickedness, as the consciences of Heathens, without the church, may boggle at, and protest against. Pilate, a Pagan, pronounces Christ innocent, whilst the hypocritical Jews, who had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles, do condemn him. Observe, 3. Who influenced the main body of the Jews, to desire Pilate to put Jesus to death; it was the chief priests and elders, *they persuaded the multitude:* woe be to the common people, when their guides and leaders are corrupt; and woe unto them much more, if they follow their wicked and pernicious counsels: the Jews here followed their guides the chief priests, but it was to their own destruction, as well as their leaders: *When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch.*

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

8 ¶ When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

9 And went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? but Jesus gave him no answer.

Observe here, 1. How ambitious the chief priests were that Christ should die under color of law: *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die.* The law which they allude to, is the law for putting false prophets and blasphemers to death: of which number they conclude Christ to be, because he made himself the Son of God; whereas he did not make himself so, or only pretend to be so, but really and indeed was so: to wit, the eternal Son of God. Such as are

indeed blasphemers, and do arrogate to themselves what is proper to God only, by the law of God they ought to be put to death; but Christ was not guilty of the violation of that law; for he was indeed the Son of God, and did not make himself so. Observe, 2. How full of fear the conscience of Pilate was, when the Jews told him that Jesus made himself the Son of God; he was afraid to condemn him, not knowing but that he might be some divine and extraordinary person, and consequently might draw down divine vengeance on his own head. Learn hence, That serious thoughts of a Deity will strike terror even into a natural conscience, especially when the sinner is following a course which his own judgment cannot approve; when Pilate heard of Christ's being the Son of God, he was afraid, knowing that what he had done to him, was against his own conscience. Observe, 3. The question Pilate puts to Christ upon this occasion, *Whence art thou?* that is, What is thy original or parentage? Art thou a divine person or not? Our blessed Saviour being unwilling to obstruct his own sufferings, or to discover any thing that might hinder Pilate from proceeding against him, would give him no answer, having before made a reasonable and sufficient defence. O how ready was Christ to lay down his life for sinners, and how willing to pay that ransom for his people, which the justice of God required.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, *Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*

11 Jesus answered, *thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Observe here, 1. How offended Pilate was at Christ's silence, and how unreasonably he boasts of his power and authority; *Have not I power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?* It is the great sin and snare of men in power, to forget from whom they derive their power, and to think that they may employ their power as they please. Observe, 2. The piety and meekness of our Saviour's answer. *Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.* That is, thou hast no power over me, nor couldst thou inflict any punishment upon me, were it not that my Father had, in his great wisdom, divine counsel, and for glorious ends, permitted it so to be. Learn, That Christ's being under the power of any man, how great and eminent soever, did flow from the peculiar dispensation of God, who, in his wise and wonderful counsel, so ordered it and ordained it, for the redemption and salvation of his people; he was above all human power as God, and no ways obnoxious to Pilate's power, being a perfectly innocent man. Observe, 3. How Christ charges his death more upon Judas and the Jews, than upon Pilate and the Gentiles; *They that delivered me unto thee have the greater sin.* Not that Pilate was excused from sin, in delivering Christ to be crucified; he sinned heinously in abusing his power, but Judas sinned more in delivering him up to the chief priests, and the chief priests in delivering him up to Pilate, than Pilate himself, whom they made a tool to serve their malice and revenge; they had

better means of knowledge than he, and so sinned against more light than he; and consequently their guilt was greater, and their condemnation heavier than his. Learn thence, That the greater means of light and knowledge persons sin against, the more aggravated is their guilt, and the more heightened will be their condemnation: *He that delivered me unto thee, hath the greater sin.*

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews cried out, saying, if thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cesar.

13 ¶ When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Still observe, How unwilling Pilate was to put Christ to death: conscience bid him spare, popularity bids him kill; how frequently and how fervently did he contend with the Jews, till they make it a state case, and tacitly accuse him for a traitor to the Roman Emperor, if he released him: *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend.* When Pilate heard that, he delivers up the innocent Jesus to be crucified. Hence learn, That the natural consciences of men, and the innate notions of good and evil, may carry men on a great way in opposing that which is a bare faced iniquity; but, at last, either fear or shame will over-rule, if there be not a superior and more noble principle. Though Pilate's conscience acquitted Christ, and his mouth had declared that he had found no fault at all in him; yet fear of Cesar's displeasure causes him to deliver up to death the holiest and best of men, against his judgment and his conscience: *When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus forth unto them.*

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king.

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered. We have no king but Cesar.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified—

Observe here, how careful the Holy Ghost is to record and set down the time when Pilate gave sentence against Christ. In general it was on the day of the preparation for the passover; that is, the day immediately before it, when they prepared every thing needful for the solemnization; and in particular, it was about the sixth hour of that day. St.

Mark calls it the third hour: St. John the sixth; but is easily reconciled thus: the Jews divided the day into four quarters, which they called hours: the first was called the third hour, which answers to the ninth; the second called the sixth hour, answering our twelfth; the third, called the ninth hour, answering our three in the afternoon; the fourth, called the twelfth hour, which was the time of their retirement from labor, and beginning of the first night watch. Now the whole time, from the third hour to the sixth, that is, from nine to twelve, was called the third hour; and the whole intervening time, from the sixth to the ninth, that is, from twelve to three, is called the sixth hour; and so of the rest. Now when St. John says, it was about the sixth hour when Christ was condemned by Pilate, and led away to be crucified, and St. Mark says it was the third hour, we are to understand, that St. Mark takes in the whole time of the third hour, from nine to twelve; and St. John saying it was about the sixth hour, implies, that it was near twelve; so that between the hours of nine and twelve our Lord was sentenced, and led away to his cross about twelve, fastened to his cross, upon which he hung till the ninth hour; that is, till about three in the afternoon; during which time, there was such an eclipse of the sun, as did occasion darkness over all the earth—Learn hence, The great love and condescension of Christ, in stooping so low, to have his sufferings lengthened out upon our accounts, to expiate our guilt, which deserveth eternal suffering; that he might, by his example, warn us to prepare for trials of long continuance, and sanctify a state of continual affliction to us. Behold the Son of God harassed all night before he suffered, hurried from place to place, posted backward and forward from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate, wearied, scourged, buffeted, crowned with thorns, at last nailed to the cross, and hanging thereupon from about twelve to three, in exquisite torture of body, and under the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul. O Lord! thy kindness towards us is matchless and inimitable, never was love like thine.

—And they took Jesus and led him away.

17 And he bearing his cross, went forth into the place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, *Golgotha*:

18 Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Observe here, 1 That it was a custom among the Romans, to cause the person condemned to crucifying, to carry his own cross; accordingly our Saviour bare his own cross part of the way, till fainting under the burden of it, they laid it upon another, not out of mercy, but malice, reserving him for a more public death; they were loath he should go away in a fainting fit. But why could not Christ bear his own cross, who was able to bear the sins of the whole world, when hanging upon the cross? *Answer*, 1 Probably, the Jews' malice provided him with a cross of an extraordinary greatness, proportionable to the crimes they charged him with. 2 He was much debilitated and weakened, with his long watching and

sweating the night before. 3. The sharp edges of the cross grating his late whipped and galled shoulders, might occasion the fresh bleeding of his wounds, and his weakening thereby. 4. Hereby he gave the world a demonstration of the truth of his humanity, that he was in all things like unto us, with respect to his human nature, and the common infirmities of that nature. Herein, like Isaac, Christ cheerfully carried the wood on which he was to be offered up a sacrifice to divine justice.

Observe, 2. The infamous company which our holy Lord suffered with, two thieves; on either side one, and himself in the midst: it had been a sufficient disparagement to our blessed Redeemer, to be sorted with the best of men; but to be numbered with the scum of mankind, is such an indignity as confounds our thoughts. This was designed by the Jews to dishonor and disgrace our Saviour the more, and to persuade the world that he was the greatest of offenders; but God over-ruled this, for fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning the Messias, Isa. liii. ult. *And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

19 ¶ And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross, And the writing was, **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

20 This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, *The king of the Jews*; but that he said, *I am king of the Jews.*

22 Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

Observe here, 1. The inscription written by Pilate over our suffering Saviour; *This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.* It was the manner of the Romans, when they crucified a malefactor, to publish the cause of his death in capital letters over his head, that so the equity of their proceedings might more clearly appear to the people. Now it is observable how wonderfully the wisdom of God over-ruled the heart and pen of Pilate to draw this title, which was truly honorable, and fix it to his cross. Pilate, who before was his judge, and pronounced him innocent, is now his herald to proclaim his glory. Learn hence, That the regal dignity of Christ was openly proclaimed by an enemy, and that in the time of his greatest reproaches and sufferings. Pilate, without his own knowledge, did our Saviour an eminent piece of service; he did that for Christ, which none of his own disciples durst do; not designedly, but from the special over-ruling providence of God. No thanks to Pilate for all this; because the highest services performed to Christ undesignedly, shall neither be accepted nor rewarded by God.—Observe, 2 How the Jews endeavour to alter this: *Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.* The Jews thought it would be a disgrace to them that Christ should be reported abroad to have been their

king, therefore they desire an alteration of the writing: but Pilate, that wrote in honor of Christ, stiffly defends what he had done: to all their importunity he returns this resolute answer: *What I have written, I have written.* Surely the constancy of Pilate at this time, must be attributed to special divine Providence. How wonderful was it, that he who before was as inconstant as a reed, should now be fixed as a pillar of brass! Whence is this, but from the God of spirits moving upon his spirit to write, and to defend what was written?—The providence of God hath a prospect beyond the understanding of all creatures.

23 ¶ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments (and made four parts, to every soldier a part) and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves. Let us not rent it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be? that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Here we have recorded our Saviour's sufferings from the soldiers; they stript him of his garments, before they fastened him to his cross, and divided those garments which could be parted amongst them, and cast lots for his woven coat, which could not be divided. Little did these vile soldiers think that they were now fulfilling a scripture prophecy: Yet so it was, this action of theirs being foretold, Psal. xxii. 18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*—Not that this prophecy made them do it, but was fulfilled by their doing of it. From hence we may gather, that Christ suffered naked upon the cross; as naked, some say, as he came into the world. We had made ourselves naked to our shame; and Christ became naked to cover our shame. If, sensible of our own nakedness and shame, we flee unto him by faith, we shall be clothed with robes of righteousness and garments of everlasting praise.

25 ¶ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, Behold thy son.

27 Then saith he to his disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

These words contain our Saviour's affectionate recommendation of his distressed mother to the care of a dear disciple. It was an argument of Christ's wonderful love to her, that when he was nailed to the cross, and ready to die, he was more concerned for his mother's sorrows, than for his own sufferings. Now was Simeon's prophecy fulfilled, Luke ii. 35, *A sword shall pass through thine own soul also.* Her soul was pierced for him, both as his natural mother, and also as a mystical member of him her head; therefore Christ applies these comfortable words as a salve to her wounds, even whilst his own were bleeding unto death. *Woman, behold thy Son.* Where note, He calls her *woman*, and not *mother*; he doth not say, *Mother, behold thy Son*; but *woman, behold him*. Not that Christ was ashamed of, or unwilling to own her as his mother: but either, 1. Fearing that calling her by that name should augment and increase her grief and trouble. Or else, 2. To intimate his change of state and condition, that being ready to die and return to his Father in heaven, he was above all earthly relations, and knew no one after the flesh, no, not his very mother: yet see at the same time, when he was above her, and about to leave her, how his care manifested itself for her, when his soul and body were full of anguish to the very brink; yet all this makes him not in the least unmindful of so dear a relation. Thence learn, That Christ's tender care of his mother, even in the time of his greatest distress, is an excellent pattern for all children to imitate and follow to the end of the world. St. John here obeyed Christ's command, and imitated his example; he took her to his own home; that is, he treated her with all that dutiful regard which a tender and indulgent mother challenges from a pious and obedient son. No personal trial or trouble upon ourselves doth exempt us from the performance of our duty towards others, especially towards our near and dear relations: Christ, in the extremity of his sufferings, accounted it his duty to take care of, and provide for his dear mother; teaching us by his example, that children ought to evidence that they honor their parents, by taking care of them in their decayed and desolate condition. Again, inasmuch as St. John took care of the holy mother after her dear Son's death, *That disciple took her to his own home*: we learn, That the Lord never removes one comfort, and takes away the means of subsistence from his people, but he raises up another in the room of it. It is very probable that Joseph her husband was before this time dead, and Jesus her Son was now dying; but still God provides; he raises up St. John to take care of her; he takes her to his own home, and looks upon her as one of his family. But how comes St. John above the rest to have this honorable service put upon him, and this high trust reposed in him? Answer, the text tells us, *he was the disciple whom Jesus loved*; that is, in a more particular manner, treating him with greater freedom and familiarity than the rest; he also evidenced more love unto, and more courage and resolution for Christ, than the rest of his disciples, he standing by the cross, when they got afar off, Mark xv. 40. Thence we learn, That such as are beloved of Christ, as do keep close unto him, and express most zeal and resolution for him, shall be peculiarly honored by him, and be employed in the highest services for him.

28 ¶ After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

Observe here, 1. The affliction or suffering which our Saviour complained of, and that is, *thirst*; there are two sorts of thirst, one natural and proper, the other spiritual and figurative: Christ felt both at this time. His body thirsted by reason of those agonies which it labored under. His soul thirsted in vehement desires, and fervent longings, to accomplish that great and difficult work he was now about. 2. The design and end of our Lord's complaint: *That the scripture might be fulfilled, he saith, I thirst.* Our Saviour finding that all was accomplished, which he was to do before his death, but only the fulfilling that one scripture, Psalm lxi. 21. *They gave me vinegar to drink*; he for the accomplishment thereof, said *I thirst.* Whence note, That such were the agonies and extreme sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, that they drank up his very spirits, and made him cry, *I thirst.* 2. That when Christ cried out, *I thirst*, it was to show, that whatever was foretold by the prophets concerning him, was exactly accomplished, and even to a circumstance fulfilled in him: *That the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, I thirst.*

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Observe here, 1. Our Lord's last words, *It is finished*—2. His last act, *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* As to the former, his last words, *It is finished*, this might be the probable intendment of it: 1. *It is finished*, that is, now is my Father's eternal counsel concerning me accomplished, and now is the promise that he made of my becoming a sacrifice for sin fulfilled; both my Father's purpose and my Father's promise are now receiving their final accomplishment. 2. *It is finished*; that is, the scriptures are now fulfilled; all the types that did prefigure me, all the prophetic predictions that were made of me, all the Jewish sacrifices that pointed at me, have now received their final accomplishment in me, and are abolished in my death. 3. *It is finished*: that is, my sufferings are now ended, my race is run, my work is done, I am now putting my last hand to it, my death is before me, I have finished the work, the whole work which I came into the world for doing as well as dying; all is upon the matter completed. 4. It is just finishing, it will be instantly finished. Again, 4. *It is finished*; that is, the fury and malice, the rage and revenge of my enemies is now ended, they have done their worst; the chief priests and soldiers, the judges and witnesses, the executioners and tormentors, have all tired out themselves with the exercise of their own malice; but now their spite and spleen, their envy and enmity is ended, and the Son of God is at rest. 5. *It is finished*; that is, the glorious work of man's redemption and salvation is perfected and performed, and consummated and completed, the price is paid, satisfaction is given, redemption is purchased, and salvation insured to a miserable world. Woe unto us, if Christ had left but one farthing of our debt to the justice of God unpaid, (No 29.)

paid, we must have lain in hell to all eternity, as being insolvent; *But Christ has by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* Learn thence, That Jesus Christ hath perfected, and completely finished the great work of redemption committed to him by God the Father. Observe, 2. Our Saviour's last act: *He bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* Whence learn, The spontaneity and voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, how freely he surrendered to death: his soul was not rent from him; but yielded up to God by him; Christ was a volunteer in dying; though his death was a violent death, yet it was a voluntary sacrifice: *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day, (for that sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

These verses contain several remarkable passages, tending to the confirmation of our faith, in the belief of the certainty and reality of our Saviour's death; in which the Jews, the soldiers, and St. John, do all give their several and sufficient evidences. Observe, 1. The Jews' part in clearing up this truth; they desire Pilate (who had power alone to dispose of the dead bodies of condemned persons,) that the legs of the crucified persons might be broken to hasten their death, that so they might be taken away, and buried; because, according to the law, Deut. xxi. 22, 23, the land was defiled with those that were hanged, if not timely buried; and they judged, if the bodies of these persons did remain on the cross all that night, and the next sabbath-day, *which was an high day*, (the ordinary sabbath, and the first day of the passover, or feast of unleavened bread and meeting together) it might pollute both them and their feast. Whence note, The cursed hypocrisy of these

Jews: they look upon themselves as strictly bound to observe an outward ceremony, but their consciences never scruple to violate the most weighty precepts of the moral law; they strictly observe the ceremonial precept, that the dead bodies should not remain upon the cross; but they scruple not to crucify the Son of God, and to use him with the utmost rigour, desiring his bones may be broken. Observe, 2. The soldiers' part contributed to clear the truth of Christ's death: they execute what the Jews had desired, and Pilate granted, breaking the legs of the two thieves, but not of Jesus, because he was already dead; but one of the soldiers, resolving to make sure work, thrust a spear in his side, and there came out straightway blood and water proving that he was really dead. All which points out to us, that it is he who came by water and blood, 1-John v. 6. and that from the merit and efficacy of his death, there floweth out blood for the obtaining remission of sin, and water, to regenerate and wash us from our uncleanness. From the barbarous soldiers' piercing Christ's side after he was dead, we learn, That no cruelty was omitted towards Christ, either dead or alive, which might testify the great desert of our sin, nor was there any needful evidence wanting, which might make clear the truth of his death; the soldiers' piercing of our Saviour's side, was at once an exercise of their cruelty, and an evidence of the certainty of Christ's death. Observe, 3. St. John's part in this evidence; he avouches, That Christ really died, and expressly affirms, that he saw it with his own eyes for the confirmation of our faith; *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true.* And further shows, That by these actions of the soldiers, that was done, by which several scripture prophecies were fulfilled, and received their accomplishment; particularly, that of Exodus xii. 46. concerning the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, *That a bone of it should not be broken;* and that prediction, Zech. xii. 10. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced.* Learn hence, That Christ is the truth and substance of that type, the paschal lamb mentioned, Exod. xii. and the true pasover sacrificed for us; therefore what was ordained concerning the paschal lamb, is applied here to Christ, as the substance of that type; *A bone of him shall not be broken.*

38 ¶ And after this, Joseph of Arimathea (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave: he came therefore and took the body of Jesus,

39 And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the gar-

den a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation-day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

This last paragraph of the chapter gives us an account of our Lord's honorable burial; such a funeral as never was since graves were first digged. Where observe, 1. Our Lord's body must be begged before it could be buried, the dead bodies of malefactors being in the power, and at the disposal of the judge; Pilate grants it, and accordingly the dead body is taken down, wrapped in fine linen, and prepared for the sepulchre. Observe, 2. The persons who bestowed this honorable burial upon Christ, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; the one provided fine linen, the other fine spices, and they jointly wound and embalmed his body after the Jewish manner; both of them worthy, though close disciples: grace doth not always make a public and open show where it is; but as there is much secret treasure unseen in the bowels of the earth, so is there much grace in the hearts of some saints, which the world takes little notice of. We read of none of the apostles at Christ's funeral; fear had put them to flight; but Joseph and Nicodemus appeared boldly: if God strengthens the weak, and leaves the strong to the prevalency of their own fears, the weak shall be as David, and the strong as tow. Observe, 3. The grave or sepulchre in which our Lord was buried: it was a sepulchre in a garden, to expiate Adam's sin committed in a garden; as by the sin of the first Adam we were driven out of paradise, the garden of pleasure; so by the sufferings of a second Adam, who lay buried in a garden, we may hope for entrance into the heavenly paradise. And it was in a new sepulchre, wherein never any man was laid, lest his adversaries should say, it was another that was risen, who was buried there before, or that he arose as one of the old prophets did by touching the bones of some other dead person. Observe, 4. The manner of our Lord's funeral; it was hasty, public, and decent; it was hasty, by reason of the straitness of time; the sabbath was approaching, and all business is laid aside to prepare for that. Teaching us, How much it is our duty to dispatch our worldly business early on the eve of the Lord's day, that we may be the better prepared to sanctify that day. Again, our Lord's funeral was public and open; all persons that would, might be spectators, to cut off occasion from any to object, that there was deceit and fraud used in or about our Lord's burial; yet he was also interred decently, his holy body being wrapt in fine linen, and perfumed with spices, according to the Jewish custom. Observe, 5. The reasons why our Lord was thus buried, seeing he was to rise again in as short a time as other men lie by the walls; doubtless it was to declare the certainty of his death, and the reality of his resurrection, to fulfil the types and prophecies which went before of him: *As Jonah being three days and three nights in the whale's belly.* He was also buried to complete his humiliation, this being the lowest step to which he could descend in his abased state. Finally, He went into the grave that he might conquer death in his own territories. Observe lastly, Of what use our Lord's burial is to us his followers: it shows us the amazing depth of his humiliation, from what and to

what his love brought him, even from the bosom of his Father to the bosom of the grave. It may also comfort us against the fears of death: the grave could not long keep Christ, it shall not always keep us; it was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now; he whose head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave. Awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust, for the enmity of the grave is slain by Christ.

CHAPTER XX.

This and the following chapter give us an account of our Saviour's exaltation and victorious triumph over all his enemies, by his powerful resurrection. All the four evangelists do confirm the truth of it, by recording the several steps and degrees of the manifestation of it.—In this chapter Christ's resurrection is confirmed, first to Mary Magdalene, next to Peter and John, then to all the disciples, except Thomas.

THE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

In this verse is recorded how Mary Magdalene came early to the sepulchre, on the first day of the week, to anoint the dead body of our Lord Jesus. Where note, That though her heart did burn with an ardent zeal and affection to her crucified Lord, yet the commanded duties of the sabbath were not omitted by her; she kept close, and silently spent that holy day in a mixture of grief and hope: her example is a good pattern of sabbath sanctification, and worthy of our imitation. Note, 2. What magnanimity and courage is found in this weak woman; she followed Christ courageously, when his disciples left him cowardly; she accompanied him to his cross, she followed his hearse to the grave, when his disciples durst not appear; and now very early in the morning she goes to visit his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night, nor the presence of the watchmen. Learn thence, That courage is the special gift of God, and if he gives it to the feeble sex, even to timorous and fearful women, it is not in the power of man to make them afraid.

2 Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

It was a great honor that God put upon this poor woman Mary Magdalene, that she has the first notice of our Saviour's resurrection, and is the first that discovers it to the apostles. But why had not the virgin Mary, his disconsolate mother, this privilege conferred on her, rather than Mary Magdalene, who had been a grievous sinner? Doubt-

less this was for the comfort of all true penitents, and administers great consolation to them: as the angels in heaven rejoice, much more doth Christ joy in the recovery of one repenting sinner, than in multitudes of holy and just persons (such was the blessed Virgin) who need no repentance.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together; and the other disciple did out-run Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie:

7 And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Here observe, 1. How Peter and John, moved with Mary Magdalene's words, *They have taken away the Lord, &c.* do run to the sepulchre to satisfy themselves in the truth of it.—Such as sincerely love Christ, upon the least intimation that he is missing, bestir themselves with great activity and diligence, that they may see him, or hear of him: Peter and John run to the sepulchre to see what was become of their holy Master. Observe, 2. That there was such clear evidence about Christ's grave, as made it apparent that he was indeed risen from the dead, and not conveyed away, either by friends or foes: it cannot be supposed that any of his friends (could they have come at it) would have so handled his holy body, as to carry it away naked; and for his foes, had they stole away the body, they would never have left the fine linen behind them. Observe, 3. That when Christ arose from the grave, he left his grave clothes behind him; whereas when Lazarus arose, he came forth with his grave-clothes about him; It teaches us, That Christ rose never to die more, but to live and reign for ever: therefore he left his grave, as never to make use of them more. But Lazarus was to die again, death was once more to have dominion over him; he therefore came forth with his grave-clothes about him. Observe, lastly, How ignorant the apostles were of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection and of the holy scriptures, which declared he was to rise again from the dead: *They knew not the scriptures*, that is, they did not heed and regard them, ponder them in their hearts, and feed upon them by faith.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 ¶ But Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Here we have a description of the great love of Mary Magdalene, which she expressed towards Christ after the resurrection; she went to his sepulchre early, when it was yet dark: she hastily calls the disciples, Peter and John, to the sepulchre; and she stays behind weeping at the sepulchre, when they were gone away to their own home. And as Mary first sought him, and longest sought him, so she first found him. Here note, 1. Mary's carriage and behaviour towards her Saviour: this is discovered by her patient attendance, *She stood without at the sepulchre*; by her passionate mourning, *she stood at the sepulchre weeping*; by her unwearied diligence, *she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre*; Here was great love indeed in this poor woman; a love stronger than death; a love which did out-strip and go beyond the greatest apostles. Learn thence, 1. That true love to Christ suffers not itself to be stinted or limited, no, not by the greatest examples; the weakest woman that truly loves Christ, may piously strive with the great apostle in this point: though he be more learned, wiser, more useful, and more eminent than any of us, yet it is holy and wise, not to suffer ourselves to be exceeded by any in our love to Christ; every christian may strive to exceed any one in grace, and to attain the highest place in the kingdom of heaven. Learn, 2. That strong love is valiant and undaunted, it will grapple and encounter with the strongest opposition; Mary fears nothing in seeking of her Lord, neither the darkness of the night, nor the terror of the soldiers, nor the malice of the Jews: love is strong as death, and the flames thereof are vehement.—Note farther, The success of Mary Magdalene's love to Christ, and unwearied attendance on his sepulchre; she found not the dead body of Christ, and it is well she did not: for if death could have held him, it would not have let us go. But though she found not her lord in the grave, she found two of his servants there, two angels; of all things in the world, one would have least expected to find an angel in a grave, spirits in the place of dead bodies, and immortality in the place of corruption. But from hence we learn, That such as sincerely seek the Lord, shall certainly find, if not the very thing which they seek, yet that which is much fitter and much better for them: Mary did not find Christ's dead body, but she finds that which is more comfortable for her to find; namely, two angels to testify that he was risen. Where note, The posture of these angels described: the one sitting at the head, the other at the feet: it is a matter of comfort to the members of Christ, that angels do not wait upon the head only, but upon the feet also; and it ought to be matter of imitation also. Let us imitate our blessed Saviour, in having an angel not at our head only, but at our feet also: many have an ambition to have an angel at their head, a great measure of light and know-

ledge there, but they care not for an angel at their feet, they delight not to walk answerably to their light and knowledge, they have an angelical understanding and a diabolical conversation; it is sad for a man to have all his religion in his brain and tongue, and nothing in his heart and life.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? she saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? she supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Observe here, 1. That the best company in the world will not satisfy or content such as are seeking for Jesus Christ, when they find not him whom their souls seek: Mary now enjoyed the presence and company of two angels, but this did not satisfy her in the absence of Christ himself. Observe, 2. How passionately did Mary mourn for the loss and want of Christ's bodily presence, thereby giving testimony of her great affection towards him; but truly our love to Christ is best shown, not by our passionate desires for his bodily presence, but by our holy longings after his spiritual presence, in his word and ordinances here on earth, and his blessed and immediate presence in heaven. Observe, 3. How Christ may be present with, and very near unto his people, and yet not be presently discerned by them; *Jesus stood by Mary, but she knew not that it was Jesus*; her not expecting a living Christ, was one cause why she did not discern him. Observe, 4. How exceedingly Mary's thoughts were taken up with Christ; she saith to the gardener, *If thou hast borne him hence: What him?* She doth not say whom; but her heart was so taken up with Christ, and her mind so full of him, that she concluded every body would understand whom she meant, though she did not say whom she meant. Hence note, That the soul of a sincere believer is full of earnest and longing desires after Jesus Christ. 2. That such a soul is yet sometimes at a loss for Christ, and cannot tell where to find him. 3. That whilst the soul is at a loss for Christ, its desires are often quicker and more stirring after Christ. This was the case with Mary here; with the spouse by night on her bed, and early in the morning, she sought him whom her soul loved.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary: She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I

ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

In the former of these verses, Christ makes himself known to Mary, and calleth her by her name. In the latter he gives her a prohibition and an injunction. Observe, 1. The prohibition, *Touch me not*; together with the reason of it, *For I am not yet ascended to my Father*. It is concluded by interpreters, that Mary Magdalene was now fallen at Christ's feet and embraced them; that having found him whom her soul loved, she hugs him now, and hangs about him; but Christ forbids any farther embracing, and rejects such testimonies of her love; as if he had said, Although I will allow you as much familiarity as shall satisfactorily convince you of the verity of my resurrection, yet you must not expect to converse with me in the bodily manner which you did before my death; for I am ascending to my Father, and must be enjoyed no longer after a corporeal, but spiritual manner. Learn hence, That our love to Jesus Christ is best shown, not by our human passionate affections to his bodily presence, but by our spiritual communion with him by faith here on earth, in order to an immediate communion with him face to face in heaven.—Christ now after his resurrection was advanced to a more spiritual condition, therefore refuses at Mary's hand the offices of human conversation, but expects of her the duties and services of spiritual devotion. Observe, 2. Christ's injunction; *But go to my brethren, and say, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God*. Where note, The endearing title given to the disciples, *My brethren*: He had before his death called them his servants, his friends, his children; but now, after his resurrection, he calls them his brethren: he became our brother by assuming our nature in his incarnation, he continues our brother by resuming that nature at his resurrection. Note farther, That Christ calls his disciples brethren, after his exaltation and resurrection; thereby showing that the change in his condition had wrought no change in his affection towards his poor disciples; but those that were his brethren before, in the time of his humiliation and abasement, are so still, after his exaltation and advancement; *Go to my brethren; and say, humility doth not only go before honor, but dwells with honor, and doth evermore accompany it*. Observe lastly, The good news or message of joy which Christ sends by Mary to his dear disciples; *Say, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and to your God*; as if nature and adoption gave the same interest. Christ calls God his God, and his disciples' God; his Father and their Father: first his, and then theirs, and therefore theirs because his. Learn hence, That God for Christ's sake hath dignified believers with that near and dear relation of his being a Father to them in and through his Son; so that as they ought to carry it towards him like children by obedience, subjection, and resignation, so they may expect he will retain a fatherly affection towards them, and they may expect from him fatherly compassion, provision, protection, correction, and all things needful. Lastly, Remark from Christ's saying, *I go to my God and your God*, the false interence of the Socinians, viz. That because Christ styled God his God, hence say they, it is evident that Christ is not God; but from those words it only follows, that he was not God according to that nature which ascended. Thus Ps. xlv. it is said of

(No. 29)

Christ, *God, even thy God hath anointed thee*: and yet he add's of the same person, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

19 ¶ Then the same day at evening being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them *his* hands and his side.—Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

Our blessed Saviour's first appearing after his resurrection having been to Mary Magdalene, as the former verses acquainted us, the same day at evening, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus miraculously, and, as to the disciples, insensibly opens the door, and stands in the midst of them and says, *Peace be unto you*, and shows them his hands and his side. Where note, 1. That it has been no strange thing in the church, that the best members of it have been put to frequent their assemblies with great fear, and been forced to meet in the night with great caution, because of the fury of the persecutors: here Christ's own disciples were forced to meet together in the night, the doors kept shut for fear of the Jews. Note, 2. Let Christ's disciples meet together never so privately, and with never so much hazard and jeopardy, they shall have Christ's company with them; neither bolts, nor locks, nor fastened doors, shall hold Christ from them; *When the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them*. Observe lastly, The evidence which our Saviour offers to evince and prove the certainty of his resurrection; *He showed the disciples his hands and his side*. Christ appealed to and admitted of the judgment of their senses, to assure them that it was his real body. And if we must not be allowed to believe our senses (as the Romish synagogue would persuade us) we shall want the best external evidence we can have to prove the truth of the christian religion; namely, the miracles of our Saviour: for how can we be assured those miracles were true, but by the judgment of our senses? Now, as our senses tell us that Christ's miracles were true, so they assure us that the popish doctrine of transubstantiation is false.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

6 A

23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Observe here, 1. The repetition of our Saviour's endearing salutation to his disciples, *Peace be unto you, Peace be unto you*. This was no more than might be needful, to signify his firm reconciliation to them, notwithstanding their late cowardice in forsaking of him, and flying from him, when the storm fell upon him. Observe, 2. How Christ doth renew his disciples' commission for the work of the ministry, who possibly were much discouraged with the remembrance of their faint-heartedness in the time of his sufferings; he doth therefore anew commissionate them, and sends them forth in these words. *As my Father hath sent me*, that is, to preach, plant, and propagate the gospel; *so send I you*. By the same authority, and for the same ends, in part, for which I was sent by my Father, do I send you; namely, to gather, to govern, and instruct my church. Learn hence, That when Christ left the world, he did not leave the church destitute of a gospel ministry, which shall continue to the end of the world. As Christ was sent by the Father, so are his ministers sent by him; and they may expect having the same authority and commission, the same success and blessing: and the contempt cast upon them and their message, ultimately reflects upon God and Christ, whose messengers they are. Observe, 3. How Christ that sends them forth, doth furnish them with the gifts of the Spirit, for their office: *He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*; that is, the gift of the Holy Ghost. They had received the Holy Spirit before as a spirit of sanctification, here they receive it in its extraordinary gifts, to fit them for their office. And Christ's conferring the Holy Ghost, by breathing upon them, shows that the Holy Spirit proceeds as well from the Son as from the Father. And as by God's breathing the first man was made a living soul; so by Christ's breathing on the apostles, they were quickened and extraordinarily enabled for the service they were called to. Learn hence, That when Christ sends forth any about his work, he will furnish them with endowments answerable to their vast employment: and the best furniture they can have, is the Holy Spirit in his gifts and qualifications suitable to their work: *He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. Observe, 4. How Christ asserts their authority in the discharge of their commission, and declares, that what they act ministerially, according to their commission here on earth, is ratified in heaven; *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted*. Where note, That there is a twofold power of remitting or forgiving sins: the one magisterial and authoritative; this belongs to Christ alone: the other ministerial and declarative; this belongs to Christ's ambassadors, who have a power in his name to bind and loose. It is a pious note of St. Austin upon this place, That Christ first conferred the Holy Ghost upon his apostles, and then said, *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted*. Thereby intimating that it is not they, but the Holy Ghost by them, that puts away sin; *For who can forgive sin, but God only?* The power of forgiving sin, that man hath, is only to declare that if men be truly and really penitent, their sins are forgiven them for the sake of Christ's satisfaction.

24 ¶ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

What the cause of Thomas' absence was, is not declared; it is evident that he was not with the rest of the disciples when Christ appeared to them; and his absence had like to have cost him dear, even the loss of his faith; and he might have had cause for ever to have bewailed his absence from that meeting of the disciples, had not Christ been more merciful. Learn hence, That the letting slip of one holy opportunity, may prove exceedingly prejudicial to the soul's advantage: it is wise and safe to lay hold upon every opportunity for enjoying communion with God, and fellowship with his saints. Thomas' absence deprived him not only of the good news which Mary brought of Christ's being risen, but also of the sight of him, which the other disciples got by assembling together; and for want thereof Thomas is left under many doubts and fears. Verily, we know not what we lose, when we absent ourselves from the assembly of God's people. Such views of a crucified raised Jesus may be communicated to others, whilst we are absent, as would have confirmed our faith, and established our joy, had we been present. Observe farther, What a strange declaration Thomas makes of his obstinate unbelief, *Except I see the print of the nails, and put my finger into his side I will not believe*. Where note, How strangely rooted unbelief is in the hearts of holy men, insomuch that they desire the objects of faith should fall under the view of their senses. Thomas carries his faith at his fingers' ends; he will believe no more than he can see or feel; whereas *faith is the evidence of things not seen*. Oh! Thomas, how deplorable had been thy case, if Christ had never given thee that proof which was very unreasonable for thee to expect. But Christ takes compassion on him, and appears to him, and cures his obstinate unbelief, which he might have justly punished, as appears by the following verses.

26 ¶ And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, *Peace be unto you*.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

Observe here, 1. Our Saviour's appearing again to his

disciples after his resurrection; it was eight days after he first arose, which was the first day of the week. Here note, That Christ's rising the first day of the week, and appearing on the next first day of the week after to the disciples, and they observing that day for their solemn assemblies, and St. Paul administering on that day the Lord's supper, Acts xx. and commanding on that day collections for the poor, 1 Cor. xvi. and St. John calling it the *Lord's day*, Rev. i. 10. From these authorities, and the primitive practice, we derive our christian sabbath: for we do not find in all the scripture, one instance of any one congregation of christians only assembling upon the jewish sabbath, but on the first day of the week, on which we ground our observation of that day. Observe, 2. The wonderful condescension of Christ to the weakness of Thomas' faith; he bids him reach forth his hand and thrust it into his side. Not that Christ was pleased with, but only pitiful towards Thomas' infirmities; and it ought to be no encouragement to any person to follow his example, in seeking or expecting the like signs of their own prescribing for helping of their faith. Observe, 3. How mercifully Christ over-ruled Thomas' unbelief, for the confirmation of our faith. His doubting proved a means for establishing his own and our faith; therefore says Gregory well, *Plus mihi profuit dubitatio Thomæ quam credulitas Mariæ*: "Had not Thomas doubted, we had not been so fully assured, that it was the same Christ that was crucified who rose again."

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God.

These words may be considered two ways. 1. As an abrupt speech, importing a vehement admiration of Christ's mercy towards him, and of his own stupidity and dulness to believe. Learn hence, That the convincing condescension of Christ turns unbelief into a rapture of holy admiration, and humble adoration. 2. This expression of Thomas, *My Lord and my God*, contains a short but absolute confession of faith.—Thomas rightly collects from this resurrection, that he was Lord, *God blessed for ever more*, the true Messiah, the expected Redeemer; and accordingly, with an explicit faith, he now professes his interest in him, saying, *My Lord and my God*. Yet note, That this resurrection could not make him God, and render him then the object of divine worship, if he had been only a creature before. And farther, observe, That Christ doth not reprove Thomas for owning him as God, which shows that Thomas did not mistake in owning the divinity of Christ.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Here we have Christ's reprehension of Thomas for not believing without such sensible evidence as he desired. He believed now that Christ was risen from the dead, but it was upon the testimony of his senses only. Therefore Christ tells him, That his faith would have been more excellent and more eminently rewardable, if he had believed without such demonstrative evidence: *Faith is the evidence of things not seen*. Therefore to give credit to a thing upon the evidence

of sense is not properly believing. Observe farther, How Christ pronounces them blessed, who should hereafter believe on him through the preaching of the gospel, though they did not see him as Thomas did, nor handle him as he might. This is a sure rule, that by how much our faith stands in less need of the external evidence of sense, the stronger our faith is, and the more acceptable it is, provided what we believe be revealed in the word of God: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing ye might have life through his name.

Observe here, 1. The true end for which the miracles of Christ were so carefully recorded; namely, *that we might believe*. By believing that Christ is the Son of God, we have life; and by the evidence of the miracles, we know and believe him to have been the Son of God: the miracles which Christ wrought, were the best external evidence of his mission. Observe, 2. That all Christ's miracles both before his passion, and after his resurrection, were not recorded by the Evangelists. Observe, 3. The great point concerning Christ, to be known and believed from the scriptures, is this, that Jesus, the Son of the virgin, is the promised Messiah, the anointed of the Father, he in whom all the types and shadows of the law are accomplished; and that this Jesus is for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal with the Father; one in essence equal in power and glory. Thus believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and accompanying that belief with a holy life, if we believe well, and live well, we shall have life through his name.

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he *himself*:

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with several appearances of Christ to his disciples after his resurrection: all which were in Jerusalem. This chapter acquaints us with his appearing to his disciples in Galilee, whither he had ordered his disciples to go, promising there to meet them. Jerusalem now becomes a forsaken place, a people abandoned to destruction: Christ will not show himself openly to them, but Galilee was a place where Christ's ministry had found better acceptance; to Galilee therefore doth he go. Such places wherein Christ is most welcome to preach, shall be most honored with his presence: *Jesus showed himself to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias*, called elsewhere the sea of Galilee.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately: and that night they caught nothing.

Observe here, That after Christ was crucified, the disciples returned for a time to their trade and employment of fishing: though they were called to be fishers of men, yet churches not being gathered and constituted at present, not being able to maintain them, they labor with their hands to supply their present necessities. Afterwards, when at the feast of Pentecost, they had received those visible gifts of the Holy Ghost, which did furnish them for preaching the gospel to all nations, and they went forth to plant and propagate the gospel, we may believe they then gave over the labor of their secular callings, and applied themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. That may be done (*Ecclesia constituenda*) in a church which is constituting, or about to be constituted. Observe farther, How Peter, with the rest, *toil all night and catch nothing*; but no sooner is Christ come among them, but they inclose a multitude of fishes. Thereby teaching us, That all human labors and endeavours are in vain, unless Christ by his presence and blessings crown them with success.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he saith unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Observe here, 1. Christ was near, very near to his disciples, but they perceived it not; *Jesus stood on the shore, but they knew not that it was Jesus*. Learn, Christ is not always discerned by us when he is present with us; it is a double mercy to enjoy his company, and to know indeed that it is he. Observe, 2. Although they had labored all the night in vain, yet at Christ's command they go to work again, and with great success: *They were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes*. When Christ is about to do great things for his people, yet will he have them exert all possible endeavours of their own; and the want of former success must not discourage from future endeavours.

Observe, 3. What a proof Christ here gives of his divinity and Godhead: how were all the fish in the sea at his pleasure, and obedient to his command! He knew where they swam, and brings them from one part of the lake to the other: *Where the disciples had toiled all night, and caught nothing*. Christ our Mediator is true God, and as such he has sovereign power and providence over all the creatures; the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the fish swimming in the sea, are obedient to his power, and observant to his commands.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his fisher's coat unto him* (for he was naked) and did cast himself into the sea.

8 And the disciples came in a little ship (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Observe here, 1. The great zeal and forwardness of Peter; hearing that it was Christ, he leaps into the sea to get to him. O how inviting, attractive and alluring is a sight of Christ! It will make those that know him, break through all difficulties to come unto him. It is not a sea of water, no, nor seas of blood, that can keep a zealous soul at a distance from Christ. *When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat and cast himself into the sea*. Observe, 2. What a complication of miracles here were; as soon as they came to land they discerned another miracle, viz. a fire of coals, and fish laid on, and bread all created and produced by Christ out of nothing, at this time, as an evidence of his divine power; for before they could get the fish to shore, they saw fish broiling upon coals, which makes it evident that these were none of the fish which they had caught. Christ, when he pleases, for the benefit and comfort of his people, will work miracle upon miracle, mercy upon mercy, one wonder upon the head of another: for here, after a miracle at sea, they met with another miracle at land: *As soon as they came to land, they saw a fire*.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye now have caught,

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken,

Observe here, 1, What was Christ's end in commanding his disciples to bring forth the fish which they had now taken, namely, that the sight of their number and bigness, together with the sight of the net remaining unbroken, might confirm them in the belief of its being a real miracle. Christ had fed their bellies before, his business now is to feed their minds with the contemplation of the greatness and reality of the miracle. All Christ's miracles were obvious to sense, and would bear the examination of the senses; not like the lying wonders of the church of Rome, which are commonly wrought in the dark to cozen the vulgar, and are mere cheats and impostures. Observe, 2. That this full draught of fishes, which Peter and the rest of the disciples now had, might probably presage that great and wonderful success which he and they afterwards were to have in fishing for men. Here we have an hundred and fifty and three great fishes caught at one draught: but, Acts ii. we find three thousand souls converted by St Peter at one sermon. Oh the marvellous success of the gospel at the first preaching and planting of it! Three thousand men proselyted by one sermon. Now we have cause to fear there are three thousand sermons preached, and scarce one soul savingly converted: *Lord, who hath believed our report?*

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.

A twofold reason may be assigned why Christ did at this time invite and call his disciples to dine with him; The first and more principal reason was, to evidence to them the reality of his resurrection, and to assure them of the truth of his manhood, that they might not think it was an apparition only. By the miracle in catching the fishes, he proved himself to be God; by his present eating of the fish, he evidenced himself to be man; and consequently teaches us, that our exalted High Priest continues our kinsman in heaven: He is still bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; he has taken possession of heaven in our nature, sitting there in our glorified humanity, united to the glorious Deity, clothed with that body which hung in its blood and gore upon the cross, but now shining brighter than ten thousand suns. The second and less principal reason why Christ called his disciples to dine with him, was this, to show his tender care over the bodies of his dear disciples, as being the tabernacles of his own Spirit, the temples of the Holy Ghost; therefore Christ encourages, though not to the pampering, yet to the refreshing of them; *Jesus said unto them, Come and dine:* and he would not confer with them till they had dined; as the next verse shows.

15 ¶ So, when they had dined, Jesus
(No 30)

saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him, the third time, *Lovest thou me?* And he said unto him, Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee: Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Observe here, 1. Christ puts Peter upon a threefold profession of his love unto him, answerable to his threefold denial of him: his threefold denial required a threefold confession. True repentance ought, and will be as eminent in the fruit and effects of it, as the saint's fall hath been. A threefold denial of Christ shall be attended with a threefold profession of love unto him. Observe, 2. The solemn question put by our Saviour unto Peter, *Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me more than these?* that is, more than thy occupation and employment, more than thy nets and fishing-boats; if so, leave them, and wholly employ thyself in feeding my sheep and lambs. Or, more than these? that is, more than the rest of my disciples: dost thou love me more than thou lovest these; or more than they love me? If so, evidence the sincerity of thy love to me by thy care of mine. Thence note, That ministers who are called to take care of Christ's flock, had need of much love to Jesus Christ, and great compassion for souls; by which they will be animated and fortified to go through with the labors and difficulties, as well as to encounter the dangers and sufferings which do accompany their calling: *Simon, lovest thou me? feed my flock.* Note farther, That the surest argument and best evidence of a minister's love to Jesus Christ, is his conscientious care to feed: that is, to teach, instruct, and govern the whole flock of Christ: lambs and sheep, weak and strong; the feeble in the fold were purchased by the great Shepherd: and if he judged them worth his blood, well may we judge them worth our sweat. Note again, That such as would be faithful in the ministerial charge ought to look upon their people as committed to them by Christ himself, as loved of him, and committed to their care by him, and for which they must be accountable to him; Christ calls them three times over his lambs and his sheep, and as often charges Peter to feed them. Observe next, Peter's threefold answer to Christ's question, *Simon, lovest thou me more than these? Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Where note, 1. The great modesty of Peter in his reply. "Lovest thou me more than these?" says Christ;

Peter replies, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" he doth not say, Lord, I love thee above them all, and before them all; here is no boasting now: once it was said that Peter vaunted, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I;" but now his fall had taught him humility; he boasts not of his love above others, and makes no comparison with others, but only ranks himself among the true lovers of Christ; *Lord, I love thee.* Note, 2. The evidence that Peter gives of his sincere love to Christ; he dares appeal to Christ himself, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee: yea, thou that art omniscient, the all-knowing and heart-searching God, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee. Oh! it is a blessed thing when we can and dare appeal to God's knowledge: and it is matter of high consolation, to know that God knoweth our sincerity and love unto him, and that he knoweth and approveth us as such;" "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee!" Note lastly, From these words, "Lord, thou knowest all things," an argument of Christ's divinity: he that knows all things, and particularly the hearts of all men, is God, 1. Kings viii. 29, but so doth Christ, if St. Peter's testimony here be true; saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things;" that is, say the Socinians, very many things; but this would have destroyed St. Peter's argument at once; for it follows not that Christ knew the sincerity of St. Peter's heart, unless he knew the secrets of all hearts; and if he knew the secrets of all hearts, he is really God.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

In these words our Saviour forewarns Peter of his future sufferings, intimating that he should prove more stout than in his former trial. When he was young and unexperienced, he enjoyed his liberty; but when he was grown older in years, and stronger in grace, he should willingly stretch forth his hands, and quietly suffer himself to be bound to the cross: for Peter (say some) was not nailed, but tied and bound to the cross only, and so, as a martyr or witness for the truth of Christ, glorified God by his death. Learn hence, 1. The ministers of Jesus Christ, when they undertake the charge of the flock, must prepare for suffering work, and their lot upon it: therefore in this prediction of Peter's suffering joined with the former injunction, *Feed my Sheep.* 2. That human nature in Christ's ministers, as well as in other men, reluctates sufferings, has an antipathy against a violent death; "They shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not." 3. From the time of Peter's sufferings, *when he is old*; learn, That the timing of the saints' sufferings is in Christ's hands; he can, and when he pleaseth, doth screen them from suffering

till old age; when their work is almost done for God, they close their days with suffering for him; "When thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee." Lastly, That the sufferings of the saints in general, and of the ministers of Christ in particular, do redound much to the glory of God, which is a consideration that ought to reconcile them to the cross of Christ, and support them under it "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

20 ¶ Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following: which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter, seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

Our Saviour having foretold the manner of Peter's death in the foregoing verses; here in these, Peter is inquisitive after, and very solicitous for the knowledge of what kind of death St. John should die. Christ checks him for his curiosity as meddling with that which did not concern him; yet intimates to him, That John should live till he came to take vengeance on the Jews, and destroy Jerusalem: "If I will that he tarry till I come;" that is, till I come to execute judgment upon Jerusalem. Here we may note, There are two great vanities in men with reference to knowledge, the one a neglect to know what is our duty to know; the other a curiosity to know what doth not belong to us to know. Christ tells Peter, it was none of his business to inquire what John should do; but he ought rather to be preparing for what he himself should suffer: "If I will that he tarry, what is that to thee?"

23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Observe here, How strangely our Saviour's words were mistaken and misunderstood by his own disciples; they apprehend presently that John should not die, and so it passed current among them. From hence we may note, How much the wisdom of God is, and ought to be admired, in giving us a written word, and tying us to it, when we see erroneous traditions so soon on foot in the world, and our Saviour's own speeches so much mistaken, and that by wise and holy men themselves, in the purest times; much more may the words of others be misreported, and wrested contrary to their sense and meaning. How great then is the vanity and uncertainty of oral tradition! Men are naturally prone to mistake, to mistake themselves, and to mistake

one another. The more to be admired is their over-daring ignorance, who think they cannot err. Such an haughty opinion of a man's self, concludes him to be neither good nor wise.

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

The great modesty of the holy evangelist St. John, is all along throughout his gospel very observable; he mentioneth himself hitherto under a third person: he calleth himself a disciple, a learner, who excelleth the most accomplished doctors of the ages ever since. Here he speaks more plainly and expressly concerning himself, declaring that he was an eye-witness and an ear-witness of what he wrote, for the greater certainty thereof. And this protestation here made by the evangelist of the truth of what he wrote, was highly necessary, lest any should think that Christ's extraordinary love and affection to him (he being the beloved disciple.) should move him to exceed (as we are prone to do) in writing the history of their lives who are dear to us, and we to them. Learn hence, That this gospel was written by John the beloved disciple, and the narration is of divine truth, worthy to be embraced and received by us as a perfect rule of faith and life; *We know that his testimony is true.*

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written, Amen.

John being about to conclude the history of our Saviour's life, asserts, that there were many other miracles and special deeds done by Christ both before and after his passion, which he had not recorded or set down; because should all that Christ did and said be committed to writing, it would even fill the world, the volumes would be so many. From hence we gather, 1. The wonderful activity, industry, and diligence of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was never idle, but that his whole life was spent in doing good; because should all the particular instances have been recorded, it would amount to an incredible bulk. Learn, 2. That it is impossible to get all said, which might be said of Christ, and in his commendation; such is the transcendent excellency of his person, and the weakness of our apprehensions and judgments, that if all were written which might be written concerning him, the world itself could not contain the books which should be written. Learn lastly, That although many of Christ's sermons, conferences, miracles, and actions, be not recorded; yet it doth not follow, nor can it be inferred from thence, that any necessary doctrine is omitted, or not sufficiently confirmed: there being so much written as it pleased God we should know, and was necessary for us to know, in order to our improvement in faith and holiness. If then, after all the revelation and discovery which God has made of his Son Christ Jesus, and of the way that leads to eternal salvation by him, persons remain willingly ignorant of him, and of their duty to him, "Where shall they appear, and how shall they escape?"

REV. I, VER. 5, 6.

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CLOSE.

THE design of the foregoing notes upon the holy evangelists, being to recommend the instructive life of our blessed Redeemer to our observation and imitation: although I have, upon all occasions, propounded his example to be followed by us in all the steps of imitable virtue, as the matter every where occurred; yet adjudging it may be profitable to sum up together the several graces and virtues which were so orient in the *Life of Christ*, that having them daily before our eyes, we may be continually correcting and reforming of our lives by that blessed pattern; I shall therefore briefly offer at it.—Because,

Nothing is so proper to form us to holiness, as the example

of the mediator, it being absolutely perfect, and thoroughly accommodated to our present state; there is no example of any mere man; that is to be followed without imitation; but the *Life of Christ* was the purest gold without the least alloy. His conversation was a living law; and Christianity, which is the best and holiest institution in the world, is nothing else but a conformity to his precepts and pattern. The universal command of the whole gospel is this. *To walk as Christ walked.* This denotes a sincere intention, desire, and endeavour to imitate and follow him in all the paths of holiness and obedience.

Particularly let us imitate Jesus.

I. *In his early piety.* We find him at twelve years old "about his Father's business, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions." See on St. Luke ii. 46, 47. An early piety gives both the person and the service a peculiar pre-eminency; no comfort in life, and no happiness in death, like the happiness and comfort of being good betimes.

II. *In his obedience to his earthly parents.* See on St. Luke ii. 51. "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them." He paid homage to the womb that bare him, and to his supposed and reputed father that provided for him; let a person be never so high above others, he is still below his parents; if the highest upon earth think their parents beneath them, and themselves above their parents' commands, our Saviour did not so. What shall we think of those monsters of ingratitude, the reproach of human nature, who are ashamed to own their parents because of their poverty; or despise them because of the infirmities of their age! Prov. xxiii. 22.—"Hearken to thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old."

III. *In his unwearied diligence in doing good.* Acts x. 38. *Who went about doing good.* This was his meat and drink by day; his rest and sleep by night. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and administered to such as were in necessities and straits. And he has declared that he will judge us at the great day, according to our imitation of him in doing good to all mankind. See the notes on St. Matt. xxv. the ten last verses.

IV. *In his humility and lowliness of mind.* Matt. xi. 29. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;" witness his stooping to the meanest office, even that of washing his disciples' feet, St. John xiii. 5. He that came in the form of a servant, performs the office of the meanest servant to his disciples. And all this was to set us an example of mutual condescension to each other; "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet;" which precept, though it doth not bind us to the same action, yet it obliges us to the same condescension; namely, to think no office of love beneath us, which the necessities of our brother call for from us.

V. *In the unblameableness and inoffensiveness of his life and actions.* He injured none, and justly offended none, but was harmless as well as holy: He wrought a miracle to pay tribute-money, rather than give occasion of offence to the government. See on Matt. xix. 27. Accordingly, let us be harmless and blameless; wise as serpents, and innocent as doves; piety without policy is too simple to be safe; policy without piety is too subtle to be good.

VI. *In his eminent self-denial.* He emptied himself and became poor. When he was rich as God from all eternity, he impoverished himself by becoming man. Oh! What did he not deny when he left the bosom of his Father, with the ineffable delights and pleasures which he there enjoyed from all eternity; and instead thereof, to drink the cup, the bitter cup of his Father's wrath for our sake? Lord, how can we enough abase ourselves for thee, who thus deniedst thyself for us?

VII. *In his contentment in a low and mean condition in this world:* yea, in a suffering and afflicted condition. He

would not honor the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, and was therefore of himself less provided of comfortable accommodations than the birds of the air, or the beasts of the field. See Luke ix. 58. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head." Let us learn from him to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit; let there be no murmurings, complaints, or foolish charging of God, heard from us, whatever straits or troubles we may be brought into: "But in whatsoever state we are, let us be therewith content." Phil. iv. 11.

VIII. *In his frequent performance of the duty of private prayer and fasting.* He sometimes spent a whole night in prayer, Luke vi. 12. "He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." And Mark i. 35. "In the morning rising up a great while before day, he went into a solitary place and prayed." It is certain, that we have much more business with Almighty God in prayer than Christ had; he had no sins to confess, no wants of grace to make known: yet did he delight with frequency and fervency to perform this homage to his heavenly Father. Lord, how doth thy zeal and forwardness condemn our remissness and lukewarmness in praying to our heavenly Father.

IX. *In his affectionate performance of the duty of praise and thanksgiving.* Our blessed Saviour was a great pattern of thankfulness. Matt. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, &c." John xi. 41. Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me;" When he was to eat common bread, he received it with thanksgiving. What a pattern of thankfulness then was Jesus to his followers! There is hardly any one external duty which we do not find the hypocrite performing in scripture, except this of thanksgiving and praise; we find Judas repenting, Ahab humbling himself, Saul sacrificing; but rarely do we find any wicked man blessing and praising God: need will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgiving.

X. *In his compassion towards those that were in distress and misery.* Matt. xx. 34. Great was his compassion to the bodies of men: He healed all that came unto him; he healed many undesired: with great condolency and tender sympathy, he exercised acts of mercy and compassion, when the object of compassion was before him, and did perfectly abhor, and severely condemn all acts of cruelty: how great was his compassion to the souls of men! what pains did he take, and what hazards did he run in preaching the gospel to lost sinners, in his fervent prayers for them; but especially in dying for them! Let us imitate Christ herein: as the compassion was universal to all mankind, to the whole man, soul and body; as it was active and operative; as it was exercised with marvellous complacency and delight; as it was a preventing compassion, and unwearied compassion; so let ours be also.

XI. *In his holy and fruitful discourse.* His lips dropt as the honey-comb, and his tongue was as choice silver: When walking with his disciples to Emmaus, with what heavenly discourse did he entertain them in the way! See Luke xxiv. 13, &c. A good pattern for our imitation, when providentially cast into such company as will bear it. Lord, what a shame and reproach is it to us, that in common conversation we spend so many hours together, in talking over all the news of city and country, and part without speaking one word of Jesus Christ, our best friend!

XII. In his free conversation: The Son of man came eating and drinking, Mat. xi. 19. That is, was of a free and familiar converse, affable and sociable. not sour or morose, never shunning the society of the worst of men, even of the pharisees themselves; but complying with their innocent customs and accompanying them at their feasts. See on Luke v. 29. We do not find that when Christ was invited to any public entertainment, that ever he refused to go; not so much for the pleasure of eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good; Christ conversed with bad men, but as their physician, not as their companion: let us go and do likewise.

XIII. In his patience under sufferings and reproaches— When he was reviled he reviled not again; but underwent the burden of his sufferings with admirable patience and meekness of spirit, when his name and honor suffered the vilest indignities, blasphemies, and reproaches, that the malice of satan, and the malignity of wicked men, could belch out against it; when he was called a blasphemer, a sorcerer, a devil, a wine-bibber, a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners. For an innocent person, and a dignified person, to bear all this, when he could have looked all his enemies into hell, and have frowned them into nothing; verily to bear all this without the least discomposure of spirit, is the highest triumph of patience that ever the world was acquainted with. And why all this, but to leave us an example that we should follow his steps! 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

XIV. In his readiness to forgive injuries: One of his last words upon the cross, was a prayer for his murderers; *Father forgive them,* Luke xxiii. 34. He offered up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it. Thus to forgive our enemies, and to beg forgiveness for them, will be an evidence of a Christ-like frame and temper; when the grace of God calms those tumultuous and outrageous passions which at any time we find raging in our breasts, moulding our spirits into sweetness and gentleness, freeing us from all malicious desires of revenge, which are so far beneath a christian, that it is the baseness of a man; yea, as jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of the devil; it is the spirit of the apostate nature.

XV. In his laying to heart the sins, as well as the sufferings of others. Mark iii. 5. "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Such was his zeal for his Father's glory, such his compassion on the souls of men, such his antipathy against, and hatred of sin, that he was grieved for sin wherever he found it, and mourned over those, who had no hearts to mourn for themselves. Lord! how far are they off from a Christ-like spirit and temper, who instead of mourning for other men's sins, rejoice in iniquity, and take pleasure to see their brother stab at once the christian name and his own soul!

XVI. In his zeal for the public worship of God. John ii. 17. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" Now as Christ was, so christians ought to be intensely zealous for the glory of God, the honor of his house, and the purity of his public worship. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Our zeal for the public worship of God glorifies him most, and he accepts it best. Now we own that God, whom we serve in the face of the world: and this creates a veneration and esteem of God in the minds of men.

XVII. In his glorifying of his Father in all he did.— John xvii. 4. I have glorified thee on earth." The whole (No. 30).

life of Jesus, when here on earth, was a glorifying of his Father; he glorified his Father by the doctrine which he taught, by the miracles which he wrought, by the unspotted purity of his life, and by his unparalleled sufferings at his death. In like manner should we glorify God in all we do, in all we design, in all we desire; in our natural actions of eating and drinking; in our civil employments, buying and selling; in our lawful recreations, taking care that too much of our time be not consumed therein. Recreation is not to be our business, but to fit us for business; but especially let us seek to glorify God in our religious duties, public, private, and secret.

XVIII. In his impartiality, in reproving of sin. He feared the faces and spared the faults of no offenders; the pharisees were a proud and haughty sort of people, who dishonored God above most, when they pretend to glorify him above any. Therefore we find Christ denouncing a bead roll of woes against them in one chapter, Mat. xxiii. "Woe unto you scribes, pharisees, hypocrites." Eight several woes are denounced against them, for so many several sins committed by them. Those to whom God has given his authority to reprove the sins of others, ought to imitate their pattern in his impartiality in reproving sin. His very enemies gave him that character, Mat. xxii. 17. "Thou carest not for any man, thou regardest not the person of men; that is, thou sparest none, but tellest all men of their faults.

XIX. In his universal obedience to his Father's will and cheerful submission to his Father's pleasure. He obeyed the will of his Father universally, voluntarily, sincerely, and with a single eye to his glory, perseveringly, and to the end; and as he was, so must we be faithful to the death, if ever we expect the crown of life. And in like manner did he submit to the will of his providence: "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt, not my will but thine be done." O let us keep this example continually before us, and every day obey the will of God's precept universally, and submit to the will of his providence very cheerfully! This is heaven on earth.

XX. In his love and practice of universal holiness, both in heart and life. He was holy in nature, holy in his principles and motives, holy in his aim and ends; he was perfectly holy, precisely holy, uniformly holy, exemplarily holy; he delighted only in holy persons and holy things; it concerns us to imitate him herein, if ever we expect to be where he is: "Heaven is the habitation of holiness;" the company is holy, the employment holy, the enjoyments holy; no unclean thing can enter into heaven, or could be happy in heaven; heaven is rather a nature than a place. It is not the place of heaven can make us happy, but the disposition and temper of our minds in heaven; without conformity to the nature of God, there can be no communion with him, nor delight in him. What a discourteous courtesy would it be to turn a filthy swine into a garden of curious flowers, to lodge it in a bed of sweet perfumes, to bathe it in a clear and crystal fountain! Alas! its unclean temper and sordid inclinations would rather choose to lie down in a kennel, and to wallow in the mire, its proper element. Thus unsuitable would heaven be; that place of greatest happiness would be the greatest uneasiness to an unholy heart. Let us then pray and endeavour that the temper of our minds, and the actions of our lives, may be

a lively transcript of the mind and life of the holy Jesus, that we may be like him in purity and holiness, in justice and righteousness, in patience and meekness, in charity and universal goodness; that as he was, we may be in the world, "holy, humble, harmless, heavenly-minded, glorifying God." on earth, that we may be glorified with him and by him in his eternal kingdom.

XXI. Yet before I close this exhortation to an imitation of Jesus, I must subjoin this cautionary direction: take heed that you do not so imitate Christ for your pattern, as to disown him for your priest. This is the dangerous error of those who affirm, that the great end of Christ's death was to give the world an example of patience, humility, meekness, and the forementioned christian graces, and that his sufferings were exemplary, but not properly satisfactory.

We acknowledge that Christ's giving us an example was one end of his coming into the world, and dying for us, but not the great end. A subordinate end, but not the ultimate; God preserve us from the contagion of this growing error; other errors only scratch the face, but this stabs the heart of the christian religion, in that it deprives us of the choicest benefit of Christ's death: namely, the expiation of sin, by a proper satisfaction to the justice of God. But blessed be God, we *have not so learned Christ*; as we are taught, so we believe, that the holy Jesus, by the sacrifice of his death, has redeemed us from death and hell, and saved us from the wrath to come, by a full and an adequate payment to divine justice, and by the redundancy of his merit, has purchased an eternal inheritance for us; and as we are taught and believe, so we pray:

"Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, as also an example of Godly life: Give us grace, that we may always most thankfully receive this his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

THE END OF THE FOUR EVANGELIST.



*A MAP of the
Voyages and Travels
of
ST PAUL;
and of the other Apostles
mentioned in the Books
of the
NEW TESTAMENT
that follow the Gospel*

PART

OF

SYRIA

PART

ARABIA



*A MAP of the
Voyages and Travels
of the
Apostles
mentioned in the
NEW TESTAMENT
that follow the Gospel*



MACEDONIA

GREECE

ACHAIA

CRETE

PHENICIA

SYRIA

ARABIA

EGYPT

LIBYA

SYRIA

ARABIA

EGYPT

LIBYA

THE ACTS

OF THE HOLY APOSTLES.

The most illustrious life of the holy JESUS being recorded at large in the foregoing Gospels by the several Evangelists, whose names they bear; this next book of the Acts undertaketh these three things:—

- I. *It recommends to our observation and imitation the lives and actions of the holy apostles, particularly St. Peter and St. Paul; and acquaints us with their fervent zeal, and unwearied diligence, in planting and propagating christianity, not only in Judea and Samaria, but also in Syria, Asia, and Macedonia, yea even in Rome itself: Where by the way, note, That there is not one word in this history of St. Peter's primacy, of his superiority over the rest of the apostles, or of any bishopric that he had at Rome; the least intimation of which would have made a louder noise than Pasce oves, or Tu es Petrus.*
 - II. *We have here an ecclesiastical history of the first and purest churches, informing us how the christian church in its infancy was planted and watered, gathered and propagated, both among Jews and Gentiles; how she observed and obeyed CHRIST's commands to his apostles, both in matters of faith, worship, communion, and government, that therein the primitive church might be an exemplary pattern to succeeding churches throughout all ages.*
 - III. *This history gives all the ministers of the gospel, to the end of the world, a great and noble pattern of ministerial diligence, faithfulness, and prudence; acquainting us what the apostle did, the pains which they took, the hazard which they run, in preaching the glad tidings of salvation to a lost world: how they instructed the ignorant, reduced the wandering; how they bare with the weakness of some, and patiently contended with the obstinacy and perverseness of others. Likewise Stewards of God's family, they gave to the whole household their portion of meat in due season.*
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CHAPTER I.

This first chapter relates, 1. The time and manner of our LORD's ascension. 2. The hundred and twenty disciples' joint devotion. 3. Their election of Matthias by lot to succeed in the apostleship, in the room of the apostate Judas.

THE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

Observe here, 1. The penman of this sacred history, St.

Luke, the same that wrote the gospel, which he calls his former treatise, dedicated, both that and this, to the same Theophilus: *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus.* Observe, 2. The time when St. Luke wrote this holy history, and the place where, namely, when he was the companion of Paul; and as some think, during the time of his imprisonment at Rome: if so, we may profitably remark, the favor which God gave the apostle and his companion in the sight of the keeper of the prison, that they were not denied pen and paper. When persecutors send the saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn. But how do the apostle and his companion spend their time in prison? Very advantageously; the former in writing epistles

to the churches for their confirmation; the latter in recording the acts and monuments of the holy apostles for our imitation. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their malice and spite against us, as by doing all the good we can, wherever we come. Satan had better have left these two holy men alone, than have cast them into prison: for by their pens they battered the walls of his kingdom, and made them shake about his ears. Observe, 3. The integrity and impartiality of this historian St. Luke; he wrote of all things; he wrote of all *things that Jesus both did and taught* in his Gospel, and what the apostles did and taught in the Acts; not that this is to be understood strictly and absolutely, but comparatively only: not as if St. Luke recorded every action that Jesus did, or every expression our Saviour said; for St. John says, they were so many that they could not be written, chap. xxi. 25. But by *all things*, we are to understand very many things; the most principal and chief things, the most necessary and useful things: every thing that the Holy Ghost thought fit to dictate to him, and enjoin him to publish for the church's use and service. Learn thence, That St. Luke was a very faithful and impartial historian, withholding nothing which was necessary for the church to know, and leaving no room for unwritten and uncertain traditions: "I have wrote all that Jesus began both to do and teach."

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Observe here, The special concern and care which Christ had for his church on earth, before he ascended into heaven. The very first night that he appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection, he breathed on them, and distributed the Holy Ghost among them, St. John xx. 22. both to inform their judgments of what they did not know, and to direct their practice, what he would have them to do; "He, through the Holy Ghost, gave commandments unto the apostles;" that is, he distributed the Holy Ghost amongst them to be their constant instructor and director, what they should do, in order to the execution of their office and employment. Learn thence, That as the apostles had, so the ministers of Christ, in their measure, shall have their gracious and special influences of the Holy Spirit to direct and instruct, to quicken and support them in the faithful discharge of their ministerial office to the end of the world: that gracious promise, *Lo, I am with you always*, St. Matt. xxviii. 20. We that live seventeen hundred years after the first making of it, may, by faith, draw out the comfort of it, as well as the apostles, to whom it was originally made.

3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Observe, 1. The time which our Lord spent here upon earth, between his resurrection and ascension! It was forty

days; Christ would not presently ascend into heaven, as soon as he was risen, but thought fit to stay some time with his disciples, to confirm their faith in the belief of his resurrection, and to satisfy them that it was he himself, their Lord and Master, that died for them, that was indeed risen and now appeared to them; *He was seen of them forty days*. Observe, 2. What our Saviour did in that forty days' stay upon earth: *He showed himself alive unto his disciples*, appearing sometimes to them, and giving them many infallible proofs of the verity of his resurrection, by eating, drinking, talking and conversing with them, by showing his wounds to them, and submitting himself to be touched and handled by them. Not that Christ's conversation with his disciples, in this his exalted state after his resurrection, was so frequent and familiar, as it was before his death, when he was in a state of humiliation: and accordingly we never read, I think, that Christ ever lodged or continued all night with his disciples, after he was risen from the grave. But he conversed with them only upon occasions, as he pleased himself, and when he pleased. Observe, 3. What our Saviour said, as well as what he did, in this intervening time, betwixt his resurrection and ascension, being forty days; "He spake to his disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;" That is, 1. Of the things pertaining to his church militant or the kingdom of grace here on earth, how he would have his church planted and propagated by the apostles' doctrine, guided and governed by their discipline; Or, 2. By the kingdom of God may be understood the church triumphant, or the kingdom of glory in heaven; what perfect bliss and happiness he was now going to prepare for them in the presence of his Father. Where note, That Christ's kingdom is purely spiritual; that Christ's spiritual kingdom is his church; and the preaching of the gospel is the great instrumental mean for the erecting of the kingdom of grace, and enlarging of the kingdom of glory.

4 And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saieth he*, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Note here, 1. How frequently Christ renewed his promise to his disciples, of sending down the Holy Ghost to confer upon them the gifts of tongues and miracles, in order to the fitting and furnishing of them for their work of preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence;" That is, the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost shall be largely poured forth upon you, (as water upon the baptized person,) which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. When Christ calls his ministers to extraordinary service, he affords them extraordinary assistance, furnishing them with endowments answerable to their great employments. Note, 2. The place where Christ commands the apostles to wait for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; namely, at Jerusalem; *He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but*

wait there for the promise. Of all places the apostles would least have chosen Jerusalem to tarry in, had not Christ commanded them to wait there. For Jerusalem was now a justly abhorred and detested place, reeking afresh with the blood of the holy and innocent Jesus; yet Jerusalem is the place chosen by Christ for the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon his apostles; because, 1. There had been his greatest humiliation. There Christ had suffered the greatest ignominy, therefore there will he show forth his power and glory. 2. Because at Jerusalem there was the greatest company of spectators to behold this noble work, and to be wrought upon by it. Such as would not be convinced by our Saviour's death and resurrection, might probably be convinced by this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit, descending upon the apostles in fiery cloven tongues. Lord! what an instance was this of thy love to thine enemies! How desirous wert thou of the conversion and salvation of thy very murderers! In and at Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified, the Holy Ghost first descended: and when Christ appointed where the gospel combination should begin, Jerusalem is the first place in nomination by him. St. Luke xxiv. 47. "And he said unto them that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

6 When they therefore, were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

Observe here, The disciples' question and our Saviour's answer: 1. The question proposed by the disciples, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" That is, Wilt thou repair the ruinous condition of the Jewish state, and restore it to that great dignity and splendour which we have always expected should be done by the Messiah?—Where observe, That notwithstanding Christ had so often rebuked the Jews in general, and his disciples in particular, for their conceit of a temporal kingdom, (who were so full of ambitious expectations to receive great honors and preferments here on earth) yet it evidently appears, that this notion still ran in their minds, and that their Master being now risen from the dead, this was the time both for his and their dignity and advancement. Learn hence, That it is no wonder that unbelievers stumbled at the poverty and meanness of Christ's outward condition when he was here on earth, seeing it was so hard for the disciples themselves to be convinced, and believe that his kingdom was not of this world. I know not any thing wherein the bishop of Rome may so properly call himself apostolical, as in his following this error of the apostles. Were they always dreaming of a temporal kingdom? So is he always doting upon it, and his eyes dazzled with the splendor of it. The disciples, not only till the time whilst Christ was with them, but even now, when upon the point of departing from them, when he was just ascending, yea, in part ascended, having one foot upon the earth, and the other in the cloud, which took him up to heaven, yet still they asked him, Wilt thou now restore the kingdom? that is, settle upon us thy followers secular power, and temporal dominion here on

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earth? But mark, 2. Our Lord's answer, ver. 7. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put only in his own power." Our Saviour's answer doth not in the least imply that any such kingdom should ever be granted as they dreamt of; but he checks their curiosity in inquiring into times and seasons, and nature of God's secrets, which it no ways concerned them to pry into: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." Here note, 1. Something implied, namely, That there are certain times and seasons, the knowledge of which only belongs to God, which yet man's curiosity has an itching desire to search and pry into. There is nothing more natural to man, than a desire to know both what shall be hereafter, and when that hereafter shall be. We are very careless in seeking out the season of that which we ourselves should do; but over careful and curious in seeking out the season of what God will do. Note, Here is something expressed, namely, that God has times and seasons for executing his own purposes, which it is neither proper, nor profitable, nor possible for us to know. Not proper, because none of our business. Not profitable because no part of our interest. Not possible, because out of our reach. It is not possible for us to know either what God is about to do, or when he will do it. It is not possible for us to know it as men, by a natural sagacity; not as christians, by a supernatural illumination; no, nor as ministers and apostles, without divine inspiration and extraordinary revelation, which we have no warrant to expect, and should have no curiosity to desire. Learn hence, That it much better becomes us with an awful silence to adore, than with a bold curiosity to pry into God's hidden and unrevealed secrets. Yet though it be not for us to know God's times and seasons, it is our duty to expect them, and be prepared for them. We know not when our Lord will come to us by death and judgment, whether "in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning." But it is our duty to believe and expect it, to wait and prepare for it, and be always ready to receive him. Finally, though it is not for us to know the times and seasons which God hath put in his own power, yet it is for us to know the times and seasons which God has put in our power; namely, the present time to improve it, and the time past to bewail our misimprovement of it. To improve the time of affliction, for consideration and humiliation; and the time of prosperity, mercy, and deliverance, for gratulation and thankfulness; and to improve both in farther measures, and increase of holiness; and sanctification both of heart and life.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Observe here, How Christ, instead of gratifying his disciples' curiosity, acquaints them with their own duty; he tells them that although they had received his Spirit before, in some measure; yet very shortly the Spirit should be poured forth upon them in a plentiful manner, to confer the gift of tongues, prophecies, and miracles upon them, for rendering them fit to preach the gospel throughout all nations, and also to testify and bear witness unto the truth of what Christ did and said in Judea and Samaria, both to Jews and Gentiles, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Here note,

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What is the special work of the ministers of the gospel; namely, to bear witness unto Christ! *Ye shall be witnesses unto me.* This they do three ways, *Christum prædicando; secundum Christum vivendo; propter Christum patiendo:* "By the purity of their doctrine, by the piety of their lives, and by their patience under suffering, both for Christ, and from Christ." Note, 2. What it was that enabled the apostles thus to bear witness unto Christ, namely, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon them: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." Thence learn, That some measure of ministerial gifts and sanctifying graces from the Holy Spirit, is absolutely necessary to enable the ministers of the gospel to bear their testimony unto Christ with faithfulness and success.

9 And, when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Here an account is given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension into heaven, with several remarkable particulars thereunto belonging. Observe, 1. Who and what it was that ascended; even the same that descended. Christ Jesus, in his divine nature as God, and in his human nature as man, his person consisting of soul and body, he now ascended in both. Observe, 2. The place he ascended from; from this world in general, and from mount Olivet in particular, that very place where he began his last sorrowful tragedy. Where his heart began to be sad, here it is now made glad. Learn thence, That God can make the very places of our trouble and torment, (as sick-beds, prisons, strange countries) to become places of comfort and triumphant joy unto us, when he pleases. Observe, 3. The place whither he ascended, into heaven; that is, the third heaven, the throne of God, the seat of the blessed. Hence he is said to *ascend far above all heavens:* that is, above the aerial and starry heavens which we see, into the highest heavens; unto the place where he was before, as himself expresses it, John vi. 62. Thence learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ is returned back again to that sweet and glorious bosom of delight and love, from which he came at his first incarnation; "What, and if he shall see the Son of Man ascending up where he was before?"—Observe, 4. The time when our Lord ascended, forty days after his resurrection. The care and love of Christ to his church was manifested by this his stay with them. Unspeakable glory was prepared for him, and did now await him; but he would not go to possess it, till he had settled all things for the good of his church. And when he had settled his family in order, and given charge to his disciples concerning the discipline of his house, he would stay no longer, lest he should seem to affect a terrene life. Note hence, That Christ desired to be no longer here, than he had work to do for God and souls. A good pattern for our imitation, to desire life upon the score of usefulness: to be willing to be gone when our work is done. Observe, 5. How and after what manner Christ ascended up into heaven. He ascended, as well as was raised from the grave, by his own power, ver. 10. *Whilst they looked steadfastly, he went up;* that is, by his own divine power. True, the angels did attend him, but they did not assist him. Elias went to heaven in a chariot of fire, but he was fetched up, he could not carry himself up: but

Christ needed no chariot, no carriage of angels for his conveyance, being the author of life and motion. 1. He ascended magnificently, with great triumph, into his kingdom in heaven: "God went up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." A cloud is prepared as a royal chariot, to carry up this king of glory to his royal pavilion: "A cloud received him out of their sight." And oh! what jubilations of the blessed angels were heard in heaven! The triumphs and universal acclamations are not ended to this day, nor ever shall end. 2. He ascended munificently, shedding forth innumerable and inestimable gifts upon his church at his ascension; "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men, prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." And oh! how many thousands now in heaven, and upon earth also, are blessing Christ at this day, for these his ascension-gifts! Observe, 6. The witnesses of our Lord's ascension: Elias had but one witness of his rapture into heaven, St. Paul not one, but Christ will neither have all eye-witnesses of his ascension, nor yet too few; he did not carry all Jerusalem forth to see his glorious departure, but the select company of his disciples only: The number of witnesses were about an hundred and twenty. Those who had been partners with him in his humiliation, are now made witnesses of his glorious ascension. If we will converse with Christ in his lowly estate here on earth, we shall be made happy with the sight of his transcendent glory ere long above. Observe, 7. The cause and reasons why he thus ascended; namely, because had he not ascended, he could not have been inaugurated and installed in the glory he now enjoys above. Had he not ascended, he could not have interceded, as now he doth, for us here below. Had he not ascended into heaven, we could never have entered heaven. He entered as our forerunner, as our head and representative, and we ascend after him, in the virtue of his ascension before us. In a word, had he not ascended before us, the Holy Spirit had not been enjoyed by us, as a sanctifier, and as a comforter, at least not in that measure in which he has been since enjoyed by his church.—"If Christ had not gone, the Comforter had not come." He begins where Christ ended. Take we good heed then, how we treat the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent down from heaven at his ascension thither; that we do not grieve him by our unkindness, nor vex him by our disobedience, nor quench him by our sinful neglects of duty: for in grieving the spirit we grieve our Comforter, and in grieving our Comforter, we grieve ourselves. But let us entertain him kindly, on the account of his nature, for he is God, Acts v. On the account of his office, and the benefits we received by him; for he is *Vinculum Unionis*, the bond of union betwixt Christ and our souls, without which we can never have either interest in Christ, or communion with him.

10 And, while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Observe here, how the spectators of our Lord's ascension were justly transported into an ecstasy of wonder and admiration. Christ ascended gradually and leisurely, that he might at once confirm the faith, and delight the eyes and mind of his beholders. Whilst they thus stood admiring, two angels in the shape of men, appeared in white, (a color which they oft appeared in, to show both that they retained their native purity, and also to represent the joyfulness of their errand which they went upon) and call to the apostles, who were some of them men of Galilee, to take notice that this Jesus whom they now beheld ascending up into heaven should come again to judge the world, and so come again *in like manner*, that is, visible, in a cloud, by his own power, with the like majesty, and with the same soul and body. But not one word of the time when; that, not knowing the hour, we may be upon our watch every hour; *Ideo latet unus dies ut observetur omnes.*

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey.

13 And, when they were come in, they went up into an upper-room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, *the brother of James*.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

The apostles having seen our Saviour thus gloriously ascended into heaven from mount Olivet, they return to Jerusalem, which is called a sabbath-day's journey, that is, about two miles. Eight furlongs make a mile, and Bethany, in which was the mount of Olivet, was from Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs, John xi. 18. This was the common walk which the Jews used on the sabbath day, but rather for meditation than recreation's sake. The apostles thus returned, assemble together at Jerusalem, where they lay the foundation of the first gospel-church. And here observe, 1. How the names of all the eleven apostles are repeated, and distinctly set down, to show that although they had fallen from their profession, and forsaken Christ, yet they had recovered themselves by repentance, and were risen again; and upon their recovery, were continued by Christ in their former office and dignity. O the mighty power of a sincere repentance, to reinstate us in the favor and friendship of an offended God! Observe, 2. How the sight of Christ's ascension had established and confirmed the apostles' faith: they now adore and worship him, and assemble together to perform their joint devotions to him. Before Christ's resurrection and ascension, we scarce read of any act of adoration that the disciples paid unto him.

True they looked upon him as a person sent from God, a great prophet, and the Son of David; but his deity being evinced, and now made evident to them by his resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven, they now worshipped him as the Son of God. See Luke xxiv. 52. Observe, 3. The place where this christian congregation did assemble; *In an upper room*; that is, says Dr. Hammond, in one of the chambers belonging to the temple; in the large upper room, say others, where Christ had lately eaten the passover with his disciples; it was no doubt the most convenient place they could find for that solemnity; an upper room being remote from noise and company, and capacious enough to receive this primo-primitive church, consisting of an hundred and twenty persons. It teaches us, That all advantages, with respect to time and place, and other circumstances, for the better performance of holy duties, ought to be made use of and improved by us. Observe, 4. The persons who were the first constituting members of this new constituted church; together with the apostles, mention is made of women in general, and of the Virgin Mary in particular; where we may remark, That this is the first and last time that the scripture makes mention of her after Christ's death. None of the Evangelists record one word of our Lord's appearing once to her, during his forty days' stay and continuance upon earth after his resurrection. Doubtless, the Spirit of God in the holy scriptures, by speaking so sparingly of her life, and nothing at all of her death, took care that all those fabulous reports of her assumption, which have since arisen, should find no footsteps in the word of God. God dealeth with her as with Moses, of whose sepulchre no man knoweth unto this day, lest it should be abused to idolatry. The learned Dr. Lightfoot is of opinion, that she continued under the care of the beloved disciple unto whom Christ committed her for some time, and at last was taken away by martyrdom, according to Simeon's prophecy, Luke ii. 35. "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." Which prophecy, he thinks, pointed at the manner of her death: but notwithstanding the silence of the scriptures, the church of Rome confidently affirms, that the virgin lived sixty-three years, and that all the apostles were at her funeral, except St. Thomas, who desiring afterward to see her holy corpse, the sepulchre being opened the third day, the body was gone, being assumed and taken up into heaven.

15 ¶ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty.)

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now, this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity: and falling

headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*.

20 For it is written in the book of *Psalms*, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and, His bishopric let another take.

During the ten days' stay and continuance of the apostles at Jerusalem, before the feast of Pentecost, a motion was made among them for filling up the vacancy in the sacred college of the apostles, which was occasioned by the death of the traitor Judas; and here we have observable, 1. The person that made this motion, St. Peter: *In those days Peter stood up and said*. Whence the church of Rome would infer his supremacy, but very groundlessly. For St. Peter being the chief speaker and sometimes the sole speaker, is not to be attributed to his superiority; but, 1. To his seniority, he being probably elder than the rest. 2. To his apostolical office; he was appointed to be the first and chief minister of the circumcision, to preach among the Jews; and therefore no wonder that Peter is first mentioned, when any thing relating to the Jewish affairs is recited. 3. His forwardness to speak and act for Christ and his interest, may be imputed to his repentance, it being but necessary that he, who had so scandalously fallen, should, by his future zeal, convince the world both of his repentance and recovery. And accordingly he speaks, acts, and labors more abundantly than all the apostles; not that the rest were idle or insignificant; for they were equal with him, having an equal authority, an equal gift of miracles, an equal number of tongues, an equal power to preach the gospel, an equal wisdom in preaching of it: for the reasons above mentioned, St. Peter spake and did so much; having dishonored Christ before by his own cowardly denial of him, he now resolves to signalize himself by showing extraordinary measures of zeal and activity for him.—Observe, 2. The honorable office and station which Judas once had; "He was numbered with the apostles, and obtained part of that ministry with them." Judas, though (secretly) a thief, a traitor, yea, a devil, yet had he by Christ's own choice, a part or office in the apostolic order.—O Lord! how possible, and yet how sad is it to preach to others, and to become cast-aways ourselves! to prophesy in thy name, and yet to perish in thy wrath! to cast devils out of others, and yet be cast to the devil ourselves! to have our ministry blessed to others' comfort and salvation, and at the same time to minister to our own condemnation! *Quis talia fando temperet a lachrymis?* Observe, 3. Judas' sin described; *He was guide to them that took Jesus*, ver. 16. A guide to the chief priests in their counsels, as to the manner of apprehending Christ; and a guide to the soldiers, as to the time and place of his apprehension. Note thence, That there cannot be a greater sin, than for a person to be a guide and leader of others into sin. Woe to magistrates! woe to

ministers! woe to parents! that are found guilty of this sin. Observe, 4. Judas' punishment declared; 1. *He was hanged or strangled*; some think by his own hand; others by the devil's. No doubt that satan, who had so great a hand in his sin, had more than a finger in his punishment. Of all mortals, no wretch ever deserved so direful a fate as this traitor Judas: And doubtless it was the dreadfulest that the devil could inflict. 2. It is added, that *he burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out*. The rope, or that to which it was fastened, breaking, he fell down headlong, and burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out. A just and suitable punishment for his want of bowels to his kind and innocent Master. 3. *He went to his own place*; that is, he went and was sent to hell and damnation, the proper place for the son of perdition; called his own place, because of his own choosing, of his own deserving, of his own procuring; it was what he had purchased to himself by the wages of iniquity, and justly deserved for his final impenitency.

21 Wherefore, of these men which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen.

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Judas having in the forementioned manner made void his office, and being gone to his own place, St. Peter moved the company that another person may be chosen to fill up the place. Where note, 1. The electors or persons choosing; namely, the hundred and twenty; these were the eleven apostles, the seventy disciples, and about thirty-eight more, all of Christ's own kindred, country, or converse; not that these were all the believers that were found in Jerusalem, for *he appeared to five hundred brethren at once*, but these followed him continually, were of his family and society, and of his immediate train and retinue, and appointed by him for the ministry: these, therefore, make the

choice; and of one among themselves in the choice made.—
Note, 2. The qualification of the person which St. Peter directs the company to observe in the choice they make of this new apostle; “One that had accompanied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them:” That is, one that had followed Christ from his baptism to his ascension, to the intent that he might be an authentic witness, both of the doctrine and miracles, but particularly of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: for the article of the resurrection includes many other articles of faith in it; for if he arose from the grave, he was buried; if he was buried, he died; if he died, he was born. Therefore the person whom they choose, was to be one that had accompanied with them. **Note, 3.** That the apostles did not presume to ordain an apostle by imposition of hands; but the other apostles being chosen of God immediately, it was necessary that he who was to act in the same office, should be chosen after the same manner. Accordingly they cast lots, and leave the determination to God, who devolving it upon Matthias, he was thereupon numbered with the eleven apostles. Lots were used among the Jews for dividing inheritances, for composing differences, for determining elections; and how casual soever it seemed, God was the undoubted determiner of it. Therefore, to cast lots upon trivial occasions, and solemnly to appeal to God’s determination in ludicrous matters, is profanely to take the name of God in vain.

CHAPTER II.

The second chapter gives us an account of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles at the feast of Pentecost. This was a matter of wonder and amazement to some, but of scorn and mocking derision unto others. Hereupon St. Peter stands up, and in a most excellent sermon defends the apostles, convicts the Jews of crucifying the Lord of Life, and exhorts them to believe on him whom they had ignominiously put to death; and the Holy Spirit crowned his endeavours with a desirable success.

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

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In this extraordinary and miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, observe, 1. The time when; “When the day of the Pentecost was fully come;” that is, fifty days after Christ’s resurrection. The day of Pentecost is probably believed to have fallen then upon the Lord’s day; it is certain from Acts i. that the Spirit descended when the apostles were unanimously assembled for his worship, and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. There is no way to obtain the Holy Spirit from heaven, both as a sanctifier and as a comforter, like fervent prayer, assiduity and perseverance in our devotions, especially in the public assemblies of the saints. Observe, 2. The place where; at Jerusalem, the more general place where our Lord had undergone his ignominy and reproach, there he manifests forth his glory and dignity: First, by his triumphant ascension, and afterwards by his miraculous mission of the Holy Spirit. The more particular place was the upper room where they were assembled and constantly prayed. This upper chamber was most raised towards heaven, most remote from noise and company, and worldly distractions. The Spirit of God descends upon and rests with such as have raised affections above the world, and are nearest unto heaven; not upon such as are buried alive in worldly business. Earth will extinguish fire as well as water, and some say sooner; not only sensual lust, but an excess of earthly business and worldly drudgery, will quench the Holy Spirit, and cause him to depart and go away aggrieved from us. Observe, 3. The persons on whom the Holy Ghost thus descended, namely, the apostles; not that they were without the Holy Spirit until now; they had him before in his sanctifying graces; here they received him in his extraordinary gifts, to fit them for extraordinary services. When God extraordinarily calls any of his servants to more than ordinary service, they may expect more than ordinary assistance. The Holy Spirit now descended upon the apostles in his miraculous gifts, and if we be not wanting to ourselves, he will descend upon us in invisible favors every day, making our souls and bodies a temple, and fit habitation for himself to dwell in, by his sanctifying impressions, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening influences: pouring in both the oil of grace, and also the oil of joy and gladness into our hearts. Observe, 4. The manner how the Holy Ghost at this time descended on the apostles: 1. Suddenly, like the wind: “A mighty rushing wind from heaven:” insinuating, that it was not the apostles’ prayer that brought, but Christ’s promise and power, that sent the Holy Ghost thus miraculously down upon them. This rushing wind also represents, the mighty efficacy of the Holy Spirit now descending. 2. In the appearance of fiery cloven tongues; cloven to signify the variety of languages which the apostles should be enabled to speak, and to qualify them to preach the gospel unto all nations: and fiery, to represent that fervent heat and zeal they should be endued with themselves; that divine light they should impart to others; as also that purity and holiness which they and all succeeding ministers of the gospel ought to appear beautified and adorned with: Finally, As fire dissipateth and disperseth, multiplieth and increaseth, even so the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the more they are diffused and well employed, the more will they be increased; by imparting to our people, we shall gather to ourselves. Thus was our Lord’s promise fulfilled to his apostles, in sending down the Holy Ghost upon them, but not upon them only; the

private christian, no doubt, as well as the public apostle, did receive the Holy Spirit according to his measure: to enlighten, as a spirit of knowledge; to enliven, as a spirit of life; to warm and heat, as a spirit of zeal; to mollify and soften, as a spirit of holy fear; to quicken and strengthen, as a spirit of power; to guide and direct, as a spirit of wisdom and counsel; to unite and knit their hearts together, as a spirit of love. And blessed be God for the promise of the same Holy Spirit to abide with all believers, though not in his miraculous gifts, yet in his sanctifying operations and saving graces, to the end of the world.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphilia, in Egypt and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes,

11 Cretes, and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

The fame of the foregoing miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit being instantly spread abroad in Jerusalem, and there being present at that time great multitudes of Jews, who had come from all parts of Judea, to the feast of Pentecost, and also many other Jews and proselytes born in other nations, in Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, who were now come up to worship the true God at Jerusalem; when they heard the apostle speak in their own language, which they never understood before, the wonderful works of God, in the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ; some of them wondered to hear illiterate men speaking all languages; others de-

rided the miracle, and imputed it to drunkenness. Here note, 1. The wisdom and providence of Almighty God, in so ordering the first publication of the gospel, that the same thereof, and of that convincing miracle which gave authority thereunto, might be carried into all nations by so many eye and ear-witnesses as were worshipping at Jerusalem at this time: for "there were now sojourning at Jerusalem, men out of every nation under heaven;" that is, of every nation, where any Jews were scattered at this time throughout the world, there were some particular persons come up now to Jerusalem to worship God.—Note, 2. The commendatory character given of those persons, who from their several countries came up to the house of God in Jerusalem, to worship him there; they are styled *devout men*: and they received from God the reward of their piety and devotion. Had they stayed at home, as many of their brethren no doubt did, they had not been witnesses of so wonderful a miracle for the confirmation of their faith as now they were. Yet note, 3. The different influence and effect which this miracle of the Holy Spirit's descent in fiery cloven tongues had upon the minds of the people in Jerusalem. Some were struck into an ecstasy of admiration and awful wonder; others (the scribes and pharisees probably) scornfully deride, and impute the miracle to drunkenness, saying, "These men are full of new wine." A senseless slander; for though excess of wine may give a man more tongue, yet not more tongues. O! how have the holy operations of the blessed Spirit from the beginning been slandered and blasphemed; accounted the effects of drunkenness then, of enthusiasm or melancholy now!

14 ¶ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants, and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire, and vapor of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come :

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Observe here, The holy courage of St. Peter, in defending the innocency of the apostles, and confuting the calumny of drunkenness, which was now cast upon himself and them ; " These men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day." Where note, 1. How he argues negatively from the time of the day ; it was but the third hour of the day, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, which was the hour for the morning sacrifice and prayer, and the worshippers of God (at the great feast especially) were never wont to eat or drink before those holy services were performed. In those times they went to their public devotions fasting ; they served God before they served their bellies. The first-fruits of the day were offered in the temple then ; in the tavern now : ten morning and evening visits are made by some to the latter for one to the former. Note farther, How he argues positively ; he assures them, that the apostles were full of the Holy Ghost, and not full of wine ; filled with the Spirit of God ; and that what was now done, was the completion of a prophecy uttered by Joel : *That in the last days, that is, in the days of the Messias, there should be a most plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, upon all flesh ; that is upon Jews and Gentiles, and upon all sorts of persons without distinction, old and young, sons and daughters, bond and free.* Learn thence, that the Spirit of God is a free Spirit, not confined to any party, to any order or degrees of men, but plentifully and abundantly poured forth unto the gospel dispensation upon all believers. It is one of the great cheats which the pope has imposed upon the world to persuade them to believe the Spirit of God is tied to the pommel of his chair : that he and his cardinals have monopolized the Holy Ghost. But blessed be God, he has promised to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, even upon servants and hand-maids, to show, that he doth not despise persons of the lowest rank and condition in this world, but that the promise of the Spirit is made to them also. Observe lastly, What is here foretold that should come to pass after this great effusion of the Holy Spirit, namely, " Wonders in the heavens, and signs in the earth, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." Which expressions signify the great miseries and troubles, the calamities and desolations, which should befall the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem, for their crucifying the Lord of life and glory. Unto which is subjoined the only way to escape and avoid them ; namely, calling upon the Lord in fervent prayer and supplication :—" Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Intimating, that prayer makes us shot-free, and is a sure defence in all storms ; that no evil shall fatally touch our persons or come near our dwellings, whilst we take hold of God by faith, and approach unto him by prayer. Lord ! how happy is it when strong afflictions from thee raise strong affections in us towards thee !

22 Ye men of Israel hear these words :

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

St. Peter having wiped off the unjust aspersion of drunkenness cast upon himself and his brethren in the foregoing verses ; in these he makes it his business to convince the Jews that they were the murderers of the best man that ever lived in the world, even Jesus of Nazareth, the true and promised Messiah. In order to this, he treats in this sermon, 1. Of the person and life of Christ. 2. Of the sufferings and death of Christ. 3. Of the resurrection of him from the grave.— 1. As touching his person, the apostle shows, That he was evidently sent from God, and approved of by him, by those many miracles, wonders, and signs, which were wrought by him. Hence note, That the many and great miracles wrought by Christ, evidently prove that he was sent of God, and came from him, and was approved by him. Our Saviour's miracles, for the nature of them, were beneficial to mankind ; for the number of them, they were many ; for the manner of their operation, they were public and open, in the sight and view of all the people ; not in corners, like the popish miracles (wrought before their own creatures only) but before his enemies ; and for the quality of them they were of the greatest magnitude, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, giving sight to them that were born blind ; by a word spoken, by a touch given : so that our blessed Saviour had all that attestation that miracles can give, that he was commissioned by God, and came from God. The second part of St. Peter's sermon here treats of the sufferings and death of Christ ; " By wicked hands ye have crucified and slain him who was delivered by the determinate counsel of God." Where note, 1. The name and kind of death which Christ died : this is ascribed more generally, it was a violent death, ye have *slain him* ; more particularly, it was an ignominious, cursed, and dishonorable death. Ye have *crucified him*. Learn thence, That the Lord Jesus Christ was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross. Now the death of the cross was a violent death, a painful death, a shameful death, a lingering death, a succourless death, and an accursed death. Note, 2. The causes of Christ's death here expressed. The principal cause, permitting and ordering, was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The instrumental cause effecting, was the wicked hands of the Jews : " Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel, &c. ye have taken, and by wicked hands crucified, &c." Learn hence, That there was not any one particular action or single circumstance relating to the death of Christ, but what came under the holy counsel and wise determination of God. Yet this foreknowledge and counsel

of God, as it did not necessitate and enforce them to it, so neither doth it excuse them in it. God's foreknowledge and determinate counsel did no more compel or force their wicked hands to do what they did, than the mariner's hoisting up his sails to take the wind to serve his design, can be said to compel the wind to blow. God's end in acting was one, their end in acting was another. His most pure and holy : theirs most malicious and daringly wicked. In respect of God, Christ's death was justice and mercy ; in respect of man, it was murder and cruelty ; in respect to himself, it was obedience and humility. The third part of the apostle's sermon respects the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave, Ver. 24. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Christ, though laid was not lost in the grave ; but revived and rose again, and rose by the power of his Godhead. True, God is here said to raise him, and the Spirit elsewhere ; but we are not to understand it so, as if they raised him by their power without his own power ; for he declares it expressly, John ii. in three days I will raise up the temple of my body : and if he had not raised himself by his own power, how could he be said, Rom i. 4. "To be declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead?" What more had appeared in Christ's resurrection than in any other, if that were all ? For others were raised by the power of God, as well as he. Now, because the Jews, to whom St. Peter here preaches, were filled with prejudice against Christ, the apostles thought fit to tell them, that God had raised him from the dead ; yet by consequence it sufficiently appears in the following discourse that Christ raised himself from the dead. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by the omnipotent power of the Godhead, the Father's, the Spirit's, and his own Godhead, revived and rose again from the dead, to the terror and consternation of his enemies, and the unspeakable consolation of all believers. As by the eternal Spirit, or the power of his own Godhead, he offered up himself to God when he died ; so when he was put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit ; that is, by the power of his divine nature. The same Spirit enabled him to do both. Observe also, The reason annexed, why God raised up Jesus Christ ; because *it was impossible* that death should hold him. But, how impossible ? 1. It was *naturally* impossible, upon the account of that divine power, which was inherent in his person as God. 2. It was *legally* impossible, because divine justice being fully satisfied by his sufferings, required, that he should be raised to life ; as when a debt is paid, the prisoner is discharged, and the prison door opened.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face : for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad : moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope :

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life : Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God hath sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ;

31 He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost he hath showed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens ; but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

St. Peter here proceeds in this memorable sermon, which he preached at the feast of Pentecost, to convince the Jews, that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was undoubtedly the promised Messiah, because he was raised from the grave according to the prophetic prediction, Psal. xvi. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And accordingly St. Peter doth strongly prove that these words, in their literal sense, could not be spoken of David, because he was left in the grave, and saw corruption : but must be applied unto Christ, who though he was laid, yet was not lost in his grave, but saw no corruption, being raised by God the third day. Hence note, That though death bound the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, and laid him in his grave, yet Samson-like, he snapt and broke those bands asunder, it being impossible that he should be holden of them, or confined by them. It was impossible for Christ to continue death's prisoner in the grave longer than three days : 1. Because he was Lord of life and death, he was the resurrection and the life, life to quicken himself, and the resurrection to raise us ; he was the resurrection effectively, the life essentially and formally. Now it was impossible for death to hold him that was life itself under its

power, and longer than he who is life, pleased; and for this reason he is said to *swallow up death in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. 2. Because of his undertaking for us; for if Christ had been held by corporeal death, we must have continued for ever under the power of spiritual death; therefore the Holy One was not suffered to see corruption, the least corruption, according to the prophetic prediction, Psal. xvi.—*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; that is, my dead body in the grave; (for David was left in that hell, from which Christ was raised; but the hell which David was in, was not beyond the grave,) nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption: that is, I shall neither see, nor feel, nor lie under the power of corruption: but shall suddenly rise again, and then my Father will show me the path of life, and make me full of joy with his countenance; that is, after my resurrection, I shall live for ever in glory, in the presence of my Father, where I shall have fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore.*

The last part of St. Peter's sermon treats of Christ's ascension: ver. 33. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, &c. intimating, that when the Lord Jesus Christ had finished his work upon earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honor and authority; at the right hand of God, in heaven: to convince the Jews of the certainty thereof, St. Peter applies that promise, Psal. cx. 1. unto Christ, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." Showing that these words are not applicable unto David; for David is not ascended into heaven in his own person, but his body remained in the sepulchre then amongst them; but Christ was ascended, and at the right hand of God exalted, and pursuant to his promise, had now sent down the Holy Ghost in fiery cloven tongues, and divers languages, upon them. Where note, The great and wonderful change in the state and condition of Christ, since his ascension into heaven. A little while since they called him the *carpenter's son, this fellow, this deceiver*: now he has obtained a more excellent name than angels. Then he had not a place to lay his head on: now he is exalted to be *heir of all things*. Here he sweats, there he sits; here he groaned, there he triumphs; never to groan, weep, or bleed more. His human nature is now advanced to the highest honors, even to be the object of adoration both to angels and men. This was the doctrinal part of St. Peter's sermon: it treated of the person, life, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, in a very close and convincing manner. His warm application of the whole now follows, ver. 36.

36 Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

That is, God the Father hath ordained and appointed this Jesus whom ye have crucified, to be the head and Saviour of his church, he being the true and promised Messiah. Learn hence, that the Lord Jesus Christ was constituted and appointed by his Father, to be the supreme Governor and only Saviour of his church. God had made Jesus *both Lord and Christ*, both a Prince and a Saviour. Note farther, How very close and home the apostle is in applying what he had said to his auditors; he doth not rest in generals; but says plainly, Ye are the men; this is the same Jesus whom ye

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have crucified, whom ye with wicked hands have slain: had not the application been so close, it is probable that the success of the sermon had not been so considerable. Thence learn, That the success and efficacy of the word preached, depends upon a particular and warm application of it to every man's conscience: generals will not affect. See an instance of it in what follows.

37 ¶ Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Here the success of St. Peter's sermon is recorded: The auditors were not only affected, but their hearts were touched with a kindly remorse: they mourn for sin, and inquire what they should do to be saved. Some in our days would have been offended at such an inquiry, and told them, it was not doing, but believing only, that God expected; that Christ had done all for them, and that they had nothing to do, but to believe strongly that all was done to their hands; but St. Peter reproves them not for their iniquity, but puts them upon doing; namely, the exercise and practice of repentance, in the next verse. Here note, 1. That conversion, where it is in truth, begets and occasions a very great and sensible change. 2. That the preaching of the word is the instrumental means for the effecting and accomplishing of this change. 3. That the best preaching is that which pricks men's hearts, wounds and convinces their consciences, and makes them thoroughly sensible both of their sin and danger, and of the great necessity of a change. 4. That when men are once convinced of their bad state, and dangerous condition, their first enquiry will be, *yea should, and ought to be, What they should do to be saved?* They said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The apostle liked that enquiry very well; and answers it in the next verse.

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Observe. 1. St. Peter exhorts them to repentance. But did they not repent already? were they not now pricked at their hearts! and will the apostles add grief to grief, and pain to smart? Know, that the apostle advises them to join to their legal sorrow, evangelical repentance, such as is attended and accompanied with owning Christ to be the true Messiah, with believing in him with desire and hope of

pardon from him. Where, by the way, observe, That St. Peter prescribes a dose of the same physic for them, which he had very lately taken himself with good success, when upon his hearty sorrow he obtained pardon for denying his Lord and Master, Mat. xxvi. 75. "He went out and wept bitterly." No sermons are so sovereign and so successful as those which proceed from the minister's personal and comfortable experience. St. Peter presses upon his auditors the doctrine of repentance, which he himself had practised.—Observe, 2. Upon their repentance, their owning of, and believing in Christ, he directs them to be baptized in his name, and then they should be capable of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; even of those miraculous gifts which they now saw and admired in the apostles. Learn hence, That baptism is a solemn ordinance and sacred institution of Jesus Christ, which is not to be administered to any out of the christian church, till they profess repentance and faith in Christ, and sincere obedience to him, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you." Observe, 3. The argument which the apostle uses with them, by way of encouragement, to persuade them to repent and be baptized; for, says he, "The promise is unto you and to your children." To you, Jews of the seed of Abraham, and to your seed; and to as many of the Gentiles, and their seed, as shall be called by the preaching of the gospel to profess faith in Christ, and subjection to him. Where, by the promise, is meant the gracious covenant of God, whereby he offers pardon and peace to such as will accept them. Now this acceptance is twofold: 1. Cordially; which intitles a person to all the benefits of the covenant, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. And, 2. Professionally only; which intitles a person and his seed to his church privileges only.—Hence learn, That when God takes believing parents into covenant with himself, he takes also their children or seed into covenant with himself likewise. And if so, then the seal of the covenant, which is baptism, ought to be applied to them. It is evident, that under the Old Testament, children were in covenant with God, as well as their parents. And do we any where find that ever they were cast out under the gospel? The apostle doth not say, The promise was unto you and to your seed: but still it is; for otherwise children would be in a worse condition under the gospel of Christ, than they were under the law of Moses; but surely the privileges of the gospel are not straiter and narrower than those of the law. Observe, lastly, How St. Peter closes all with an exhortation to his auditors, "to save themselves from that untoward generation;" that is, from the scribes and pharisees, that sour sort of men, who desperately and maliciously opposed Christ and his gospel, and by their authority and example, kept people from embracing the only way of salvation revealed by Jesus Christ.

41 ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Observe here, 1. The wonderful success of St. Peter's sermon: About three thousand were converted to the profession of the christian religion in one day, by hearing a single sermon. How many thousand sermons have been since preached, without the conversion of a single person! Oh! what an high holiday was this memorable day in heaven!

This *All Saints' Day* was a festival of great solemnity there, where there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. But here did concur several advantages to render St. Peter's sermon more effectual. 1. The sufferings of our Saviour were so near in place, and so late in time, that his wounds were still fresh bleeding in the guilty memories of the people now assembled. 2. The present miracle of tongues bestowed on St. Peter; and his unlearned companions, did wonderfully make way for the word delivered. And, 3. His auditors were devout men, ver. 5. ignorant enough, but yet brought with them minds fairly disposed for information and conviction. 4. The Holy Spirit wrought now extraordinarily by and with the word, and caused this miraculous improvement. How did our Saviour fulfil his promise to his disciples, John xiv. 12. "Greater works than these shall ye do, when I go to my Father." Now was Peter the disciple above his Master in success; Christ all his life-time was angling for a few fishes, whilst St. Peter comes with his drag-net, and catches three thousand at one cast. Observe, 2. These three thousand were baptized the same day in which they were converted, and probably in the same place, which was at Jerusalem; either in the temple, or in some house, where the sermon was preached. We need not inquire, whether the apostles did it by dipping or sprinkling, both being lawful; but this may be said, it is hard to guess how such a quantity of water could be brought to the place, as might serve for the decent dipping of three thousand persons in so short a time. And, upon supposition that the water was not brought to them, but they went down to that; baptizing so many by dipping, would have required a week, rather than a day, to dispatch it in.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

Which words give us an account of the behaviour of the first christians, particularly in their religious assemblies, and of the way of worship used in the church of Jerusalem, the true mother church in the time of the apostles. Where observe, 1. The doctrine which they adhered to, the doctrine of the apostles; that is, the doctrine delivered by Christ, and taught by the apostles, and contained in the holy scriptures. This was the rule which the first christians governed themselves by, both as to faith and manners. It was infinite wisdom in God to inspire holy men for committing this doctrine to writing, and not to leave it to the hazardous and uncertain way of tradition. Observe, 2. The steady adherence of the first christians to this doctrine of the apostles; *They continued steadfastly in it*; that is, they were constant hearers of it, and attendants upon it; they received it not upon trust, but due examination. Learn hence, That religion being the great interest and common concern of mankind, he that espouses it aright, must first understand and examine the fundamental grounds and principles of it, and then choose accordingly; otherwise our adherence to the best religion in the world, will rather be the result of chance than of judgment and choice. Observe, 3. They continued steadfast in fellowship: this may signify and import three things: 1. Their communion with the apostles, their keeping close to their own teachers, in opposition to schism, which is a causeless, and therefore a culpable separation; they were obedient to their spiritual governors and instructors. 2. Their society among themselves, and communion

one with another; as the communion of saints in heaven is a considerable part of the happiness of heaven, so the fellowship of saints on earth is a sort of heaven upon earth: The comfort of our lives depends much upon society, but more upon the suitableness of society. The primitive saints were all of one mind, and therefore fit to make one body. For though man loves company, yet it is the company of those he loves. 3. Mutual assistance which they gave and received, a communication or free distribution to the necessities of each other; they did by love serve one another, and parted with their possessions for the support of each other: This liberality, and mutual supplying one another's wants, did plainly show, that they esteemed themselves as fellow-members of the same body, and that they were perfectly united in heart and affection. Observe, 4. Another religious office in which they continued constant, was breaking of bread; that is, receiving the sacrament. So great and fervent was the devotion of the first christians, that none of their religious assemblies passed, in which they did not make this solemn commemoration of our Saviour, and show forth his death; looking upon their other religious services as lame and defective without this. Our Saviour's blood was still warm, and those first christians kept it so, by their devout and frequent remembrance of it; and it was their constancy in breaking of bread, which quickened and put life into all their religious actions: This fitted them both for doing and dying. Their frequent drinking of the blood of Christ fired them with zeal for shedding their blood for Christ, Lord! what reason can men now give for neglecting so holy and useful an institution! Are we above these helps to a good life which they used? Have we not as much need to arm ourselves against sin and temptations as they had? But the plain truth is, Men are not willing to be so holy now, as they were then. This ordinance, their consciences tell them, would engage them to greater strictness of life than they are willing to undergo. They must leave their sins, which they are loth to part with; they must forgive their enemies, whom they had rather be revenged of: they must enter into new engagements, whereas they had rather be at liberty; so that those things which make men loath to come to the sacrament, are indeed, if duly considered, the greatest arguments to draw them thither: and according to the example of these primitive christians, to be constant in *breaking of bread*. Observe, 5. The last thing which they continued steadfast and constant in, was prayer: that is, in the public and solemn addresses made to God in the religious assemblies, whereby they poured out their souls to God both in prayer and supplication, and in praise and thanksgivings. The public prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ, are greatly to be esteemed by all christians; they glorify God most, he esteems and accepts them best: This keeps up a sense of God and religion in the world, and nothing delights God more than the joint prayers and praises of his people. Psal. lxxxvii. 2. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the performances in the dwellings of Jacob."

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Observe here, 1. That awful respect God obliged the people of Jerusalem to pay unto the apostles: "Fear came upon every soul, at the sight of those wonders and signs which were wrought by the apostles." 'Tis God that keeps up the authority and reverence of his ministers in the minds of their people: Did not he hold these stars in his own right hand, how soon would men trample them under their feet? Observe, 2. An extraordinary instance of a noble charity among these primitive christians; *They had all things common*: that is, they chose rather to part with their estates, than that any of their brethren should want; the rich very readily sold their possessions and goods to help and relieve the poor. Yet note, 1. That this community was not of all their goods, but of that part only which every one did voluntarily consecrate and devote to the relief of the church's necessities. It was not in a strict sense a community of goods that was here practised; but, by *all things*, we are to understand, such things as every one freely laid aside for the service of the poor. Note, 2. That this practice was only used in Jerusalem, in the beginning of christianity, without being a precedent for after times and places. *Res quæ erat temporaria necessitatis et liberi arbitrii, non debet in exemplum trahi, multo minus ut necessaria obtrudi.* Christ's gospel doth not destroy the moral law: the eighth commandment is still in force, which it could not be, if there were no property. The lesson for your instruction, to be gathered from this instance, is this, that they who have ability ought to abound always in ordinary, and sometimes in extraordinary works of charity: We must always relieve the saints' wants as we are able, and sometimes, upon an extraordinary occasion, above what we are well able.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart;

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

This chapter concludes with giving us an account how these primitive christians spent their time together in the service of God, and in great simplicity and sincerity amongst themselves. They continued daily in the temple; that is, at the usual time of prayer they joined with the Jews in their prayers in the temple: We must not think that they preached sermons, and administered sacraments in the temple; that would not be endured, as appeareth chap. iv. 1. But having performed their public devotions daily in the temple at the accustomed times of prayers there, they used to resort to a private and particular place to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and afterwards took their ordinary and necessary repast with gladness and singleness of heart. And thus these holy christians conversing together with great simplicity, and sincerity, they went on cheerfully in their christian course, praising God for what he had done for them.

and by them; and their holy and harmless conversation procured them favor with the generality of the people, who had not their hearts possessed with the prejudice against christianity, as the Pharisees had. And thus, by the parity of the apostles' doctrine, and the exemplary piety and unblameableness of their lives, the Lord daily added more and more converts to his infant christian church. Learn hence, That the work of a thorough and saving conversion upon the hearts, and in the lives of men, is God's work. It was not the mighty rushing wind, nor the miracle of the fiery cloven tongues, nor St. Peter's sermon, nor any of these, nor all of these, that did or could alone produce this great effect without God and the internal operation of his holy Spirit. Therefore it is expressly said, That the Lord added to the church, not St. Peter, nor all the apostles. Yet note, 2. That though God and his Holy Spirit be the author and efficient cause, yet the preaching of the gospel, and an exemplary conversation agreeably thereunto, were the subordinate helps and instrumental means conducing thereunto. "They continued daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. And thereby the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

CHAPTER III.

The constituting of the first gospel church, we had recorded in the former chapters. The first persecution raised against that church, is here related in this and the next chapter, together with the occasion of it; which was, St. Peter's healing the lame beggar. No sooner was the primitive church planted, though miraculously, but a persecution is stirred up against it most maliciously to root it up, and lay it waste: Wherever God has his church, the devil will be sure to set up his chapel; not a chapel of ease for the saints, but a chapel of service for himself; hoping at once to strengthen the walls of his own kingdom, and to raise the foundation of Christ's church, which yet the gates of hell shall never fully nor finally prevail against.

NOW Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

Observe here, 1. The remarkable diligence and industry of St. Peter and the other apostles in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the third hour of the day on the feast of Pentecost, that is, at nine o'clock in the morning, St. Peter preached a sermon, chap. ii. 14, which, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit accompanying it, converted three thousand souls. Here at three o'clock in the afternoon on the same day, (as the learned Dr. Lightfoot notes) he preached a second sermon, which converts five thousand more. This affords at once a good precedent, and a good encouragement to the apostles' successors, the ministers of Christ, to the end of the world, for

the preaching twice upon the Lord's day: If, in the room of three and five thousand souls, we be instrumental for the conversion of a single soul, it is infinitely worth the indefatigable pains and diligence of our whole lives. Observe, 2. The place which the apostle preaches in, *the temple*: thither the apostles went, not to offer sacrifice, but to inform the Jews, that the law of sacrifices was now abolished by the death of Christ; not to communicate with them in their antiquated worship, but they might have a larger field to sow the seed of the gospel in. Observe, 3. The circumstances of time, *at the hour of prayer*. In all ages, since God had a church in the world, there have been stated times and places for solemn public worship; by which means a sense of God and religion has been preserved and kept up in the world, which otherwise would be in danger of being lost. The worship of God in the closet will not do this, because it is unseen; but stated, solemn, public worship, glorifies God most, and he accepts it best, Psal. lxxxvii. 2. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. The apostles went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." *Sine stationibus non staret mundus.*

2 And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Observe here, 1. The condition of this person. 1. He was poor, even to beggary: but poverty is no sign of God's disfavor, nor doth exclude any from partaking of the best of blessings. 2. He was born a cripple, not lamed by casualty or accident, but lame from his mother's womb. 4. He had continued a cripple forty years, chap. iv. 22. "The man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed." Consequently the cure was the harder, and the person cured the more credible witness against them that cavilled at his cure. Observe, 2. The wonderful mercy and goodness of God towards this poor cripple; his miseries and calamities, his lameness and poverty, are over-ruled by God for good to him, even for the best good; namely, for bringing him to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and salvation by him. O how good is God at making up all our losses, and exceeding not only our deserts, but our expectations also! This poor man only begged an alms, God gives him his limbs; yea, gives him his Son and salvation by him. Thus we receive of God daily more than we can either ask or think — Observe, 3. The apostle's advice to a lame man, and his ready compliance with that advice. *Look on us*, says St. Peter; he doth not say, believe on us, but *look on us*, and believe on Christ. This the apostle spake to quicken his attention and excite his hope. As if St. Peter had said

"You look upon many others as able to relieve your necessities; now *look on us*, and see what we can do for you."—Accordingly he fastened his eyes upon the apostles, and beheld them as expectant of relief. Here note, 1. The great mercy of God that was mingled with this poor man's affliction, though he was lame, he was not blind. He could and did steadfastly behold the apostle, with a fixed eye both of body and mind. Note, 2. That what the cripple could do, he must and did do, towards his own healing; he could not move a foot, but he could fix his eye. We are spiritual cripples, laboring under a moral impotency; being *without strength*, Rom. v. 6. But God expects the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our endeavours, in order to our recovery, help and healing. As the cripple looked up to the apostles, so may we look up to the ministers of God; hear them and apply to them, place ourselves under the word dispensed by them; for he that made us without ourselves, will never save us without ourselves: but we must *work out our own salvation*, Phil. ii. 12.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up; and immediately his feet and ancle-bones received strength.

8 And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Observe here, 1. The poverty of this great apostle St. Peter, and his holy contempt of the world; silver and gold he had none; his pretended successor, the pope, upon his election, says the same; but, with as little sincerity as he says, *Nolo episcopari*: The apostle's poverty was real, not fictitious. The holiest, the wisest, and best men, are seldom the wealthiest. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give." As if he had said, "I have no money to give thee, but that which is better than money: I have received power from Christ to cure and heal diseases; and having received it freely, I will give it freely: therefore, *in the name of Jesus*; that is, by the power of Jesus, whom in contempt ye call *Jesus of Nazareth*, be healed, rise up and walk." Observe, 2. The nature of the miracle here wrought: it was, 1. Public and open, not done in a corner, but before all the people at a public time, (Pentecost) and at a public-place (the gates of the temple.) The miracles, that is, the lying wonders wrought in the church of Rome, will not bear the light. Miracles are by them most pretended to, where people are most ignorant, and a dark shop is fittest for their false wares. 2. Instantaneous and sudden; "Immediately his feet and ancle-bones received strength." This evidently shows it to be God's work; he was perfectly cured, and instantly cured, though he was lame from his birth, and had continued lame above forty years. All things are easy, yea, equally easy, to an Almighty power: if God speaks but the word, "the lame shall leap as an hart," Isaiah xxxv. 6. Observe, 3. The humility and faith of this great apostle (No. 31.)

discovered in the manner of the cure; his humility, in not disdaining to touch and take hold of, and lift up this poor cripple from the ground; his faith, in being fully persuaded of Christ's presence, relying upon his power, and depending upon his promise Mark xvi. 18. They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. The apostles had not a power at their pleasure to work miracles; but when God pleased to work them, he made it known to them by inspiration, and put them upon it. Observe, 4. How the poor cripple piously ascribes the praise of this miracle to God only: *He leaped and praised God*, not the apostles. No instrument must rob God of his glory; we may pay and gratify the messenger, but must return our prime and principal thanks to our benefactor. No doubt the cripple returned thanks to the apostle, but his prayers unto God only. To conceal God's mercies is ingratitude; to attribute them to second causes is sacrilege.

9 And all the people saw him walking, and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And, as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 ¶ And, when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Observe here, 1. As soon as ever the poor cripple received strength, all the people beheld him praising and blessing God. Learn thence, That the very first appearances of the power and mercy of God, towards ourselves or any of ours, should put us upon the works of praise and rejoicing. We truly say, "Better late than never;" but it is best to be in every good work, especially in the noblest and most angelical work; namely, that of thanksgiving and praise. *My voice shalt thou hear*, says David, *betimes in the morning*; *my praying voice*, my praising voice. Observe, 2. The influence and effect that this miracle had upon the minds of the multitude; it occasioned wonder, but did not produce faith. *They wondered*, but not believed. Miracles will confirm faith, but not alone beget it. The Spirit's extraordinary works may produce astonishment; but it is the work of the Spirit that must produce faith. Observe, 3. How the apostle abaseth himself and his fellow disciples, that he might exalt Christ; he will not suffer the least part of the praise and glory of this miracle to stick to their own fingers, but gives it all to Christ.—Think not "that we by our power and holiness have made this

man to walk." The Jews had a conceit, that extraordinary holiness would enable a man to work miracles: the apostle denies it: for though there be a great difference betwixt miraculous faith and justifying faith, yet true justifying faith has a miracle in it, though not so obvious to sense, requiring the same power to work it in us, which raised up Christ from the dead, Eph. i. 11. Learn hence, That Christ's power, not his apostles' holiness, was the cause of all the miracles that were wrought by them. "Why look you so earnestly upon us, as though by our holiness we had made this man to walk? Through faith in his name, is this man made strong" ver. 16.

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 And killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith, which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Observe here, 1. How St. Peter lays hold upon this opportunity, (when the people are gathered together to gaze upon this lame beggar) to preach a second awakening sermon to the Jews; in which he rebukes them sharply for their cursed contempt of Christ, and the horrible indignities offered to him.

1. They denied him although he was an Holy and Just One. 2. They delivered him up to Pilate when he was inclined to let him go. 3. They preferred Barabbas, the worst of men, and a murderer, before Jesus, the best of men, and a Saviour. 4. They murdered the Messiah, called the *Prince of Life*, because he came to bring life into the world. Where note, that though probably none of the Jews then and there present, did actually nail Christ unto his cross, yet they having given their consent unto it, they are charged with *killing the Lord of Life*. A plenary and full consent of the sins of others, makes us deeply guilty of others sins: ver. 15. "Ye delivered up and denied the Holy One: ye have crucified the Lord of Life." Observe, 2. How St. Peter ascribes the whole of this miracle to the power of faith; ver. 16. "Through faith in his name, and the faith which is by him; hath he given this man perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Faith is twice named in this one verse, because of the apostle's faith in working the miracle, and the cripple's faith in receiving of it, says Dr. Lightfoot: but questionless, it was chiefly the apostle's faith; for the lame man showed no faith in Christ before he was healed; he expected an alms, but little thought of receiving the use of his limbs; but the apo-

stle, firmly relying on the power and promise of Christ for healing, did believe that Christ could and would help and heal him. Learn hence, That as it is the property and prerogative of God to do great things, it is the duty and property of faith to expect great things from God; great expectations from God honor the greatness of God: we dishonor God as much or more, when we believe little, as when we do little. A great God and a small faith suit not well together; accordingly St. Peter here, knowing the all-sufficiency of Christ's power, exerts strength of faith, and through faith in the name of Christ, makes this man whole.

17 And, now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had shown by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. How careful the apostle was, not to drive these murderers of Christ (and consequently the worst of men to despair, but to draw them to repentance; in order to which, 1. He mitigates their sin, imputing it rather to ignorance and blind zeal, than to malice. 2. He is so charitable as to impute it to the ignorance of the pharisees their rulers also. 3. He calls them brethren, though guilty of so great a mistake in their judgment, and fault in their practice. "Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Learn thence, That God used the ignorance of some, and malice of others, for his own glorious ends, in accomplishing the fore-ordained and foretold death of our Redeemer. Observe, 2. St. Peter acquaints them, to keep them from despair, that God hath decreed the sufferings of Christ for man, and by his prophets foretold them, who, as they spake by one Spirit, did all speak the same things, as if they had all spoken out of one mouth. So that what the Jews did he tells them, was though unknown to them, a fulfilling of ancient prophecies and promises for man's redemption. "Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath now fulfilled." The death and sufferings of Christ, with all the circumstances relating thereunto, were all ordained by God, and foretold by the prophets; which, though it doth not excuse his murderers from the guilt of a dreadful sin, yet may be improved as an argument, to keep them from despair—"What God before had showed, he hath now fulfilled."

19 ¶ Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

The apostle, like a wise physician, having discovered to the Jews the danger of their disease in the foregoing verses, now directs them to the only effectual remedy, viz. Repentance: *Repent and be converted*; that is, repent of your

rejecting Jesus Christ, and be converted to christianity. To repent, doth denote a change in the mind and judgment: and to be converted, a change in the life and conversation. The exhortation doth denote our duty, and supposes our ability also, by the assistance of that grace, which will never be wanting to sincere endeavours. They were subjects recipient of that *vis gratiæ vortcordiæ*, as St. Austin calls it, "The heart-changing power of the grace of God," which could and did enable them to convert and turn to God. Note farther, How this duty of repentance is urged from the effect and fruit, and profitable consequences of it. "Your sins shall be blotted out," a metaphor taken from creditors who have the books of accounts, in which all debts and reckonings are set down. 2. "The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" by which some understand more generally the times of the gospel, others more particularly understand it of the time of Jerusalem's destruction; as it St. Peter had said, "Know, O my brethren, that the time of Christ's coming to Jerusalem to execute vengeance on his murderers, is now at hand! Repent, therefore, speedily of what you have done, that these dreadful days to his enemies, may be days of refreshment to you." But the days of refreshment are thought by most to signify the day of judgment, which will be a day of refreshing to all penitent sinners; because they shall then enjoy a complete and full absolution from all their sins. Note here, 1. That almighty God has his book of remembrance, in which he writes down all the sins which every person commits, in order to their accusation and charge. 2. That it is the great wisdom, interest, and duty of every person, to take care that he gets his sins now blotted out of God's debt-book, as ever he hopes that the reckoning day may be a day of refreshing to him. 3. That without repentance, conversion, and turning unto God, there will be no forgiveness, comfort, or refreshment from him.—"Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come." 4. That a complete absolution and full discharge from all sin is not yet enjoyed, till the day of judgment. We are in this life continually subject to new sins; and consequently are daily contracting new guilt, whereby arise new fears; so that a soul has not a full rest till the final absolution be pronounced at that solemn day.

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you;

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Here St. Peter enforces his exhortation to repentance with a strong motive; namely, the certainty of Christ's coming to judge the world. God shall send Jesus, this Jesus whom we preach to you, visibly, to justify and glorify all penitent and pardoned sinners, whom yet the heaven must contain till the restitution of all things; that is, to the end of the world, when the whole creation which now groaneth will be delivered, and more particularly restored to God, to himself, and to a blessed immortality. Learn hence, That Christ, being ascended into heaven in our human nature,

shall abide and continue there until the restitution of all things, and his corporeal presence here on earth is not to be expected, until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Now if his body be, and must continue in heaven, surely then it is not in the sacrament, and the Papists' dream, who ascribe to Christ's human nature the property of a Godhead; namely, to be in ten thousand places at one and the same time, contrary to the nature of a human body. If the heavens must contain Christ, Christ must be contained in heaven, and then his presence in the sacrament doth not draw him from heaven; his bodily presence is in heaven, his spiritual presence with his people in the sacrament.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

These words are recorded, Deut. xviii. 15, and here by St. Peter pertinently applied unto Christ, to convince the unbelieving Jews, that he is the true and only Messiah, the great Prophet and Teacher of his church, whose doctrine it was highly dangerous to condemn, though out of the mouth of such contemptible persons as he and St. John appeared to be unto them. Where note, 1. Christ, according to his prophetic office, is largely described, and that three ways. 1. By his title, a prophet; one that by his office is to declare the whole will of God to man. 2. By his type, a prophet like unto Moses; one that went between God and the people as Moses did; carrying God's mind to them, and returning their mind to God. As Moses was faithful in the execution of his office, so was Christ. As Moses confirmed his doctrine by miracles, so did Christ. As Moses brought Israel out of literal Egypt, so Christ brings us out of spiritual Egypt, whereof the Egyptian bondage was a figure. 3. By his stock and original, from which according to the flesh he sprang; "I will raise him up from among thy brethren."—Christ honored the nation of the Jews, and the tribe of Judah, with his nativity. Thus this great prophet is described. Note, 2. A strict injunction to hear and obey this great prophet; hear him only, hear him universally. The word (*him*) is to be understood exclusively, him and none but him; that is, in the same manner that we hear him; *him* for his own authority's sake; his ministers for his sake, as speaking from him, and in his name: And we must hear him universally, in all things; every command is to be obeyed, none to be disputed, be the duty commanded never so difficult, and the sin forbidden never so tempting. Note, 3. A severe condemnation, "The soul that will not hear shall be cut off;" that is, God will severely revenge himself upon the stubborn and disobedient. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is constituted and appointed by God to be the great prophet and teacher of his church: He reveals the will of God perfectly, powerfully, persuasively, plainly, and infallibly.—Learn, 2. That it is the duty of all to hear and obey the

voice of this great prophet, and this under the penalty of eternal destruction: "Every soul that will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

That is, "All the prophets from Moses to Samuel, and particularly Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, did foretell the coming and kingdom of the Messias, the special mercies to them that believe on him, and the destruction of those that reject him." Where note, That Samuel is mentioned as the first prophet between them, because he was the first prophet after Moses that wrote his prophecy, and first erected the schools of the prophets. Learn hence, That Christ was the sum of the law, as well as the substance of the gospel, all the legal sacrifices pointed at him, all the prophets prophesied of him, and received their completion in him. He was Abel's Sacrifice, Isaac's Ram, Isaiah's Emmanuel, Daniel's Holy One, Zachary's Branch, and Malachi's Angel.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Still observe, How sweetly St. Peter invites and encourages these murderers of Christ to repentance; the worst of men must neither be driven to despair, nor be too hastily despaired of. He tells them, they were the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom God first entered into covenant, and consequently they were children of the covenant, and also children of the prophets; that is, the people to whom God primarily and chiefly sent the prophets. So great were the prerogatives of the Jews, that they are called the children of the prophets, children of the promise, children of the covenant, children of the kingdom. But the higher a people are exalted by spiritual privileges, the lower they fall if they miscarry.

26 Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Here note, 1. That the offer of Jesus Christ, and eternal salvation by him, was first made to the people of the Jews, because they were the children of the covenant; that is, the only people in visible communion with God throughout the whole world. Note, 2. The benefit offered; God's Son is raised up; that is, either, 1. Authorised, consecrated, and appointed to be a Saviour; or, 2. Raised from the grave.—You crucified him with wicked hands; but behold the divine clemency! He is first offered to you his crucifiers: God has sent his Son, in the preaching of the gospel, first to you; and this not to take vengeance on you, but to bless you: He being the great High Priest, blesses you authoritatively and effectually; and the blessing he dispenses is

not a temporal blessing as you expected, a pompous Messiah, a secular kingdom, but spiritual, in turning souls from sin to God: He offers to bless you by turning every one of you from your iniquities. Learn hence, 1. That it is Christ's proper work to turn sinners from their iniquities. Oh! that we would all subserve Christ in that great work! He is the principal agent; let us be subordinate instruments, by practising holiness ourselves, and promoting holiness in others.—Learn, 2. That to be turned by Christ from our iniquities, is the greatest blessing we can receive from him; because it is a spiritual blessing, a fundamental blessing, a comprehensive blessing, an endearing blessing, an everlasting blessing.

CHAPTER IV.

The foregoing chapter gave us an account of a miraculous cure wrought by the apostles upon a cripple that was lame from his birth. This chapter acquaints us how exceedingly the governors, both in church and state, were offended and enraged thereat, to such a degree, that they imprison the apostles, and raise a persecution against the church; which yet God over-ruled for his own glory, and his church's increase. This infant gospel church, in the time of the apostles, being like unto the infant Jewish church in Egypt in the days of Moses, the more the church was molested, the more she multiplied; the more they were oppressed, the more they increased.

AND, as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them.

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day; For it was now even-tide.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed: and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Observe here. 1. How the apostles' preaching to, and instructing the people, stirs up the devil's rage, and brings upon themselves a severe persecution: Well might Luther say, *Quid est evangelium predicare, nisi in nos furorem diaboli derivare?* "At the preaching of the gospel the gates of Satan's prison fly open, and the walls of his kingdom are shaken; he finds himself in danger of losing his principality."

No wonder then that he raises all the powers of hell, and stirs up all his instruments on earth to stop the mouths of the preachers of the gospel. Observe, 2. The persons by whom, and the cause for which this persecution was now stirred up against the apostles; namely, the Jewish priests, the Gentile captain, and the sottish sadducees; "As they spake, the captain of the temple, the priests and sadducees, came upon them." These were distinct persons, and they were differently distasted; the *captain*, who was placed with the band of soldiers near the temple to guard it, was offended for fear of a tumult from such a vast appearance of people as came to see the recovered cripple. The *priests* were offended, because the apostles, being private men, went about publicly to teach and instruct the people, not considering the extraordinary call which the apostles had. The *Sadducees* were displeased because they preached the resurrection from the dead (a doctrine which they denied,) and because they preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead; that is, through the power and efficacy of Jesus. Asserting Christ to be both the efficient and also the exemplary cause of the resurrection: and inferring from Christ's resurrection, that all his followers should arise with him, and like unto him. Observe, 3. How far God suffered these persecutors and this persecution to proceed: "They laid hands upon them, and put them, in hold." How easily might this band of soldiers have taken away the lives as well as imprisoned the bodies of the apostles! But God restrained them, and led on the apostles to their sufferings gradually; they were yet but young pupils in Christ's school; therefore they shall not have trials beyond their strength. God will not call his servants to a martyr's fire, till he hath first endued them with a martyr's faith; for this reason God suffered not the storm of persecution to break forth with over much violence upon the new planted church at first. Observe, 4. What was the event of that violence which was now offered to the apostles; God over-ruled it for his church's advantage, and a wonderful increase, by a new addition of five thousand souls more added to it. O wonderful draught of fish at the second casting out of the gospel net! These fishermen, Peter and John, now became, by the help of the Holy Spirit, fishers of men, according to their Master's prediction, Mat. iv. 19. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Many which heard the word believed, and the number of them was about five thousand," ver. 4. This infant church flourished the more by the frowings of men upon her. *Plures efficitur, quoties metimur ab illis*. Tertull. "Like a green meadow, which the oftener it is mowed; springs the faster and becomes the thicker."

5 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the highpriest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the highpriest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And, when they had set them in the

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midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Here observe, 1. What a combined force did unite and join together of rulers, scribes, elders, highpriests, highpriests' kindred, and who not? they all, though of different interests, yet hold together as one, to extinguish and put out the light of the gospel, as soon as it began to shine forth. Need we wonder that the devil struggled so hard at the dawning of the reformation to blow out the light of the gospel; when we consider what opposition he discovered against the first plantation and propagation of the gospel? As Herod would have strangled Christ in his cradle, so would the highpriests have stifled christianity in its infancy; *They all gathered together at Jerusalem*. Sad! that a message of such glad tidings as the gospel, should meet with so bad entertainment. Observe, 2. How the apostles are here arraigned, and questioned. By what name and authority; that is, by what power or virtue they had done this? Some think, they suspected the apostles to have wrought by the black art, being assisted by the devil. But did not this miracle give a sufficient convincing light to demonstrate that it was heaven-born, and showed evidently that it was wrought by a supernatural and divine power? Cursed men! who accounting it a credit for themselves to do evil, make it a crime for the apostles to do good: was there any reason for their asking, by *what power*, when the thing itself proclaimed it to be done by the power of God? Observe, 3. The bold and resolute answer of St. Peter, to the foregoing malicious and ridiculous question! Where note, 1. His holy courage. 2. The cause of it; *He was filled with the Holy Ghost*. In the 5th and 6th verses, we find a full bench, not of justices, but of professed enemies, enough to have dashed ten prisoners at the bar out of countenance. But behold the ingenuousness and holy boldness of a good christian in a good cause. St. Peter, who formerly, when full of himself, was baffled by a damsel, and frightened into a denial of Christ by a silly wench; now, being *filled with the Holy Ghost*, silences and confounds his most potent and malicious accusers. Lord! how woefully weak are we when we rely on our own strength, but how able to do all things,

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when Christ strengthens us! *In te stas et non stas*, says St. Austin. "Thou art sure to come down when thou standest on thine own legs; but shalt be mightily upheld and carried on, when supported and conducted by God's hand." Observe, 4. A singular instance of the apostles' boldness:—namely, in preaching Jesus Christ to them that had imprisoned them. Be it known unto you, that Jesus whom ye crucified, is the stone which was set at nought of you builders; and is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other, &c. Where note, 1. The title given to the rulers of the Jewish church, *Builders*; so they were by office, and here are called so, to remind them of their duty; namely, to increase, strengthen, and beautify the building, *the church of God*; not to demolish, weaken, or deface it. Note, 2. The contempt which these builders cast upon *Christ the chief corner stone*; they refused him and set him at nought, according to the prophecy, Psalm cxviii. 22. which was a prophecy of the rejection of the Messiah, though the Jews would not so understand it; for they dreamed of such a pompous Messiah coming according to their heart's desire, that it should be incredible that any Jews should ever reject or despise him. Note, 3. The title given to Christ, *the corner-stone*; so called because he supports and sustains the whole building; and as the corner stone is equally necessary for both sides of the building, which are united to it, and borne up by it, in like manner both Jew and Gentile are united in Christ, and saved by him.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Observe here, 1. A positive assertion, that there is no salvation but by Christ; or, that besides, or without him, there is no possibility of salvation, either for Jew or Gentile; both those under the Old Testament had, and we under the New Testament have, one and the same common Saviour. Observe, 2. The ground and reason of this confident assertion, That there is no salvation but by Christ; namely, because "there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved." There is no other person designed or appointed by God, to be the author of redemption to, and procurer of salvation for a lost and miserable world, but only Christ. Take we good heed then, that we do not reject or set him at nought; for in rejecting of Christ, we reject the wisdom of God, the authority of God, the love of God, yea, the salvation of God.

13 ¶ Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

14 And, beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them

to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But, that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Observe here, 1. How convincing the boldness of the apostles was, together with the undeniable evidence of the miracle wrought by them: when the council observed both, they marvelled, the apostles being unlearned men, yet now able to speak all languages, and the cripple born lame, now able to leap and walk. These men were convinced, but not converted; silenced, but not satisfied; they marvelled, but not believed; they were full of admiration, but far from faith. The evidence of the fact, with the courage of the apostles, stopped their mouths at present, but did not cure their hard hearts. Observe, 2. At what a nonplus the council was, to know what to do with the apostles; they confess the miracle, but consult upon ways and means how to conceal it; and at last conclude upon threatening them, That for the time to come they speak no more in the name of Jesus: that is, not to preach in his name, nor work miracles by a power and authority derived pretendedly from him. But the apostles soon let them understand, that they esteemed not the threatenings of the council, nor looked upon them as any excuse for the forbearing of their duty, as appeareth by the next words.

19 But Peter and John answered, and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye;

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Observe here, The prudence and integrity of the apostles, in referring it back to the judgment of their very adversaries, whether it was reasonable to obey their commands, when they charged them to preach no more in the name of the Lord Jesus: and as if the apostle had said, "We have received a command from God to preach, *Go, teach all nations*, Mat. xxviii. 19. And we have received a command from you not to preach: now we leave it with you, whether it be fittest and most reasonable to obey God or you." It is a strong way of conviction, to refer a matter to their judgment and conscience, against whom we make opposition. Learn, That when the commands of God's vicegerents run counter

to the command of God himself, God is to be obeyed, and not man.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

23 And, being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And, when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Here observe, 1. That notwithstanding this rational plea, which the apostles used, the council added further threatenings, and so dismissed them, *because of the people*, who looked upon the miracle with admiration, and glorified God for

working it by the apostles' hands. Where note, That it was not the sense of sin, nor any apprehensions of God's displeasure, that influenced the council to set the apostles at liberty; but either the fear or favor of the people. Thus God made the people a restraint to the rulers' rage. Observe, 2. That the apostles thus dismissed, went immediately to their own company, (that is, to the hundred and twenty, mentioned chap. i. 15.) and acquainted them both with their danger, and deliverance, the better to prepare them for sufferings, and encourage them to hope for the like support under them. Observe, 3. What use the church makes thereof; they hearing how their enemies lay in wait to persecute and destroy them, apply themselves to God by fervent prayer. Thence learn, That it is the church's duty when enemies combine together to do mischief, to give themselves much unto prayer.— Thus did the church here, and the like, chap. xiii. Observe, 4. The prayer itself, which they jointly put up at the throne of grace, with one heart and spirit. And here note, 1. They began their prayer with invocation, and a reverend compellation, suitable to their present sufferings; adoring God's omnipotency in creating and governing of the world. "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is therein." Whence learn, That the power and wisdom of God, in creating and governing the world, doth afford singular support and comfort under the sense of present and future sufferings. He that made all things by his power, will over-rule all things by his providence for his own glory and his church's good. Note; 2. The apostles used scripture language and expressions in their prayer: they allude to Psal. ii. and acknowledge that all that enraged malice of men and devils against the Messiah, which was foretold long ago by the prophet David, was now come to pass: for both the Jewish council and the Roman governors had combined together against Christ; and in opposing him, had opposed the Father that sent him. "Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus are they gathered together, to do what thy hand and thy counsel had determined before to be done." Where we see, 1. That all the sufferings of Christ were fore-ordained and determined by God the Father; God from all eternity decreed that Christ should die a sacrifice for sin. 2. That this decree of God did not necessitate the Jews to sin; but they acted freely and voluntarily, according to the wicked determination of their own wills; God foresaw and permitted it, but no ways influenced or compelled them to it. He over-ruled those evil instruments to fulfil his holy purposes, while they intended only to fulfil their own wicked counsels. Observe, lastly, They close their prayer with a fervent petition, that God would strengthen them, and glorify his Son, : 1. That God would strengthen them against their fears; steel them with courage, and fortify them with impregnable resolution; "Grant that with all boldness we may speak thy word." Boldness to preach the gospel, when unjustly forbidden, is a special gift of God, and a great effect of God's grace unto his servants. 2. They request that God would magnify, not them, but his Son by them, in giving them power to work miraculous cures in the name of Jesus, for confirming of the gospel; "Grant that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." Where note, That the gift of miracles, though promised by Christ, is yet prayed for by the apostles. God will have the performance of his promises to be the answers of our prayers.

31 ¶ And, when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of *them*, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of land or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.

35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Observe here, 1. The special and speedy answer which the Lord gave to the apostles' prayer: as a testimony thereof, the place where they prayed is miraculously shaken, and many eminent graces and special gifts of the Spirit were poured out upon the apostles, particularly a greater measure of boldness to preach the gospel; and, as some think, the wonderful gift of conferring the Holy Ghost was now conferred upon the twelve; so Dr. Lightfoot. The Holy Spirit, which caused them thus to pray, gave them that boldness which they prayed for; with signal shaking of the place which they prayed in. O! how ready is God to hear and answer the prayers and pleading of his righteous servants, especially when suffering for righteousness' sake? Observe, 2. The great unity and happy unanimity which was found amongst the ministers and members of this infant church, this purest and most primitive christian church; "They were of one heart and of one soul:" That is, they were one in doctrine and opinion, and they were one in heart and affection: A singular pattern for succeeding christians

to the end of the world, so to carry it one towards another, as members of the same body, and influenced by the same head. Observe, 3. As their unanimity, so their liberality, in contributing to the necessities of each other. *They called nothing their own*, when their brethren's wants required it; the rich readily sold their possessions and goods, to help and relieve the poor. Notwithstanding, this example cannot be a copy for after times, to follow as a command, or to imitate as a perfection: seeing that such was the state of the church at that time, as was never since, or like to be; it was but newly born: It was all in one city; all in a possibility to be soon scattered by persecution. *Res quæ erat temporariæ necessitatis et liberi arbitrii non debet in exemplum trahi, multo minus ut necessaria obtrudi*. The lesson to be gathered from this instance for our instruction, is this, That those who are of ability, ought to abound always in ordinary, and sometimes in extraordinary acts of charity. We must always relieve the saints' wants as we are able, and sometimes upon an extraordinary occasion, above what we are well able. Observe, 4. How the apostles with great authority and assurance gave testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and their doctrine found great favor and acceptance with the people, v. 33. "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." The resurrection of Christ from the dead, was the great point now in controversy, therefore with evident miracles and wonderful gifts of the holy Spirit, did the apostles perform their testimony of his resurrection. So that as Christ was declared to the apostles to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead; in like manner, the apostles by miracles and wonderful gifts did bear witness to the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection, and their doctrine found acceptance with the people. Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ, by the almighty power of his godhead, revived and rose again from the dead, to the consternation of his enemies, and the consolation of all believers. 2. That the doctrine of Christ's resurrection being not only attested by the preaching, but confirmed by the miracles of the apostles, found deservedly belief in the world, and is a point of infallible certainty amongst all those whom wilful obstinacy has not blinded.

CHAPTER V.

BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to *it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 Whilst it remained, was it not thine

own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

The last verses of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the practice of the primitive christians at the first plantation of the gospel, in selling their possessions for charitable uses, and laying down the money at the apostles' feet, for the relief of their fellow-brethren and members in Christ. Now this chapter informs us, that according to their example, one Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, consecrated a possession unto God, and sold the same to that purpose; but fraudulently kept back part of the price; and thus, as St. Chrysostom notes, was found stealing his own goods: he had the formality to sell his lands as others did; but had not the sincerity to part with his money as others had. Observe here, 1. The true nature of Ananias' sin, it was sacrilege; that is, a purloining or stealing of that which was consecrated unto God, not by actual performance, but by vow and inward purpose of heart: covetousness and vain-glory, lying and hypocrisy, did all attend and accompany this sin; but the sin itself was sacrilege. Learn hence, 1. That what is consecrated to God, must not be alienated or applied to other uses. 2. That such an alienation is sacrilege, and a sin against God, being a breach of vow or promise made unto him; *a lying unto God*, as the text calls it. 3. That it is an heinous sin, which God will severely punish. Observe, 2. How this secret sin, lying in the intention of the heart, was known to God, and by divine revelation made known to St. Peter. Learn thence, That not only our outward actions are taken notice of by God, but even the purposes and intents of our hearts are all manifest and open to him, and thoroughly understood by him.—Observe, 3. How St. Peter justly aggravates their sin from the divinity of the person (the Holy Ghost) against whom it was committed; “Why hath satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God.” But why is Ananias said to lie unto the Holy Ghost, rather than to God the Father, or Jesus Christ the Son? Answer, Either, 1. Because it is the proper work of the Spirit to search the heart, and to know the thoughts and purposes thereof: Or, 2. Because the wealth brought in to the apostles and laid at their feet, was an effect of the Holy Spirit's inclining the hearts of believers so to do. Learn hence, The divinity of the Holy Ghost, that he is truly and really God; he whom the scriptures calls the great and true God, is God; but the scripture calls the Holy Ghost the great and true God; therefore the Holy Ghost is God. Either the Holy Ghost is man, and God's messenger, or God himself; but the antithesis or opposite show, that he is not man; for says the apostle, *Thou hast not lied unto man*; and if the Holy Ghost had been only God's messenger, it had been as great a sin to lie to Peter, (he being God's extraordinary messenger,) as to lie to the Holy Ghost; therefore the apostle, in the fourth verse, doth explain what he meant, by lying to the Holy Ghost, in the third verse; namely, lying unto God: “Thou hast not lied unto man, a creature like thyself, but unto God, even the Holy Ghost, who is God.

5 And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost: And
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great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Observe here, 1. The justice of the punishment inflicted upon Ananias for his sin; he is struck dead upon the spot for his sacrilege, covetousness, hypocrisy and lying: doubtless it was a very heinous sin which God so severely punished, and it was the first sin of this kind under the New Testament. This was the first consecration of goods that ever was made unto Christ our Lord, after he was exalted at the right hand of God in heaven: and this was the first sacrilege: the first sin of this kind, and therefore the first persons that were found guilty of it met with this severity, *in tertorent*, to make all others afraid of it. The first transgressors in any kind have been made public examples. Thus the angels before the Jewish church; Nadab and Abihu at the beginning of the Jewish church; and here Ananias and Sapphira, at the beginning of the christian church: Observe, 2. How Sapphira, the wife's subjection to her husband, doth not excuse her from partaking in his sin, nor exempt her from the severity of the punishment. God's authority in commanding or forbidding, must be first observed and obeyed, otherwise we put the creature in God's place, debase him and set up an idol, which the jealousy and holiness of God will never endure. Observe, 3. How the same sin meets with the same punishment. Husband and wife had here agreed both what to do and what to say, and they that sinned together suffered together. God is no respecter of persons, male and female, Jew or Gentile, prince or subject, husband or

wife; the soul that sinneth, it shall die; "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost," ver. 10. Observe, 4. That this miraculous way of punishing offenders with immediate death by the apostles, was not common:— This is the only instance in the New Testament of so severe a punishment inflicted by the mouth of the apostles for any sin whatsoever; and it seems accommodated and suited to that particular time, in which magistrates were so far from defending the church, that they furthered the persecution, and endeavoured the extirpation of it. Observe lastly, The effect which this tremendous miracle had upon the whole church: it awfully affected them with fear and trembling; "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." God's extraordinary providences, either judgments or mercies, towards ourselves or towards others, ought to affect us with holy fear, and that fear which works righteousness, Isa. xxvi. 9. "When his judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness;" that is, they ought to do so, and if ever they will do it, they will do it then: judgments work fear, and fear works righteousness.

12 ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: (And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women:)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on bed and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Three things are here observable: 1. How that act of severity upon Ananias and Sapphira for their hypocrisy, is instantly succeeded with acts of clemency and mercy upon others: the former acts of severity in the apostles were necessary to prevent the intrusion of hypocrites into the christian church: these subsequent acts of mercy were as necessary for the propagating of the gospel, and to invite people to the love of christianity. Accordingly, the apostles, after the death of Ananias, are endued with power from on high to work signs and wonders, to heal diseases, to

cast out devils; insomuch that the people brought forth their sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds, and couches, hoping that the shadow of Peter, as he passed by, might reach and recover some of them. The church of Rome makes a noise with this text, and produces it to prove St. Peter's supremacy over the rest of the apostles, because his very shadow cured the diseased: but very groundlessly; for, 1. By the same argument they may prove St. Peter to be superior to Christ himself; this being more than what Christ himself wrought, according to what he foretold, St. John xiv. 12. "Greater works than these shall ye do," &c. 2. The papists might observe, were they not wilfully blind, that the napkins and handkerchiefs, which were carried from St. Paul's body, cured diseases also, and dispossessed devils, Acts xix. 12. 3. Besides all this, it is not here expressly said, that any sick were actually healed by St. Peter's shadow, but that the diseased were brought, in hopes that his shadow might produce such effects; and, if it did so, Almighty God thereby put honor upon the gospel, and upon all the apostles, without any particular respect, or special regard to the person of St. Peter. Observe, 2. the place where the apostles assembled to preach the gospel, and work miracles for the confirmation of the same, "They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Where note, 1. Their unity and unanimity: there were no persons among them guilty of schismatical separation in forsaking the public assembly; but with one mouth, as well as with one mind and heart, they glorified God. 2. Their prudential boldness and holy courage appeared in preaching to the people in Solomon's porch; for the sanhedrim, or great council, sat in, or very near that place, even that council, which in the former chapter imprisoned them, and in this beat them. (See ver. 40.) Learn hence, That nothing better becomes the ministers and messengers of Jesus Christ, than an holy and humble, a wise and meek, a zealous and convincing boldness, in asserting the truths of the gospel, and in reproving sin, and denouncing judgments against impenitent sinners. Consider we, how bold and zealous our Lord and Master was in his ministry, Luke xx. 21. "We know thou teachest the way of God truly, and acceptest not the person of any." And the apostles learned the same of their Master, Acts iv. 13. "When the highpriest saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Observe, 3. How God over-ruled the judgment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira, and caused it to work for special good. Thus, such of the apostles' hearers, who were unsound and insincere, durst not join themselves to them, having seen a great instance of severity upon concealed hypocrisy! They were afraid to come among them any more, or to make a show of such piety and zeal as Ananias did, for fear of the same, or such like punishment as he had. But however the people extolled and magnified, admired and applauded them, and multitudes were daily added to the church. This seems to be the sense of ver. 13. "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them, and believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Nothing doth more affect and afflict unsound and drossy hypocrites, than the sight of God's judgments inflicted upon others in this world, and the fear of the righteous judgment of God upon themselves in the world to come.

17 ¶ Then the highpriest rose up, and

all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation.

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord, by night, opened the prison doors, and brought them forth and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Note here, 1. How the persecutions of the holy apostles did gradually advance and increase. In the former chapters the apostles were only secured, kept in hold for a night, and dismissed with a threatening next day; but now being filled a second time with the Holy Spirit, they are better enabled to grapple with sufferings, and to glorify God under them, and accordingly here they are committed to the common prison amongst malefactors, and afterwards beaten and exposed to public shame, ver. 40. O the tenderness of God towards his tender servants! While these apostles were striplings, their faith feeble, and their grace weak, God stayeth the rough wind, keeps off the storm of persecution from them.—God will evermore suit the stroke to his people's strength, proportion their burden to their back, and never suffer them to be tempted above what they are able. Note, 2. The apostles being prisoners for Christ and his gospel, they have an angel for their keeper and deliverer, who opens the prison door and overpowers and puts out the devil. God could otherwise have delivered them, but he makes use of the ministry of angels for the confirming of their faith, and to let them see by experience that he had given his angels charge over them. Since the establishment of the gospel, God will have us to live more by faith, and to walk less by sense, and therefore we must not now (ordinarily) see those ministering and beneficent spirits; but although their visible apparitions be ceased, yet their invisible operations for the heirs of salvation shall never cease, Heb. i. ult. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Note, 3. The apostles being thus brought out of prison by an angel, are commanded to preach, and they have their text given them by the angel that opened both the prison and the pulpit doors for them. The angel said unto them, "Go and speak unto the people all the words of this life," ver. 20. That is, of this life for which you were imprisoned, this life, which the sadducees, who imprisoned you, deny; namely the resurrection of the body and eternal life. Learn, That not the things of this life; but the things of eternity and the life to come, the unseen things of another world, are the things which all the ministers of Christ ought to preach, and press their people to the pursuit of; "Go and speak unto the people all the words of this life:" That is, the gospel, which is the word of life, and directs them how to attain eternal life and salvation by Jesus Christ.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the

morning, and taught. But the high-priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, 'The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors; but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now, when the highpriest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence; (For they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.)

27 And, when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the highpriest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Observe here, 1. No sooner were the apostles out of prison, but they enter into the temple and preach, with a redoubled zeal and diligence; no doubt, satan had better have let these holy men alone, than have cast them into prison; for the cold blasts of persecution and imprisonment beating upon their outward man, by a spiritual antiperistasis, augmented the heat of grace within. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their spite and malice against us, as by doing all the good we can to the souls of men. Observe, 2. How the deliverance which God wrought for the apostles, in bringing them miraculously out of prison by the conduct of an angel, did confound the council which laid them in: they were nonplussed and horribly perplexed at it: "They doubted whereunto this would grow."

They stood musing and amazed, and knew not what measures to take; but were at last well-said. Sin often-times brings men into straits, but straits do not always bring men off from their sins. Thus here, notwithstanding their present perplexity of spirit, they spurn, and bring them again before the council, ver. 26. "Then went the captain with the officers of the temple, and brought them without violence." Observe, 3. The crimes which the holy apostles were unjustly accused of; namely obstinacy and sedition. They are charged with obstinacy for persisting to preach the gospel, when they had strictly (but very wickedly) forbidden them: and they are accused of sedition, as if they endeavoured to stir up the people to avenge the blood of Christ upon the rulers, as being unjustly shed by them. The greatest innocency cannot protect the holiest persons from slander and false accusation. The best of men have sometimes been charged with the blackest crimes. No wonder that the sanhedrim, or great council, which charged Christ himself with imposture and blasphemy, did accuse the apostles of sedition and contumacy; "The disciple is not above his Master." Observe, 4. The contumacious reflection which they had made upon our Lord Jesus Christ himself: *You intend*, says the council, *to bring this man's blood upon us*: as if the holy Jesus had not been worthy the naming by them. Christ told his disciples, Luke vi. 22. that the world should cast out their name as evil. Behold! his own is used no better: he is *homo nullius in nomis*. This man, this fellow, this deceiver were the opprobrious titles which the learned Rabbies thought fit to impose upon the best man that ever the world had.—Lord! how can we be abused enough for thee, who wast so degraded and debased for us?

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

39 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to *be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things, and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

To the foregoing charge of obstinacy brought in against the apostles, St. Peter answers, in the name, and as the mouth of the rest; owning that they had not obeyed them in their injunction, because they had commanded that which was contrary to the command of God. Where observe, How the apostles assert the prerogative of Christ as their apology for

disobedience to human commands; "We ought to obey God rather than men." The second part of the charge was sedition; as if the apostles endeavoured to stir up the people to revenge the blood of Christ upon the chief priests and rulers. Thence note, That it is no new thing to tax the ministers of Christ for preaching sedition, when rulers design to stop their mouths, and not suffer them to preach at all. But to remove this part of the charge, the apostle tells them, that this Jesus, whom they ignominiously slew on earth, is now an exalted Prince in heaven, able to give repentance and remission of sins to the worst of his murderers, if they unfeignedly desire it: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, &c." Whence learn, 1. That Jesus will be a Saviour to none to whom he is not a Prince. We must submit ourselves to his ruling power, as well as commit ourselves to his saving mercy. For it is in vain to expect salvation by him, if we do not yield subjection to him. 2. That repentance and remission of sins are the special fruits and advantages of Christ's exaltation: "Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." Learn, 3. That it is the sole prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give repentance and remission of sins. Where note, The encouragement which the apostle's ministry gave to the murderers of Christ to *be* his parish; he preaches the duty of repentance, and the privilege of remission of sins, but assureth them, for their comfort, that Christ stands ready to dispense both. But observe the sad effects which this sermon had upon these hearers; it was for substance the same which St. Peter preached, chap. ii. when so many thousands were pricked at the heart by sorrow and compunction; whereas these men were cut to the heart with anger and indignation. Whence learn, 1. That the most sound and sacred doctrine is an intolerable torment to an unsound and unholy heart; That the word of God dispensed by the same minister, and in the same manner, has not always the same success. The substance of both these sermons was the same (Jesus and the resurrection,) and the preacher (St. Peter) was the same, but the success was not the same; to let the apostle know that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of himself, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

34 Then stood there up one in the council; a pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man arose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now, I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply, ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and, when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. A general council erring, and that fundamentally in matters of faith. They determined peremptorily, that the doctrine and practice of the apostles was not from God; and accordingly resolved to suppress them, and that by death. Thence learn, that no determination of a council against a doctrine or practice, is any demonstrative or sufficient proof, that such a doctrine or practice is not from God. Observe, 2. How God raised up a particular person in the council. Gamaliel, to interpose in the apostles' behalf as Nicodemus before had done on Christ's behalf; and uses him as an instrument to preserve them from the rage and fury of their persecutors. Without question, Gamaliel's spirit was actuated and influenced by the Spirit of God, to give such counsel as is here given. Observe, 3. The counsel and advice given in the several parts of it. 1. He advises them to take heed what they did to these men, ver. 35, implying, that men had need take heed how they engage themselves in suppressing or destroying any sort of men, whatsoever, until they have clear and expressive warrant from heaven for the execution. 2. He assures them, that if this work be of men, it will certainly come to nought; which he proves by a double instance, namely, Theudas, and Judas of Galilee, who both pretended to be sent of God as saviours of their country, and gathered many followers, but miscarried in their enterprise; intimating, that every invention, contrivance, or device of man, especially in things pertaining to God and religion, will in time be blasted and blown upon by God, and come to nothing. 3. He adds, That if this work be of God, it can never be overthrown, but the attempt will be deemed a

(No. 32)

fighting against God: signifying to us, that for any person to attempt the suppression of any doctrine or practice that is from God, is to fight against God himself. 4. He intimates to them the great peril and danger of fighting against God, in the word *even*, lest ye be found *even* fighting against God. Thence learn, that fighting against God is a most dangerous enterprise for any person at any time to be found engaged or concerned in. Observe, 4. The success or issue of Gamaliel's counsel; his advice being so wise and rational, it prevailed with the rulers to desist from their former intention of putting the apostles to death: but they come not off without blows, though without bloodshed; they are scourged, as their Master was before them, which was both a painful and reproachful punishment. Yet were they so far from being discouraged, that they were the more resolved. They rejoiced that they were so graced as to be disgraced for Christ, and accounted it their highest honor to be dishonored for him; esteeming it a very great favor and happiness to bear reproach for Christ, according to that of the apostle St. Peter, 1 Epist. iv. 14. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." This sent them from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Observe lastly, How wisely and well the holy apostles improve their restored liberty: they redouble their pains and diligence in preaching the gospel, and are unwearied in the way of their duty, and in the work of their God, ver. 42. "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ; that is, they laid hold on every opportunity, in season and out of season, publicly and privately, to publish the gospel to those that had not received it, and farther to instruct those that had already received the faith of Christ. Thus the more outrageous were their adversaries, the more courageous were the holy apostles. They religiously profess the name of Christ, and resolutely abide by their profession, though they were derided, imprisoned, persecuted, and beaten for the same.—Lord help thy ministers at this day to suffer reproach for thy gospel; but never let any of them either reproach it, or be a reproach unto it. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

In the foregoing chapters, an account is given of the two first persecutions that befel the christian church after Christ's ascension; the former in the imprisoning, the latter in the beating of the apostles. This and the next chapter acquaint us with a third blow given to this infant-church, blacker and bloodier than both the former, in the death of the holy Martyr St. Stephen; and the occasion of it was thus:

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

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2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Here observe, 1. How the number of christians increased upon the foregoing persecution; as the Jewish church in Egypt, the more it was oppressed, the more it multiplied; so the christian church here got ground by opposition; ver. 1. "In those days the number of the disciples was multiplied." Observe, 2. How the number of believers increasing, there arose (as it often happens among a multitude) a murmuring among them: the Grecians, that is, such Jews as were dispersed abroad among the Greeks, complaining that their widows were neglected, and received less than the widows of the Hebrews in the daily distribution of the church's money, for charitable uses. Thence learn, That neglect of the poor, particularly of the godly poor, is a sin in all, but especially in the churches of Christ. Observe, 3. How the apostles desiring to have the poor well provided for, not having leisure themselves personally to take care of them, advise the church to choose seven persons out of the hundred and twenty, mentioned in chapter the first, to be stewards and dispensers of the church's stock, to distribute the same with equity and indifference to all proper objects of charity without exception. Thence learn, That a general concern for the poor, and a tender regard to their necessities and wants, is a duty that will become the ministers and ambassadors of God: God's poor are his treasure, his jewels, the signet upon his arm; they are always in his eye, and upon his heart; how well then doth it become the ministers of God to take care of them who are so dear to him? Observe, 4. How the apostles resolve to perform their duty to God and their people, with such zeal and supplication, as became persons of their holy character and profession. We will give ourselves continually unto prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Where note, 1. That such as are called by God to the work of the ministry, ought to give themselves wholly to it: *We will give ourselves continually thereunto.* 2. That a minister's giving himself unto prayer, is as great, if not a greater duty than giving himself to the preaching of the word: "We will give ourselves continually unto prayer, and to the ministry of the word:" to the one as the end, to the other as the mean; it is God that sets the word on work, but it is prayer that sets God on work: that minister that is not fervent in prayer cannot expect to be successful in preaching. Pray for us, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, that the word may run and be glorified; he that begged prayer of others, did not neglect it himself, but prayed, without ceasing.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and, when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Observe here, That to remove the forementioned murmuring at the inequality of the poor's relief, seven deacons were chosen to assist the apostles, and to dispose of that treasure (which had been laid down at the apostles' feet) with more indifference to all fit objects of charity without exception.— Here note, 1. The qualification of the persons chosen; *men full of the Holy Ghost*; that is, persons that were extraordinarily assisted by the Spirit to perform the duties required of them; for the office of a deacon was, besides the taking care of the poor, to preach the gospel, and to baptize, as it appears Philip did; had it been only to take care of the poor, they needed not to be so inquisitive to find out men full of the Holy Ghost for that service. Here observe, That the scripture mentions a threefold fulness of the Holy Ghost according to a threefold capacity of the receivers. There is *plenitudo sufficientia*, the fulness of a vessel; this every believer hath; there is *plenitudo abundantia*, the fulness of a stream; this the apostles had, when extraordinarily inspired, and filled with the Spirit at the first plantation of the gospel; and there is *plenitudo superabundantia*, the fulness of the fountain; and this Christ had, Col. i. 19. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Note, 2. The manner how these deacons enter into their office; it is by prayer and imposition of hands, ver. 6. They prayed and laid their hands on them." This rite of laying on of hands was used anciently upon a threefold occasion in the Jewish church; namely, in their sacrifices; Exod. xxix. 15. In their blessings Gen. xlvii. 14. And in their designation unto a charge or office; Numb. xxvii. 18. Thus Moses laid his hands on Joshua; and from hence it was derived and brought into the gospel church, when ministers were ordained by the apostles in the primitive times, they laid their hands upon them, 1. Tim. v. 22. Note, 3. The almighty success of the gospel, notwithstanding all the violent opposition that was made against it; *The word of God*, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, *increased, the number of believers multiplied*; yea, some of the priests themselves, though formerly bitter enemies to Christ, now embraced the faith, and were joined to the church; great is truth, especially the spirit of truth, and will prevail. Naked truth is too hard for armed error. Truth has the strength of God in it, and therefore human power can never

prevail against divine truth. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 ¶ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the *synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

13 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

14 For we have heard him say, That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Observe here, The great character given of St. Stephen; a man full of the grace of God, full of faith, full of power to work miracles, mighty in word and deed; able to do all things, and to suffer all things through Christ that strengthened him. Observe, 2. The violent opposition which this good man met with in the way of his duty. He is, 1. Encountered by disputation with the heads of five colleges in Jerusalem, namely, Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians, and Asiatics. Behold here, an admirable act kept, wherein St. Stephen was the respondent, against whom opponents appeared from all parts of the then known world; but all too few to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake. He asserted the truth so convincingly, that all his opponents had no power to oppose him. See here how faithful Christ was in fulfilling of his promise, Luke xxi. xv. "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or oppose." 2. His adversaries being baffled in their disputes, they burn with revenge; they hire men to

accuse him falsely, that they might take away his life. The best arguments of a baffled adversary are ever found to be craft and cruelty; it has been an old artifice of the devil, to swear innocent men out of their lives: and therefore it is next to a miracle, that no greater number of innocent persons have been murdered in the world by perjury and false accusation; when so many thousands hate them, who make no conscience of false oaths. Observe, 2. The charge and accusation brought against Stephen, that he spake dishonorably of the Jewish religion, that he was continually foretelling destruction to the temple, and threatening the change of all the Mosaic rites. It is very probable, that he told them the shadows and ceremonies were to vanish, now the substance was come; and that the Mosaic rites were to give place, that a more excellent and spiritual worship might succeed. For as God was worshipped aright four hundred years before either temple or tabernacle were built, or the Jewish rites instituted: so he might again be truly worshipped after they were abolished. Observe, lastly, How Almighty God, by a miracle, bears witness to the innocency of his holy servant St. Stephen; and to convince his accusers, that he had done no wrong to Moses, God makes his face to shine now as Moses' face had shined of old, and gave him an angelical countenance, in which appeared an extraordinary lustre and radiancy; not that an angel has a face, or shines visibly; but it intimates that amazing brightness of beauty which was instamped upon the face of Stephen. He now began to border upon heaven, and had received some beams of glory approaching: it pleaseth God sometimes to give his children and servants some prelibations and foretastes of heaven before they step into heaven, especially holy martyrs and confessors, who love not their lives unto death: God bears an honorable respect to them that bear witness to his name and truth; and as they shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, so will God sometimes put a lustre upon their faces here: "All in the council saw St. Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel."

CHAPTER VII.

THEN said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed into this land wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

This chapter contains St. Stephen's apology, or defensive plea which he makes for himself: the Jews had, in the foregoing chapter, accused him for blaspheming their law, and profaning their temple, imagining that Almighty God was so pleased with the temple service and Moasic rites, that no other way of worship could be acceptable to him. Therefore by an historical deduction, he shows them that God was worshipped aright before either tabernacle or temple was built, or any of the Moasic rites instituted or ordained, and consequently that the true worship of God was not necessarily and inseparably annexed to any of these things. For the proof of this he begins at Abraham, and shows them, that he living of old at Ur of the Chaldeans, in the midst of idolators, God was pleased of his free mercy to call him to enlighten, and draw him to own and worship the true God, and commanding him to leave his native country, and go into a land which he should show him: he promised to make of him a great nation, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Now the design and drift of Stephen in this relation, is to prove, that Abraham, from his first call in Chaldea, when he was seventy years old, to the time of his being ninety years old, had served God faithfully all that time, without either circumcision or ceremony, without tabernacle or temple; and consequently that the true worship of God might be now performed acceptably after these ceremonies were abolished, as well as it was performed before they were instituted. Learn hence, 1. That religious worship is manifestly due to God by the law and light of nature. 2. That the manner how that worship should be acceptably performed, was not known by the law of nature, but discovered by divine revelation. Adam in innocence knew that God was to be worshipped: yet he did not know by what outward acts he was to testify that homage, till God the Sovereign Governor and Supreme lawgiver did give direction. 3. That the worship due from the creature to God the creator, is a spiritual worship, and ought to be spiritually performed. 4. The Judaical worship, though appointed by God himself, was fleshly and carnal, and never pleased God for its own sake. 5. The evangelical worship being spiritual and most suitable to the nature of God, is therefore most acceptable and best pleasing to him. The ceremonial worship was therefore good, because God commanded it; but the evangelical worship is therefore commanded, because good. The legal worship is called *flesh* in scripture, and a carnal ordinance, in opposition to the gospel, which is called *spirit*, and a *ministration of the spirit*, because attended with a more spiritual efficacy on the hearts and lives of men.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: And after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: And so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

Observe here, The great trial which God put Abraham's faith unto: the Lord promised to give him the land of Canaan for a possession, but he gave him not a foot's breadth. He promised to give it unto his seed, when as yet he had no child; and when God gave him seed, yet they were to sojourn in a strange land, Egypt; and continue there in bondage four hundred years. Learn hence, That there is no faith which God delights more to exercise and try, than the faith of his people; as faith puts honor upon God, so doth God put honor upon faith; and faith never honors God more, nor is more highly honored by him, than when it is put upon the greatest exercise and trial; 1 Pet. i. 7. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory."—Here the apostle compares faith unto, and prefers it before gold, even the most precious gold purified in the fire. Is gold precious and rare? So is faith. Is gold pure and resplendent? So is faith. Is gold lasting and durable? So is faith. Is gold purified and improved by trying in the fire? So is faith by exercise; as the instance of Abraham here fully proves. Observe, 2. How God takes Abraham and his seed into covenant with him, and gives him circumcision, the seal of the covenant. Thence learn, That in the covenant which God made with Abraham, he gave himself to be a God to Abraham and to his seed, and received Abraham and his seed to be a people unto himself. 2. That circumcision was both the sign and the seal of the covenant which God made with Abraham, and his seed, the people of the Jews: it is here called the covenant of circumcision, because circumcision was both the sign and the seal of that covenant made with Abraham. 1. Circumcision was a sign, and that in several respects: it was a commemorative sign of God's covenant with Abraham; it was a representative sign of Abraham's faith and obedience towards God. A demonstrative sign of original sin, and the depravity of human nature. A discriminating and distinguishing sign of the true church, and people of God, from all the rest of the world. An initiating sign, by which all strangers were admitted into the Jewish church. And lastly, it was a prefigurative sign of baptism, which succeeded in the room of circumcision in the christian church. 2. Circumcision was not only a sign, but a seal also; Rom. iv. 11. "He received the sign of circumcision, the seal of the righteousness by faith." It was a seal on God's part, to confirm all the promises made to Abraham and his seed: and it was a seal on his and their part to bind him to renounce the service of all other gods, and to oblige them to the observation of the whole Jewish law.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy,

sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him; and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph:

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

From the history of Abraham, Stephen proceeds to that of Joseph; and shows, as he did before, that Joseph, as well as Abraham, worshipped God acceptably without either tabernacle or temple, and without such customs as Moses delivered; and consequently, that the worship of God is not confined to an outward temple, or a Mosaical ministration; and that therefore it was not blasphemy in him to say, that God might be so worshipped. This is St. Stephen's argument from the instance of Joseph: As to the particular story of Joseph, Observe, 1. The great and sore afflictions which befel that holy and good man; he was envied and hated of his brethren, they conspired against him, and sought to take away his life: he is thrown into a pit, and afterwards sold

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for a bond slave to the Madianites; they sell him into Egypt where he was imprisoned so long, till the iron entered into his soul; that is, so loaded with irons, that his flesh was eaten with them. Learn thence, That afflictions, many and great afflictions, long and sore afflictions, have been, and may be, the lot and portion of the holiest and best of men, and all these occasioned by their own brethren; "Joseph's brethren, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." Observe, 2. The singular support and comfort which Joseph experienced in, and under his great afflictions; *God was with him*: God was with Joseph in Potiphar's house, and gave him favor in the eyes of his master, who reposed an entire confidence in him. God was with Joseph in prison, and caused his imprisonment to make way for his enlargement. God was with Joseph in Pharaoh's court, and gave him a prudent and provident spirit, making him a father unto Pharaoh, and to all his people: giving him also a compassionate and merciful spirit to his brethren; pardoning their cruelties and forgiving the injuries done unto him. Hence we learn, That all the envy, malice, and mischievous designs of men, shall never be able to hinder or disappoint the purpose and pleasure of God: "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him." Observe, 3. The religious desire which Jacob and Joseph, and the rest of the holy patriarchs, had to be buried together in the land of Canaan, ver. 15, 16. "Jacob died, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in a sepulchre." No doubt, this was done by way of declaration of their own faith, and in order to the confirmation of the faith of others; that their posterity should enjoy and possess that land: so that this act of theirs was a profession of their faith in the promises which God had made to them of their possessing and enjoying the land of Canaan. There is a natural desire in persons to be buried by their ancestors; but here was a religious desire, they died in the faith of their ancestors, and laid down their heads together upon the same pillow of dust, in hope of a blessed and glorious resurrection.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months;

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

23 And, when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed, his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, Saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

From the history of Abraham and Joseph, St. Stephen descends to that of Moses; where we have observable, 1. The birth and education of Moses, *he was born and hid three months in his father's house*; and then being cast out, was taken in by Pharaoh's daughter, and had a noble education given to him; being instructed in all kinds of good literature, to fit him for such great services as a prince's court might probably have brought him to: *Moses was learned*. Hence note, That the greater men are, the greater should their care be for the learning and religious education of their children: because nothing is more incongruous and unsuitable than greatness of estate and meanness of understanding. It is a shame for great men to breed up their children sensually, to gaming, sporting, and excess, as if an inheritance did serve for no other purpose but to make the heir of it useless and good for nothing. Again note, the latitude and extent of Moses' learning. *He was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians*. Where remark, 1. The different end which God had in his providence, from what Pharaoh's daughter had in her particular care. She intended by this education of Moses, the good of Egypt; but God intended the good of Israel: she designed the service of Pharaoh; but God designed Moses to be a deliverer from Pharaoh. Thus the wise and holy providence of God useth the diligence of men to effect and bring things about which they never thought of. 2. We may remark, how that Moses, the great prophet, whom God spake to, mouth to mouth, is here commended for his learning, yea, for Egyptian learning. Thence we may gather, That human learning is a noble and beneficial gift of God, and a very great ornament and honor unto the greatest and most excellent men; for it is in itself an ornament and perfection to the mind; it renders men the more useful and serviceable in their generation, and a greater blessing to human society, but especially to the church of God. Human learning indeed is far inferior to holiness: but in holy men, learning is a rare ornament and accession to holiness. Sanctified wit beautifies religion, sanctified reason defends it, sanctified power protects it, sanctified eloquence persuades others to the love of it; so that to decry the use of human learning must proceed either from ignorance or from malice, and a desire of having religion betrayed. Let us see that we get our learning seasoned with holiness, that we use it with humility, moderation, and sobriety, as an handmaid unto Christ; not vain-gloriously unto ostentation, not proudly with contempt of others,

not heretically in defence of error; never suffering human learning but divine revelation, to determine articles of faith; then, if with Moses we be learned in all the learning of the philosophers, the more glory we shall bring to God, and be the more useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 2. As the education of Moses in Pharaoh's court, so the time of his continuing there: namely, till he was *forty years old*: after which God put it into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, and to offer himself to be a deliverer to them; and he supposed that they would have understood the purpose of God to save them by his hand, but they understood it not. But what reason was there for the Israelites to suppose that Moses was the person designed by God for their deliverer? Answer, Very great reason; because, 1. They knew that the time of their deliverance did now draw very near. 2. From the extraordinariness of Moses' preservation: by his being hid three months in his father's house without discovery; by his floating upon the waters in an ark of bulrushes without danger, when an infant; they might have rationally thought that such a person was designed by God for very great purposes. 3. From his readiness to defend them at this time, when an Israelite and an Egyptian contended; for it was wonderful that so great a person as Moses was, and might have been, should concern himself in a private quarrel betwixt two obscure persons. Moses might well suppose that his brethren would have understood, how that God, by his hand would have delivered them; but they understood it not. Observe, 3. The ill treatment given to Moses, when he offered himself to be a reconciler: they thrust him from them and expostulate with him, *Who made thee a ruler or a judge?* The meek man replies, *Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?* Where note, 1. Who were the persons doing wrong to each other; they were Israelites, both Israelites. To see an Israelite and an Egyptian struggling, had been no wonder; but to see two Israelites, who were brethren by nation, brethren by religion, brethren in tribulation, both of the seed of Abraham, both initiated into the same covenant, both in bondage to a cruel tyrant, Pharaoh, who had condemned them to an ignominious slavery, and designed such a degree of cruelty, as to murder all the male issue; this was an astonishing sight, and Moses might well say, *Why do ye wrong one to another?* Plainly implying, that both parties were to blame; but that party most who would not hear of a reconciliation, or putting a stop to the quarrel; a reconciler is more odious than a stranger in the apprehension of some. Observe lastly, How Moses, being thus ill-treated by them, departs from them, and they hear no more of him for forty years, ver. 20. *Then fled Moses, and was a stranger in the land of Madian*; Where observe, The years of Moses' life were an hundred and twenty: forty years he spent at the court in Egypt; forty years he spent in Madian with his father-in-law Jethro: and the last forty years of his life in the wilderness. Now all this time Moses was a worshipper of the true God, and that in an acceptable manner; and most of this time he worshipped God without either tabernacle or temple. From whence St. Stephen draws his argument to prove, that as God was acceptably worshipped by holy men, before either tabernacle or temple were erected, in like manner he may be so again, after both tabernacle and temple are destroyed; and consequently, that they unjustly accused him of blasphemy, or speaking blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

30 And, when forty years were expired, there appeared to him, in the wilderness of mount Sina, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying*, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now, come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37 ¶ This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear.

38 This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers; who received the lively oracles to give unto us;

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in

their hearts turned back again into Egypt;

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen:

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers unto the days of David;

46 Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him an house.

48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool; what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

St. Stephen here goes on with the history of Moses, and having, in the former verses, made mention of what occurred to him in Egypt and in Madian, here an account is given of what happened to him in the wilderness; and the first thing observable, is the appearance of God to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, which burned, but was not consumed. This bush was an emblem of the church: this bush burning, pointed out the afflicted state of the church in Egypt, having a long time been in the fiery furnace there; but the burning bush, not consumed, signified the church's preservation. God was in the midst of the bush, whilst the bush was in the midst of the burning. Where note, How Almighty God, intending to send Moses as a deliverer of his people out of Egypt, gives him a visible sign for confirming of his faith, in the sight of this burning but unconsumed bush: 1. To assure him of his people's deliverance, that though they were now slaves in Egypt, yet they should be set free, and instated in a land flowing with milk and honey; next to satisfy him that he should be the instrument to bring to pass so glorious a work. O how gracious is God's condescension towards his servants, who is pleased, by visible signs, to support the weakness of their faith. "The Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush." Observe, 2. How Moses, in the faith of God's presence with him, protection over him, and assistance of him, goes forth for Egypt, where he works many signs and wonders before Pharaoh, at last brings the people forth into the wilderness to mount Sinai, where God gave them his law; and appointed Moses then to make a tabernacle for his worship. Now, the use which St. Stephen makes of this, is to convince the Jews, that for above four hundred years their fathers had worshipped God without any tabernacle at all, and consequently, that now that sort of worship was abolished, God might be very acceptably served and worshipped in the absence of it. Observe, 3. That notwithstanding Moses was raised up by God, and sent to be a deliverer into Egypt, and a lawgiver to the Israelites in the wilderness; yet they rebelled against him, and against God in him: for they ran into the vilest idolatry, even to make and worship a golden calf, to adore the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, for deities; yea, they carried about with them the images and pictures of the heathen gods, Mars, and Saturn, with design to worship them; for which gross idolatry God sent them into captivity beyond Babylon. Hence learn, 1. That there is a strange inclination in man's heart to the sin of idolatry; the reason is, because it is a worship of our own invention. Now, man is most fond of and forward for, that service of God which is of his own finding out and setting up. We love a devotion of our own devising very dearly. Learn, 2. That idolatry in worshipping the sun, moon and stars, is a very ancient sin; both the old Gentiles and old Jews were guilty of it; and consequently, we may infer, that neither antiquity nor universality will bear us out in idolatrous worship. Example is no plea against a rule, nor antiquity against truth: it is no excuse to us, when we do evil, to say our forefathers did so before us. Learn, 3. That the idolatry of the Jews was a grand iniquity, and much worse than the idolatry of the heathens; the Gentiles knew not God; but the Jews owned him, and gloried in him. But "though they knew God, they worshipped him not as God." Observe, 4. The Israelites being come out of Egypt by the conduct of Moses, and having entered the wilderness at God's appointment and particular direction, the tabernacle for his public worship and service

is erected; this is here called, ver. 44. *The tabernacle of witness*; it being the place where God used to witness and manifest his glorious presence, and because the ark of the covenant, the law and the testimonies, were laid up in it, which were witnesses and declarations of God's will how he would be served. Now this tabernacle was an ambulatory temple, as the temple was a standing tabernacle. This tabernacle was moveable; they carried it with them from place to place, while they sojourned in the wilderness, and at last they brought it with them into Canaan, ver. 45.— which tabernacle our forefathers brought in with Jesus, (that is, Joshua) into the possession of the Gentiles, that is, the land of Canaan, where it continued all the days of David, till Solomon began his reign, who built the temple in a most magnificent and sumptuous manner. Here note, 1. That the public worship of Almighty God is a moral duty, founded in the light of nature, and the common reason of mankind.— 2. That solemn places for public worship have been from the beginning, before the giving of the law. The ancient devotion of the world delighted much in groves, Gen. xxi. 33. "Abraham planted a grove, and called there on the name of the Lord." This was a sort of oratory or chapel, whither Abraham and his family resorted to worship the true God. After the giving of the law, while the people of the Jews were in an unsettled condition, God was contented with a mean tabernacle; but when they were settled in Canaan, then a magnificent temple is built, in some measure suitable to the greatness and majesty of that God who was to be worshipped in it. From whence we may infer, That the public worship of God, though it doth require inward and spiritual devotion, yet, as public, is necessarily external; and as such, it ought to express, in the best manner we are able, that profound reverence which we pay to the divine Majesty. And therefore, that the circumstances of it should not only be decent, but very solemn and magnificent, the light of nature seems plainly to require, and the gospel doth no where gainsay. When David determined to build God an house for public worship, he resolved it should be exceedingly magnificent; which resolution was not a piece of ceremonial piety, but grounded upon a moral, and eternal reason, of equal force in all ages; namely, that the greatest and best of beings be most awfully adored by us in the best manner we are able; and that we declare our high regard and esteem of so glorious a Majesty, by all outward fitting testimonies of respect and reverence. Observe lastly, That after the temple was built, the worship of God was not so tied to that place, as that he could not be worshipped acceptably any where else; for God hath declared, by the mouth of his holy prophet, Isa. lvi. 1, 2. "That he delighted not in temples made with hands," as if he were included therein, and bound thereto.

And thus St. Stephen, by a large induction of particulars, made good his defence, that he was not guilty of blasphemy, for affirming that Christ would destroy the temple, and change the customs which Moses delivered. He closes his apology with this argument, that which was not blasphemy to affirm of the tabernacle, though it was set up by God's special appointment given to Moses, is not blasphemy to affirm of the temple; but it was no blasphemy to affirm the use of the tabernacle to have been a temporary, and consequently alterable; therefore to affirm the same of the temple is not blasphemy; especially since the Lord hath said, That "he dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

51 Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers *did*, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them, which showed before of the coming of the just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

Observe here, 1. How St. Stephen, having finished his general discourse in the foregoing verses to the Jews, comes now to a particular and close application of it to them. All the while he was generally discoursing, they were quiet and still, and made no noise at all; for generals do not affect: but when he came to apply it particularly, and say, "You are the men, *ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart*," this enrages them, and drives them into the worst kind of madness. Learn hence, 1. That the efficacy of the word preached lies in a particular and close application of it to every man's conscience. 2. That it is ministers' great duty not to satisfy themselves with delivering general truths to their people, but they must point at their particular sins (though not at their particular persons) and reprove them for the same, what hazards soever they run, and whatever the event may be. St. Stephen's close preaching here, and impartial reproving of sin, he saw would cost him his life; but, nothing terrified by his adversaries, he spares not to tell them, the greatest of them, of their faults. Accordingly, observe, 2. The particular sins which St. Stephen here convicts them of, and reproves them for: 1. The stoutness, and stubbornness, and stiff-neckedness of their hearts; *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart*: a metaphor taken from a bullock not used to the yoke, who therefore will not submit his neck to bear it. Wicked men are often called children of Belial, because they will not endure the yoke of obedience; but when God comes to put it upon their necks, they lift up their heel against him. 2. He charges them with rebelling against, and resisting of the holy Spirit of God: *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*; That is, both the outward testimony of the Holy Ghost, speaking to them in the ministry of the prophets and apostles, and also the inward operations of the holy Spirit, in that work of illumination and conviction which they had been under. 3. For their imitating their cruel ancestors, who killed the old prophets, and crucified the Lord of life and glory: *As your fathers did so do ye*. 4. For their wicked violation of the holy law of God, which was given them by the glorious ministry and proclamation of angels: *Ye received the law by the disposition of angels*: that is, the angels were *testes* and *internuncii*, witnesses and messengers betwixt God and Moses, in giving of the law, or Jesus Christ the angel of the covenant, who is God's messenger, and the angel that appeared to Moses in the bush: he gave that law to Moses, and by Moses to you, which law ye have notwithstanding violated and never kept.

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54 ¶ When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Observe here, 1. The Jews' angry and unreasonable resentment of the foregoing representation; though it was exact truth and matter of fact, yet were they cut to the heart; that is they were angry even unto madness. Here was a most proper corrosive, and applied by a skilful hand, but they would not let it stick, nor endure a cure; such is the enmity of wicked hearts, that when the ministers of God reprove sin sharply, instead of receiving the message, they rage at the messenger: *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart*. Observe, 2. How they discover their rage against the holy man two ways: by their gestures, and by their actions: their gestures made a full discovery of their enraged minds. 1. *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*; the action of damned fiends. 2. They made a great outcry with an unanimous and tumultuous rage; *They cried out with a loud voice*. 3. *They stopped their ears*, resolved to hear no more either of his counsels or complaints. 4. *They ran upon him with one accord*, like persons combined and united together in malice and madness. 5. They cast him out of the city, not out of the synagogue only, but out of the city also. They look upon this good man, of whom the world was not worthy; as a person not fit for human society. "Lord! why should any of thy present ministers and ambassadors wonder at or be discouraged by the ill treatment which an unkind world now gives them; when thy blessed apostles, full of the Holy Ghost, and endowed with power to work miracles, were cast out before us, as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things!" But this was not all; not only by their gestures, but by their actions did they discover the utmost effects of their rage and malice against this holy and innocent person: for they put him to death; yea, stoned him to death; shooting a whole volley of cruelty at his naked breast; a shower of stones came down upon him, from those hands which ought to have cast the first stone at themselves; but all this did but join him the closer

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to Christ the chief Corner-stone; *Et per tot lapides Petra conjungitur uni.* Learn hence, that it is not in the power of piety and religion to exempt and secure the most holy and religious person either from the attempts of popular fury, or from the stroke of a violent and bloody death; "They cast him out of the city and stoned him." Observe, 3. What a blessed sight St. Stephen had of heaven, and of Jesus in heaven, to prepare and fit him for his sufferings, and to support and uphold him under them, ver. 56. "Behold I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Blessed Jesus: what an encouragement it is to us, suffering for thee on earth, to look up steadfastly by faith unto thee in heaven, who art continually standing there to behold and observe, to strengthen and support, to receive and reward thy suffering servants; to count every stone cast at them, and to revenge all the injuries and wrongs done unto them! Observe lastly, How these bloody persecutors manage their cruelties under a form of law, that they may appear the more specious. By the law of God, stoning was the punishment due to blaspheming; and they that witnessed against the blasphemer were, by the law of God, to cast the first stone at him, Deut. xvii. 7. Accordingly, the witnesses here put off their upper garments to fit themselves for their bloody work; and a young man called Saul, undertook to look to them, kept their garments for them, and consequently consented unto his death, and had a hand in stoning of him: "The witnesses laid down their garments at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." By consenting to the sins of other men, we certainly become partakers of other men's sins.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

Observe here, 1. The holy deportment of this humble saint at his death; he prays. Learn thence, That good men should shut up their lives with prayer, and die with prayer in their mouths. Our Saviour did so; his first martyr here did so. St. Stephen imitated the death of Christ, and he imitated Christ in his death: turning from malicious men, to speak unto a merciful God in prayer. They stoned Stephen, calling upon God. Observe, 2. The object of his prayer, or whom St. Stephen prays to, Jesus Christ: he doth not say, "O blessed Virgin! O St. Thomas! O St. Bridget! intercede with my Saviour for me." But he directs his supplications immediately to Christ, saying, *Lord Jesus!* From whence we may strongly infer the divinity of Christ. Prayer is an act of religious worship, and he that is the proper object of religious worship must be God: none must be the object of my prayer, but he that is the object of my faith. How shall I pray to him, in whom I have not believed? Observe, 3. The subject of his prayer, or what he prays for, his soul *Lord Jesus receive my spirit;* he doth not say, Lord Jesus, save my life, which is in so much danger of being taken away; O, deliver me from the hands of my persecutors, and bring me off safe! Not a word like this; but let it go well with my soul: Lord, receive my spirit. Learn hence, That the godly man's care, living and dying, is for his soul; because this is the principal and immortal part, because this is the greatest talent that ever God put into our hands, and because the happiness and eternal welfare of the body depends upon the blessed condition of the soul: if the soul be happy,

the body cannot be miserable. Observe, 4. The sweet surrender, the willing and cheerful resignation which the good man makes of his soul into the hands of Christ; *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* 1. The godly man's spirit or soul is his own, he has not sold it to sin, nor pawned it to Satan, nor exchanged it for the world; but he has reserved it for Christ, who redeemed it for him. 2. *Receive.* Learn thence it is the duty and disposition of a gracious person, to resign up his soul willingly and cheerfully into Christ's hands, whenever God calls for it; his soul is surrendered by him, not extorted from him. The knowledge that a good man has of Christ's love and care, of his faithfulness and power, encourages him to this resignation, Psal. xxxi. 6. "Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it." And sure he that redeemed it will not hurt it.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

We had St. Stephen's prayer in the foregoing verse for himself: here in this verse he prays for his murderers.—Where note, 1. His pious charity in forgiving his enemies, and praying for them, that God would forgive them also; *Lord lay not this sin to their charge:* how doth this holy martyr imitate his dying Saviour? Luke xxiii. 34. *Father forgive them*—Note, 2. His regular charity; his charity began at home; he prays first for himself, then for his murderers; first, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;* next, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Where remark, that Christ prayed first for his enemies, then for himself, Luke xxiii. 35, 36. "Father, forgive them: Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" but St. Stephen intercedes first for himself. The reason of the difference in this, Christ needed no prayer for himself, but Stephen did: we are to love our enemies as ourselves; but Christ loved his enemies above himself, and better than himself. Christ's love to his enemies was the copy and pattern, St. Stephen's but the transcript.—Note, 3. His holy fervency in prayer: he cried out with a loud voice, endeavouring by the cry of his prayers to drown the noise of the stone which rattled about his ears, and to divert that shower of vengeance from them, which their shower of stones upon him deservedly called for from heaven. Note, 4. The holy martyr prayed for himself standing, but for his enemies kneeling. Ver. 59. He stood when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" but ver. 60. when he said, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge, he kneeled down and cried." He was more importunate for his enemies, than he was for himself. How near did St. Stephen, the first martyr, come to his blessed Master Jesus Christ, in praying for his enemies? Note, 5. The success and benefit of his prayer: God heard and answered Stephen's prayer in Paul's conversion, recorded in the ninth chapter, *Si Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non habuisset*, saith one of the ancients; "Saul's conversion was owing to St. Stephen's intercession." Note, 6. The holy man's exit and happy conclusion, *He fell asleep.* Where note, 1. The thing recorded of him is his death. 2. The metaphor which his death is set out by, and clothed with, and that is *sleep.* 3. The circumstance of time when he fell asleep, namely, after he

had served Christ, and suffered for him. Learn thence, That it is a blessed thing when death calls us off the stage of this world, after a life of service and suffering: *When he had so said, he fell asleep.* Happy is that christian who falls asleep with his Lord's work in his hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

The history of Saul's cruelty and conversion is next recorded; the former in this chapter, the latter in the next; the design of both is to excite us to consider, what a great change the grace of God can make in turning Saul into Paul; persecutors into professors: and the opposers of Christ and his truth, into faithful servants unto both.

AND Saul was consenting unto his death.

That is, St. Stephen's, mentioned in the close of the last chapter; how far he consented to his death, the text tells us, "He kept the garments of them that stoned him, they laid down their clothes at his feet," chap. vii. 58. His hand did not throw one stone at the holy martyr's head, but his will concurred with others in that bloody act; and this denominated him guilty. Learn hence, That God chiefly inspects the heart, and if the vote be passed there, he looks upon the man as guilty, though he proceeds no farther. It is easy to murder another by silent wish, or passionate desire. In all moral actions God values the will for the deed, and reckons that man an actor, that is an applauder. Consent unto the sins of others makes their guilt our own: *Saul was consenting unto his death.* It follows:

—And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Observe here, 1. How the spite and cruelty of the church's adversaries was not quenched, but rather inflamed by the blood of Stephen: from whence arose a bitter persecution against the church at Jerusalem, upon which the multitude of believers fled from thence. Persecution scatters the professors of religion; but God makes scattering the way to increasing, and what was intended for the hindrance, God overruled for the furtherance of the gospel: as God overpowers the devil, so he outwits him too. This scattering persecution at Jerusalem, which was designed to smother and suppress the gospel, did propagate and spread it more and more. Observe, 2. How God sets bounds and limits to this sharp persecution: though the believers were scattered, yet the apostles continued at Jerusalem; *They were all scattered, except the apostles.* The twelve stay there untouched in the midst of the fiery furnace of persecution, to comfort and cherish the church in that sad and doleful day, manre the

malice of angry men, and of enraged devils; and those who were scattered, carried the light of the gospel among the Gentiles. Thus out of the darkness of persecution, God bringeth forth the light of the gospel, providing at once for the safety of some by their flight, and for the calling home of others by their dispersion: "They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria."

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Observe, 1. Though St. Stephen was stoned to death by his bloody persecutors, yet are they not so inhuman as to deny him burial; it is a mercy to have a grave, and a decent burial is a blessing: the body is the garment of the soul; we lay up this garment in the wardrobe of the grave, with assurance that we shall put it on again (when made spiritual and incorruptible) in the morning of the resurrection, and wear it to all eternity. Observe, 2. The persons described who carried Stephen to the bed of the grave; *devout men*: That is, truly religious men, men of eminent piety and holy courage also; *Devout men carried Stephen to his burial.*—A noble instance of a generous and christian courage, that they durst, among such a multitude of persecutors and furious zealots, own their esteem of, and pay their last respects unto, the name and memory of the holy martyr. Observe, 3. The doleful solemnity of his funeral, *They made great lamentation over him*; and reason enough there was for it, because of the church's great loss at that time. When any of the ministers of God are snatched away by death, especially by a violent death, from the service of the church, there is a just cause for great and solemn lamentations: "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

"Bloody Saul! was it not enough for thee to see a single saint destroyed, but wilt thou seek to destroy the whole fraternity and communion of saints?" Behold the fiery zeal of this furious persecutor: he spares neither age nor sex, neither men nor women, neither young nor old, but without respect he hales them to prison. O fury! worse than inhuman, not only to drag men spitefully, but to hale women shamefully to prison. Women in all ages have been exempted from the insults of tyranny, but not always freed from the persecutor's fury. And blessed be God for that masculine courage and constancy which the feeble sex have shown when they have been called forth to bear their testimony for Christ; out of weakness they have been made strong. With what wisdom and courage have they answered their examiners, convicted their accusers, confuted their opposers, kissing the stake, hugging the faggots, embracing the flame! thus can God help the weak things of the world to confound the strong: and teach the foolish to confute the wise.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word.

The severe persecution at Jerusalem dispersed the whole body of the church, and scattered both members and teachers thereof, except the apostles. Some went to Damascus, some to Samaria, some to Phœnice, Cyprus, and Antioch. But God overruled this scattering for his church's increasing: he brought good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion. It is a great and certain truth, that the Holy God would suffer no sort of evil to be, did he not know how to bring some excellent good out of that evil.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached unto them.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

Observe here, 1. Amongst the dispersed, who went to Samaria, Philip was one: not Philip the apostle, (for all of them remained at Jerusalem,) but Philip the deacon, who was the second in order after Stephen, among the seven deacons: he comes to Samaria, and preaches there. Observe, 2. The doctrines which he preached; he preached Christ, unto them; that is, christianity, or the christian religion; *namely*, The doctrine of Christ's incarnation, holy life and death, resurrection and ascension, together with remission of sins through faith in his name. Observe, 3. The success of Philip's doctrine at Samaria; the people with one accord embrace the gospel, *Giving heed to the things which he spake*: The presence of the Holy Spirit accompanying his ministry, united his hearers' hearts, as well as their ears, to attend diligently to the doctrine of Christ delivered to them. This diligent attention was a blessed preparative to the Samaritans' conversion, seeing faith comes by hearing: yea, they did not only attend to, but acquiesce in all he spake. Note thence, That were there a more reverent attention to the word, there would be more conversions by it than at this day there are. Observe, 4. The external ground and reason of Philip's success in his ministry at Samaria; the miracles which he wrought. These were undeniable evidences of the truth of what he spake, and by which he showed God's authority for what he did and said; he healed diseases, and cast out devils, (called unclean spirits, because they delight in sin, that spiritual uncleanness of the soul,) who cried out with a loud voice, as very loath to leave their lodgings, had they not been constrained to it. The miracles which Christ

and his apostle wrought were heaven's broad-seal, to confirm the truth of what they taught: "The people gave heed to what Philip spake, seeing the miracles which he did." Observe, lastly, What joy and rejoicing there was among the Samaritans at their receiving and entertaining of the gospel; *There was great joy in that city*; not only for the cures wrought upon their bodies, but for the doctrine of reconciliation and salvation preached to their souls. As the gospel is in itself a message of joy and glad tidings, so it fills that soul with joy unspeakable, that cordially receives and entertains it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is one of the sweetest effects of the kingdom of God; that is, the gospel, Rom. xiv. 17. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

9 But there was a certain man called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

An account is here given of one of Philip's auditors at Samaria, Simon Magus by name, or Simon the sorcerer, a vile man, the blackest Ethiopian that ever baptismal water wet or washed. Notorious for sorcery, for hypocrisy, for final apostasy, and avowed impiety. Ecclesiastical history informs us of the heresies he broached, of the divine honors he assumed, of the statues and images built to him and his strumpet Helen, which lewdly accompanied with him; of an altar erected to him with this blasphemous inscription, *Simoni Deo sancto*: "To Simon the holy God;" and of his tragical end, by breaking his neck, when attempting to fly up to heaven, because the people would no longer be cheated with his impostures here below. From this example, note, 1. That into the most eminent and populous cities do oft-times enter the greatest and vilest impostors, the most atheistical and diabolical sorcerers: there they lurk and lodge, there they seek to set up and play their prizes. Note, 2. That the vilest impostors and the worst seducers have yet many, very many followers: the silly multitude is soon deluded: *To him they all gave heed from the least to the greatest*. Note, 3. That such vile deceivers have the confidence to brag, and the deluded multitude have the weakness to believe, that they are very extraordinary persons, and can do extraordinary things. Simon gave it out himself, that he was *some great one*; and the people cry him up as the *great power of God*.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of

Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also : and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Observe here, 1. How long a time this vile sorcerer, by God's permission, and Satan's power, wrought these lying wonders among the people : "He had of a long time bewitched them with sorceries," ver. 11. Deceivers are not always suddenly detected, and drossy hypocrites are not presently discovered ; but the vizard will drop off sooner or later. Observe, 2. That where the true knowledge of God comes, and the clear light of the gospel shines, there gross impieties and impostures, there cheats and delusions will be found out, detested and abhorred : "When they believed Philip's preaching, they were baptized, both men and women." Where the light shines, satan falls as lightning ; magic vanishes. This Dagon cannot stand before the ark of God : when the people of Ephesus received the gospel ; they soon made a bonfire of their magic books, Acts xix. 19. Observe, 3. The success of the gospel preached by Philip ; the people believed, and were baptized, both men and women. Mark 4. Believed, and then baptized ; these were adult, or grown persons, not infants, and they were heathenish idolators, strangers to the covenant ; and therefore, must believe the gospel, and profess their faith in Christ, before their baptism. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him. Mark 2. The persons baptized were women as well as men ; "When they believed Philip, they were baptized both men and women." Women under the gospel are capable of the seal of the covenant as well as men. Under the law they were not : then they were circumcised in the men : now they are baptized for themselves : "They were baptized both men and women." Observe, 4. A great and sudden change wrought in Simon himself, by the preaching of Philip : "He believed also, and was baptized." Behold, the sorcerer is become a professor, a believer, a baptized person. The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward sanctification. All that are by the gospel proselyted are not savingly converted. All are not good fish that are inclosed in the gospel's net ; but some fish, some trash. As there will be wheat and tares on the same field, chaff and corn on the same floor ; so will there be some saints and some sinners in the purest earthly church. Observe, lastly, Upon a bare profession of faith, Simon Magus is baptized. Learn thence, That outward profession justly gains admission into the christian congregation, and gives a person right to external ordinances ; *De occultis non judicat ecclesia*. "The church's judgment is a judgment of charity, not of certainty ;" of the outward, not of the inward man ; of the life, not of the heart. The faith of Simon Magus was no other than a temporary, historical, yea, hypocritical faith : however, Philip baptizes him upon his making profession of it. An heart hypocrite is no hypocrite (*in foro ecclesie*) in the sight of the church, though most abominable in the sight of God. Simeon the unsound professor was more odious in the sight of God than Simon the sorcerer.

(No. 32.)

14 ¶ Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John ;

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost,

Observe here, 1. How the apostles at Jerusalem, hearing the glad tidings of Samaria's conversion by Philip's ministry, thought fit to send down two of the twelve to confirm the new converts in their faith, and to constitute a church there by their apostolical authority. Observe, 2. The persons whom the college of the apostles at Jerusalem thought fit to send to Samaria, Peter and John. Where note, That Peter's being deputed by the rest of the apostles to this service, is an argument that Peter had no primacy or superiority over the rest of the apostles : or, if in this employment there was any sign of primacy, John was sharer in that as well as Peter. "The apostles sent Peter and John." Observe, 3. What the apostles Peter and John did when they came to Samaria. "They prayed and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Where, by the Holy Ghost, is not to be understood the sanctifying graces of the Holy Ghost, which the apostles never did, nor could dispense, but the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and a power to work miracles. Those were now conferred on such persons whom the Holy Ghost directed them to lay their hands upon, as persons appointed and chosen to be preachers of the gospel. Where note, That imposition or laying on of hands has been an ancient rite used by the officers of the church, in their solemn dedicating of persons to the service of God and his church.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter ; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

6 N

Here Observe, 1. How infinitely mistaken this wretch was in thinking that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money. 2. In supposing that the apostles had a power to dispense these gifts, when and where, and to whom they pleased. 3. And that they could enable others to impart this also; which were all very gross conceits. From this deed of Simon's, it is called *simony*, to seek to buy spiritual gifts or offices with money. Observe, 2. What it was that put Simon upon purchasing this power; doubtless it was covetousness and vain-glory. He hoped to make a penny of this privilege, and to render himself famous among his followers by this prerogative. Learn thence, That cunning and close hypocrites, corrupt and hypocritical professors, do seek to make a gain of godliness, and a merchandise of christianity. Simon had never bid so freely for the Holy Ghost, if he had not expected to receive as freely of others for the Holy Ghost; which he desired to buy, but not to keep; and intended to sell, not to give. Observe, 3. How St. Peter scorns the vile motion made by Simon, and rejects it with the greatest detestation: *Thy money perish with thee*. Learn thence, That wicked (though gainful) motions are to be scorned and refused by the godly with the greatest detestation and abhorrence. Our hearts can never rise too high in just indignation against sin, and against all temptation unto sin; *Thy money perish with thee*; thou and thy money perish together. Observe, 4. How plainly St. Peter deals with him; he searches him to the quick, to the heart, sounds the depths of sin; lays open the core of his hypocrisy before his face, and tells him to his teeth, that his heart was rotten and unsound; *Thy heart is not right in the sight of God*.

The baptismal water had washed his outside, but his inwards were unclean. The heart is the worst part of man till it be mended, and then it is best: where most evil lies; there we must first begin to be good; all will be good, if the heart, which is the seat, the sink and seed-plot of all evil, be made good. The life would not be so bad, if the heart were not worse: all the obliquity of our lives proceeds from the impurity of our hearts and nature, as the muddiness of the stream from the foulness of the fountain.

22 Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans,

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general, and hypocrisy in particular, is branded, it is bitterness and bondage; it is the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Learn thence, 1. That sin is an exceeding bitter thing: it is bitter to God, it provokes him to bitter anger; it was bitter to Christ, it laid him under the bitter wrath of God: it was bitter to the angels, it turned them out of heaven, and banished them from the presence of God evermore; it is bitter to good men, it costs them bitter repentance, and it occasions them bitter chastisements, and it will be bitter, eternally bitter to the wicked and impenitent world. Now the bitterness of sin is not a medicinal and wholesome bitterness, but an intoxicating and stupifying bitterness, a poisonous and a baneful bitterness. Sin's bitter draught is a baneful draught. Learn, 2. That not only bitterness, but bondage attends the service and servants of sin: as sin is the gall of bitterness, so it is the bond of iniquity, and the bondage of sin; it is a shameful and ignominious bondage, a fruitless and unprofitable bondage, a stupifying and insensible bondage, a restless and unwearied bondage, an endless and eternal bondage. Learn, 3. That every soul before conversion is in and under this deplorable bondage; *Thou art in the bond of iniquity*. Observe, 2. The means prescribed and directed for the soul's delivery 'out of this deplorable bondage; namely, repentance and prayer. "Repent of thy wickedness and pray to God." 1. Repent. Learn thence, That timely and sincere repentance is a special mean, prescribed and appointed by God, for the recovery of the worst of sinners out of this deplorable bondage. 1. Pray. Here note, 1. A wicked man may pray, and ought to pray. As bad as Simon Magus was, St. Peter doth not drive him to despair, but directs him to his duty: *Pray to God*. Prayer is a part of natural worship, which we owe to God; it is the soul's motion Godward: therefore to say a wicked man should not pray, is to say, he should not turn to God. Note, 2. That all the prayer in the world, without a man's own prayer to God for pardon and remission, will be ineffectual and unavailable to salvation. Simon Magus desired the apostles to pray for him, ver. 24. But St. Peter bids him to pray for himself, as ever he hopes for forgiveness with God: *repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God*. Observe, 3. The encouragement given to make use of the means prescribed; namely, a probability of forgiveness and acceptance with God. "Repent and pray, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Learn thence, That the vilest and worst of sinners, upon their repentance, accompanied with prayer and supplication unto God, have good ground of encouragement to hope for pardon of sin and acceptance with him. Observe, 4. How St. Peter takes notice of that, of which Simon Magus took least; and that was of the wickedness of his thoughts; "That the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Thence learn, That wicked and evil thoughts, lodged and entertained in the heart, ought in a special manner to be repented of, and humbled for, by all that expect forgiveness with God; for sinful thoughts are radical and seminal evils; they were the root of the angels' apostasy and of Adam's apostasy also. A world of sin may be lodged in the thoughts.

26 ¶ And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go towards

the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship.

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, how can I, except some man shall guide me? and he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

Here we have recorded the remarkable conversion of the eunuch by the preaching of Philip; concerning which several circumstances are to be observed; 1. The author or instrument converting, Philip, who was commanded by the angel in a vision to go to Gaza: but not the common way or ordinary road, but by the way of the desert, a difficult, and perhaps a dangerous way, over mountains and through valleys: Philip knew not whither he was going; but God knew whither, and wherefore he sent him. O Philip! it was worth thy going many steps out of the way, to convert and save a soul: happy for the eunuch that thou wast out of the way, and that he as happily met with thee. Observe, 2. The subject or person converted, 1. An Ethiopian, the most despised of all the Gentiles in the sight of the Jews. Behold! the sanctifying grace of God washing a blackamoor white, and making an Ethiopian clean. 2. A nobleman, a courtier, a treasurer to the queen; yet he concerns himself with religion, and, being a proselyte, travels in his chariot as far as Jerusalem, to worship God in a solemn manner. O how will this example rise up in judgment against our great ones, who have more light, but less heat; more knowledge, but less love! 3. A bookish man, one that delighted in reading, and in reading of the scriptures too, and thus, whilst he was riding in his chariot, to lose no time for gaining the knowledge of his duty. If our courtiers and great men read not at all in their coaches, or if so, plays or romances only, this ignorant Ethiopian lord did better, though he knew not so much as these. *He read in his chariot in the prophet Esaias.* Observe, 3. The means which God sanctified and blessed for the eunuch's

conversion; it was the reading and expounding of the holy scriptures: the word of God, read and preached, is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for sinners' illumination, conversion, and salvation: and blessed are they that hear and read the word with attention, affection, and application. Observe, 4. The wonderful modesty and humility of this great man, he thankfully accepts Philip's offer to instruct and teach him: (some would have huffed at it as a rude affront,) but he condescends to learn of one beneath him. Such as are modest and thoroughly humble, are also truly docile and teachable, willing to learn knowledge, although from the mouth of an inferior: "He desired Philip to come up and sit with him."

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The particular text of holy scripture which God directed the eunuch to read in order to his conversion; it was a prophecy of Christ, the promised Messias, recorded in the liii. of Isaiah: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before the shearer". Pointing out the innocency, the meekness and patience of the Lord Jesus Christ, in and under all his satisfactory sufferings for our sins: *In the day of his humiliation*, particularly in the day of his trial and sentence: *his judgment was taken away*: that is, his right was taken away by the unrighteous judgment of the Jewish sanhedrim, and no right or justice done him; and who can declare sufficiently the wickedness of that generation, which cut off so innocent a person from the land of the living? This text, Philip informs the eunuch, was truly applicable to the Messias, who was certainly come into the world, and both did and suffered all that was prophesied of him. Here note, How wonderfully the divine providence did work in a concurring tendency towards the eunuch's conversion. God moves his heart to read, to read the scriptures, to read this scripture, which informed him of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and sends Philip out of his way to meet him, and he meets him just as he was reading that portion of scripture which most concerned him. He wanted to be informed concerning Christ, and Philip is at

his elbow at that very juncture, to instruct him in a most fundamental truth in order to his conversion and salvation.—O the wonderful love and manifold wisdom of God, in finding out ways and methods for bringing home souls to himself! If this providence brings not them under the means, it will bring the means to them. This eunuch wanted the ordinary means of knowledge; but being desirous of a spiritual knowledge, God steps out of the ordinary road to meet him, though an Ethiopian, commonly esteemed the meanest of mankind; and thereby shows, that as there is no respect of persons, so no difference of nations with him; but whoever feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. In the close Philip preaches a gospel sermon to him, he displays Jesus Christ before him, and by the blessing of God upon the ordinance, saving faith was effectually wrought in the eunuch's soul.

36 And, as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, see, *here is* water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him.

39 And, when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus; and, passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

Observe here, 1. The eunuch is instructed before baptized, and he desireth baptism of Philip; it was not forced upon him by Philip against his will, "The eunuch said, What hinders me to be baptized?" To drive men to baptism, as they drive beasts to watering, and force christianity upon them against their wills, to send forth booted apostles with javelins in their hands, and crosses on their breasts, as the Romish church doth to dragoon men into christianity, is the way to make hypocrites, but not proselytes; for it is not whole armies that can besiege my reason, nor cannons batter my will. It is conviction, not compulsion, that must induce assent. Observe, 2. The eunuch after instruction desired baptism, *See, here is water*; let me be baptized. As if he

had said, "O Philip! as thou hast instructed me, I pray thee also baptize me. Now that I have received the benefit of thy doctrine, let me not want the comfort of the sacrament." Where the heart is truly touched by the ministry of the word, and the soul thoroughly converted unto God, there is a desire to be partaker of the sacraments. Observe, 3. The condition required of the eunuch before he was baptized, namely, a profession of his faith in the promised Messias; *If thou believest*, thou mayest be baptized. There is a necessity of faith, to render man a meet partaker of the holy sacrament: if we come to any of the sacraments without faith, we are sure to depart without fruit. Observe, 4. The qualification of that faith which gives a right to the holy sacrament: *If thou believest with all thine heart*: only that faith gives a right to baptism, and intitles to salvation, which is with all the heart. The eunuch believed with his whole heart, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. This gave him at once a right to baptism, and a title to heaven.—Observe, 5. The manner of the administration of baptism to the eunuch: he went down into the water and was baptized by Philip: in those hot countries it was usual so to do, and we do not oppose the lawfulness of dipping in some cases, but the necessity of dipping in all cases.

In sacraments, it is not the quantity of the elements, but the significancy of them that ought to be attended to; as in circumcision, it was not the quantity of the flesh cut off; and in the Lord's supper, it is not the quantity of the bread and wine taken down; so in baptism, a few drops of water poured upon me, doth signify and seal, and convey and confirm to me a right and interest in all the benefits of my Saviour's death and resurrection, as fully as if, with Jonah, I were plunged into the main ocean. Observe, 6. What followed upon the eunuch's baptizing and coming out of the water.—1. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; by the ministry of an angel he was carried out of his sight, that the eunuch might be the more assured of the truth of those things which were taught him by Philip's ministry; and that he was a person sent of God to direct him in the way to true happiness. 2. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing, as well he might; it was the happiest journey he ever took, to meet with Christ and conversion in his way, and heaven and salvation at his journey's end. A converted man hath great cause of rejoicing: the gospel proclaimed, much more heartily embraced, is matter of great joy. Behold the fruit of faith, joy and rejoicing; the eunuch is instructed, believed, is baptized, and goes home rejoicing. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Observe lastly, Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, thirty-four miles from Gaza, so far had the ministry of the angels carried him, and there safely set him down. Learn, How good it is to obey God in the most difficult command. Philip had a hard and tiresome journey from Samaria to Gaza, footing it through a desert, in untrodden paths, and running as fast as the eunuch's chariot, to join himself unto it at the command of God. But now from Gaza to Azotus he has a swifter and easier passage, he rides in an angelical flying chariot. When we attend the execution of God's commands, the holy angels shall attend us, and take care of us, and administer necessary help unto us; like tender nurses, they keep us fast while we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die. Blessed be God for the ministry of his holy angels.



Conversion of St. Paul.

CHAPTER IX.

This chapter relates to us both Saul's cruelty and conversion; and acquaints us with the wonderful method which the infinitely wise God took for his church's deliverance from the fury of persecution; namely, by the conversion (not confusion) of Saul the principal persecutor; whereby the churches had rest and peace. His cruelty is recorded, ver. 1. and 2.

AND Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Observe here, 1. The lively character of a bloody persecutor: "He breathes threatenings and slaughters against the members of Christ." His very breath smells of fire; threatenings and slaughter, like lightnings and thunder, proceed out of his mouth. Whilst a persecutor hath in him the breath of his own life, he breathes nothing but death against others: nothing will satisfy him but the death and destruction of the members of Christ. An in-fierce and ungovernable zeal soon degenerates into fury and madness. Observe, 2. How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the prosecution of their bloody designs and purposes. Saul was now *inquisitor hæretice pravitatis*; away he trots to the high priests for a commission to bind heretics, who believed on Jesus, and opposed the traditions of the fathers; and having, as he thought, swept Jerusalem of saints, he resolved next to ransack Damascus, though it was five or six days' journey from Jerusalem: however he spurs on, away he goes through fire and water to revenge his palace on the poor members of Jesus Christ. Learn thence, That persecutors will spare neither purse nor pains, they will sicken and stop at nothing, though never so toilsome and hazardous, so they may glut their malice, and satisfy their revenge upon the poor disciples of Jesus Christ. The high priests needed not to hire Saul to this black work, he both offers himself, and sues for the office: no doubt the high priest and council highly applauded his zeal and forwardness for extirpating heretics, commending the gallantry of his resolution, and the bravery of his mind; and having sealed his commission, sent him away with wishes of success.

3 And, as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

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4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Saul was now onward of his journey to Damascus (the worst journey that ever he intended, but the best that ever he undertook;) a journey most ardently purposed by him, but most mercifully disposed by God. Heaven had designed him for better service and work of another nature; and accordingly he is stopped in his way. Knocked off his horse, a sudden beam of light beyond the brightness of the sun darts upon him, dazzles him, and he hears a voice, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* that is, *me in my members.* Whatever is done against christians for any thing that Christ commandeth them, he takes it as done against himself. Such as persecute the saints for their sanctity, persecute Christ himself; and he can no more endure to see them wronged, than himself. As the honor of Christ, the Head, redounds to the members, so the sorrows of the members are resented by the Head. Christ said not thus to his murderers on earth, *Why bind ye me? Why buffet ye me? Why scourge ye, and why crucify ye me?* but here, when the members suffer, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Lord! thou art more tender of thy body mystical, than thou wast of thy body natural; more sensible of thy members' sufferings than of thine own. Observe, 2. The wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God. Saul cries out, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Saul is no longer a lion, but a lamb; the wolf that hunted before for his prey, now gently couches like a sheep; hears and obeys the voice of Christ the great Shepherd; and of a persecutor of the church, becomes the great doctor of the Gentiles. Behold! the tare is become wheat; the child of wrath a chosen vessel: the prodigy of nature, the miracle of grace. Lord! who can enough admire and magnify the sovereignty and omnipotent prevalence of divine grace, which could refine and did extract very precious gold from so rough, so coarse, and so base a metal? Conversion is a work of wonder in all men, but a miracle in this man, and extraordinarily strange, and instantaneously sudden; and therefore is by no means to be made the measure and standard of every man's conversion. Shall we think no man converted, unless he be struck down with a light and power immediately from heaven, and be taken with a fit of trembling, and frighted almost out of his wits? How many by the benefit of a good education, others by the blessing of God upon some affliction, and upon calm consideration, without any great terror and amazement, have been visibly changed and converted? The effects and fruits of conversion are very visible in all, but the manner of conversion is not alike in all. Things may be very visible in their effects, which yet are not visible in their cause. If the fruits of our conversion be visible, the certainty of it is unquestionable, and the advantage of it will be unspeakable, although we cannot tell the time when, or the manner how, the Holy Spirit wrought it in us.

6 And he, trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Observe here, 1. How easily God can make the fiercest persecutor to quake and tremble; Saul is struck down, but it is to convert him, not confound him? he trembles, but his trembling was in order to rejoicing. It was a favorable, though an affrighting stroke, which struck him down, but with design to raise him up again. Humiliation for sin, in some measure, always goes before a soul's acceptance of Christ, and subjection to him. Observe, 2. How ready and desirous a converted person is to know and do the mind and will of God; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* He is inquisitive after his duty, and desirous of the knowledge of it. We may sooner find fire without heat, than a true convert without operative grace. It is not, Lord, what wilt thou have me to say? but, what wilt thou have me to do? It is not the talking, but the walking and working person that is the true christian. Observe, 3. God's answer to Saul's inquiry; *Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Mark, he was going to Damascus before on the devil's errand, now God bids him go; he had better authority for his going thither now, than what he had from the high priest before: he went before for others' destruction; he now goes for his own instruction, in order to salvation: *There it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Observe here, The testimony or witness of Saul's conversion, to wit, the men that journeyed with him; it is probable that he had a considerable number of officers with him, to bring both men and women that professed christianity bound to Jerusalem. These saw the light shining, and heard a confused noise like thunder, but they saw not Christ himself, as he did, nor heard the articulate voice of Christ that he heard, which spake so powerfully, so convincingly, and so convertingly to his soul. Lord, how many are there that come under thine ordinances, who hear only (like Saul's companions) a confused noise and empty sound! they do not hear the distinct voice of Christ speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, inwardly and effectually, and so remain under the power of unbelief, in an unconverted state.

8 And Saul arose from the earth: and, when his eyes were opened, he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Observe here, 1. The change of Saul's posture; *He arose from the earth.* He that fell to the earth a persecutor, rises up a saint. O free mercy and astonishing grace! that the earth upon which he lay did not open her mouth and swallow

him up alive: he that had run away from God, and employed his feet in the service of the devil, is once more set upon his feet again. Observe, 2. His blindness and loss of sight: *When his eyes were opened, he saw no man.* Christ taught him, by his bodily blindness, the blindness of his soul in spiritual things, which till now he was insensible of. As Saul was, so all men naturally are, spiritually blind before regeneration and conversion: true, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was a great proficient in human learning, but after his conversion he counted that knowledge no better than blindness, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Observe, 3. His manuduction or leading by the hand into the city; *They led him by the hand into Damascus.* Who led him? Doubtless his companions that came along with him upon his bloody design from Jerusalem. Here the blind lead the blind; those very hands lead him to Damascus, which should have haled the saints from Damascus to Jerusalem. But, O Saul! thou hadst a better leader than all these, even Christ himself; he led thee by the hand into the city, in order to the completing of thy conversion: now happy Saul! though formerly rebellious, who hast thy Saviour for a leader, thou shalt neither wander nor miscarry." Observe, 4. The duration and continuance of Saul's blindness; *He was three days without sight.* This was a long night to him who persecuted the children of the day; a just time for him to be in darkness, who so implacably attempted to blow out the light of the gospel: but perhaps no less time would have been sufficient to humble him for his rage and madness against Christ and his members, besides, there are some that think that, in these three days of his continued blindness, he had that rapture into the third heaven, which is mentioned, 2. Cor. xii. 2. But however that be, doubtless in this time his mind was filled with divine contemplations; and that glorious gospel was taught him in three days, which he taught to others all his days. Observe, 5. His abstinence from food; *He did neither eat nor drink:* he spent those three days, we may believe, in fasting and prayer, and extraordinary humiliation before God, for his former wicked life, and particularly for his violent persecution of the church of Christ: he fasted to make him more fervent in prayer: for fasting prepares for prayer, and gives wings to prayer.

10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire at the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Observe here, 1. Though Christ converted Saul himself, yet Ananias his minister must instruct him. By Christ is grace infused, but by his ministers increased: such an honor

doth Christ put upon the ministers of the gospel, that he makes use of their endeavours, ordinarily, both for the production and augmentation of grace in the hearts of his people. Oh, the necessity and usefulness of a standing ministry! It is a singular favor to have the mind of God made known to us by men like ourselves: and behold the honor that God puts upon the ministers, in using them as conduit pipes, for conveying the water of life unto us, which he is not pleased to communicate immediately from himself. Observe, 2. What an exact knowledge the Lord has of particular persons and particular places: he tells Ananias in what city Saul was, in Damascus; in what street he was, in the street called *Straight*, in whose house he was, in the house of *Judas*. It is matter of consolation, yea, of highest consolation to the children of God, to know and remember that God knows them, that God knows their persons, knows their purposes, knows their performances, knows their place of abode; that he knows who they are, what they do, and where they dwell. It assures them as to their persons, that they shall be accepted; as to their performances, that they shall be rewarded; as to their habitations, that they shall be loved, blessed and protected by him. So dear are the holy servants of God unto him, that he loves the very street in which they lodge, the house in which they dwell; the walls of their habitation are always before him, and he delights continually to look upon them. Let holiness to the Lord then be always writ in fair and legible characters upon the walls of our houses, Zech. xiv. 10. Observe, 2. The course which almighty God takes to remove all fear from Ananias' mind, and to encourage him to go to Saul, according to the direction given him; although he had been such a bloody persecutor, he tells him; that, *Behold, he prayeth*: as if he, had said, "Though he has been bad, he is not now what he was, he is another man; nay, he is a new man, he is truly and thoroughly converted; and this is the undeniable evidence and testimony of it, that whereas before he persecuted, now he prayeth: *Behold he prayeth*: Learn hence, That spiritual breath is a good sign of spiritual birth: none of God's children are still-born, they all come crying into the world. The duty of prayer faithfully and perseveringly performed, is a good evidence that a soul is thoroughly converted and brought home by repentance unto God: *Behold, Saul prayeth!* But did he never pray till now? Yes, no doubt, many a time when he was a strict pharisee, he prayed after a loose and customary manner: but he never prayed so sensibly and feelingly, so spiritually and affectionately, so fervently and perseveringly before, as he did after his conversion: his prayer before, was the cry of the old, now of the new creature; before he prayed with coldness and indifference, now he prays with warmth and fervency, as a person in earnest for his soul's happiness and salvation; therefore Christ brings it with a note of attention and observation: now, *Behold, he prayeth*.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem;

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Observe here, 1. Ananias' reluctance and fear to go to Saul, because of his former violent persecution, and present commission; *Lord, I have heard of this man, &c.* Learn, That such as are very ready and forward for Christ's service, may, upon appearing difficulties, hang back, till they be helped over those difficulties by the helping hand of Christ. Thus it was with Ananias; *Behold, says he, here am I Lord, ver. 10.* to show his readiness to run on any errand that Christ would send him: but when he came to understand his message, he was affrighted, and began to draw back: therefore the Lord graciously condescends to remove the stumbling-block that lay in the way of the servant's obedience. Fear not; as if Christ had said, "*Go thy way*, he is not what he was, he is another man; yea, he is a new man." Observe, 2. The honorable title which Christ puts upon Saul, *He is a chosen vessel*; that is, a person chosen of God to convey the divine treasure of the gospel, not only to Jews, but Gentiles also, even to the greatest and highest among them: "He is a chosen vessel, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings." Where note, 1. The term of usefulness: he is a vessel. Now a vessel is not a natural but an artificial instrument. No man is born, but made a minister of the gospel. Vessels are not of equal capacity, some are greater, others less; all ministers have not alike endowments, nor are they equally fitted for the sacred employment. Again, vessels are receptive instruments; they must take in before they can give out. What the ministers of the gospel have received of the Lord, that they deliver to their people; they give out what God gives in. Finally, vessels are for effusion, as well as for reception: they let out as well as take in; yea, therefore take in, that they may let out; therefore have the ministers of Christ a treasure of divine knowledge in themselves, that they may communicate and impart it to others. And it is not impaired by imparting, but like the oil in the widow's vessel, increased by pouring out. A minister, by communicating the treasure of his knowledge, enriches others without impoverishing himself. Note, 2. The term of excellency, *He is a chosen vessel, chosen* to preach Christ, *chosen* to suffer for Christ; a vessel chosen to bear the divine treasure of the gospel both to Jews and Gentiles. Lord! what honor dost thou put upon thy ministers in making them vessels of honor fit for their master's use and the family's service! If I may not be a vessel of gold or silver, let me be a vessel of wood or stone, so I may be a vessel unto honor, a successful instrument in thy hand, for thy glory, and the church's good.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and, putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest,) hath sent me,

that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales : and he received sight forthwith, and he arose, and was baptized :

19 And when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Observe here, 1. Ananias; though no apostle, no deacon, nor minister, that we read of, but an ordinary and private christian only, yet he has power to heal Saul of his blindness, and to confer the Holy Ghost : "Receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." If so, undoubtedly he had an extraordinary warrant for this extraordinary work; for none but the apostles had power to confer the Holy Ghost. No ordinary person ought to undertake any part of the ministerial functions without an extraordinary call and commission. Observe, 2. The title given by Ananias to Saul, *Brother Saul*; they were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. As the scripture speaks of a brotherhood betwixt Christ and believers. *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, *Love the brotherhood*; that is, the whole fraternity and society of christians, who are *sanguine Christi conglutinati*, cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love. Observe, 3. How this converted person, Saul, takes upon him the badge of christianity by baptism; *He arose, and was baptized*.—Listing himself thereby a soldier under Christ's exalted banner, and entering himself a member of that church which heretofore he had made havoc of. Observe, 4. The prudent care which Saul takes of his health, by giving nature its necessary refreshment: *He received meat and was strengthened*. Doubtless his body was much weakened and enfeebled, by his long journey partly, but by his consternation, fear, and grief especially, as also by his humiliation, watchings, fasting and prayer: it was therefore his duty to refresh nature, and to strengthen himself for the service of his great Master, wherever he should please to send him. Whilst we are in the body, there is a debt of care which we owe to the body: meat and drink are the supports of life, under the influence of the divine blessing; and all superstitious abstinence from food is no better than will-worship. Observe lastly, Saul is no sooner changed himself, but he changeth his company and acquaintance. He no longer associates with the chief priest and rulers of the synagogues, but with the followers of Jesus, ver. 19. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." Men who cunningly conceal their inclinations, may yet be known by their constant companions. Saul was now a companion of them that feared God, and kept his commandments. The disciples at Damascus, whom he came to destroy, are now become his delight; "He continued certain days with the disciples."

20 And straightway he preached Christ

in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul: and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

Here we have an account of St. Paul's entrance upon his ministerial office in preaching the gospel; "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues." Where note, 1. The time of his preaching, *Straightway*: he fell presently to his Master's work, not consulting flesh and blood about the difficulties and dangers that might attend it; but performs his duty with such zeal and immediate application, as became a person of his holy character and profession. Note, 2. The place where he preached. *In the Jewish synagogues*: he was afterwards indeed the apostle of the Gentiles, but according to Christ's command he first preached the word of life to the Jews, to convert some, and to leave others without excuse: after which he turned from them unto the Gentiles, according to Acts xiii. 46. "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you; but because you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles." Note, 3. The doctrine he preached; *That Jesus was the Son of God*, the true, promised and expected Messiah; and that all the prophecies and predictions of the prophets concerning the Messiah, were exactly fulfilled in his person. Note, 4. The effect of his preaching: 1. Some of his auditors were amazed, admiring that so pestilent a persecutor was become a powerful preacher, *These glorified God in him*. 2. Others were confuted, yea, confounded, being unable to withstand the force and dint of his argument, by which he proved, that this is the very Christ. Note, 5. The hazard which the apostles ran in preaching the gospel at Damascus; his enemies, who were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, took counsel to kill him, and in order to it, watched the gates of the city day and night, there being in their apprehensions no possibility of his escaping. Note, 6. The manner and means of his deliverance: some christians who dwelt at Damascus, let him down

in a basket by the wall, and so he escaped the hands of his bloody enemies. The wisdom of God is never at a loss to find out ways and means, either ordinary or extraordinary, for the deliverance of his servants, when their deliverance makes most for his own glory, and the gospel's advantage. God had much work for Paul to do; and till he had finished his work, his enemies could not take him off with all their combined power and malice.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Here we have an account of the second place which Paul exercised his ministry in; namely, Jerusalem. Having escaped with his life at Damascus, he comes to Jerusalem, and attempts to join himself to the disciples there, who were all afraid of him, knowing how bloody a persecutor he had been. The conversion of a persecutor is so rare and seldom heard of, that it puts the largest charity hard to it, to believe the verity and reality of such a person's conversion unto God. The disciples, who had formerly felt the effects of Saul's persecuting rage and fury, might justly be afraid of taking him into intimate fellowship and communion with the church. Observe, next, How Barnabas was stirred up by the Spirit of God to present Saul to the church, and free their minds of all fears and jealousies which they had entertained concerning him; and this he doth by a threefold argument: 1. Because he had seen *Jesus Christ in the way*, as he went to persecute the saints at Damascus. 2. Because *the Lord had spoken to him* with a strong hand, and wrought a mighty change in him, and upon him; the persecutor being now become a great professor. Because he was not only become a *professor*, but a *preacher* of that gospel he had persecuted, and this boldly and publicly, both at Damascus and in Arabia; proving undeniably that Jesus was the Christ, and the true Messiah. This testimony of Barnabas was full and satisfactory, both to the church at Jerusalem, and also to Peter, James, and John, who gave Paul the right hand of

(No. 33.)

fellowship, and he went with him to the work. Observe, lastly, How the enemies of the gospel conspire against Paul's life here at Jerusalem, as they did before at Damascus; for preaching Christ, and disputing with the Grecians in defence of the gospel of Christ, they lay siege for his life. Learn thence, That always opposition, and often persecution, is the evil ghost that hunts the preachers and preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. To preach the word convincingly, brings the ill-will of an evil world infallibly upon the head of the preacher. But why did these men rather seek to kill Paul than Peter, James, or Barnabas? Answer, Because he was formerly one of their own company, of their own college; a persecutor like themselves, and a persecutor with themselves. This enraged them; they looked not upon him as an apostle, but as an apostate; one that had revolted from them, a renegade, and as such they meditate his destruction night and day; inasmuch, that it is probable, that never were so many sufferings heaped upon the head of any minister of the gospel throughout the world, as upon St. Paul. (see them reckoned up, 2 Cor. xi. 23. &c.) partly through the hatred of the Jews, and partly through the fury of the blind Gentiles; yet the Lord delivered him out of all. Till his work was done, and his race run, and he had finished the course of his ministry, neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, could take him off. Blessed be God, our times are in his hands, not in our enemies, nor yet in our own.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

That is, "After Saul's miraculous conversion, and after he was sent away, and departed from those parts, where the Jews, his old companions in persecution, could not endure his presence, he having been just before, as zealous a persecutor as themselves: then the churches planted by Philip and others throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had much rest and peace, and were greatly edified in knowledge and faith, in holiness and love; and the graces and comforts of the holy Spirit daily increasing in them, the number of believers daily multiplied." Learn thence, That after the persecution and wearisome troubles of the church, God has his times for their peace and rest. God sends his church sun-shine after showers, a calm after a storm, health after an hectic, and a Canaan's rest after a wilderness journey. Learn, 2. That it is the church's duty to improve her peace and rest for her establishment and increase in all the graces and comforts of the holy Spirit. Learn, 3. That it is a very great blessing to have the churches of God multiplied, and their multiplication is the happy fruit and consequent of their having peace; *Then had the churches rest, were edified, and multiplied.*

32 ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

23 And there he found a certain man

6 P

named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

The Holy Ghost now leaves the relation of St. Paul's life and actions for the present, and returns to give a farther account of St. Peter, what he said, what he did, and what he suffered, particularly at Lydda, at Joppa, and Cesarea: at Lydda he healed Eneas, at Joppa he raised Dorcas, and at Cesarea he preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Observe, 1. What this great apostle St. Peter did at Lydda: he there *in the name*, that is, by the power of Christ, healed Eneas, who lay sick of the palsy, and had kept his bed eight years. Where note, The difficulty of the cure, the manner of the cure, and the effects of the cure. Note, 1. The difficulty of the cure; the disease was a dead-palsy, which had taken away the use of his limbs, and made him bed-ridden for eight years: all this is recorded, to show the difficulty of the cure, and the greatness of the miracle: *Onnipotenti medico nullus insanabilis occurrit morbus*; "To such an Almighty Physician, as the great God is, no disease is found incurable." Note, 2. The manner of the cure: St. Peter acts in Christ's name, not his own; and lets the lame man know whom he should own for his benefactor, Christ, himself: the apostle was but the instrument in Christ's hand; and that the cure was perfectly miraculous, appears by this: the cripple was cured immediately, and cured perfectly; it was a present cure, ver. 34. *And he arose immediately*. The instantaneous manner of the cure shows it to be miraculous, and by divine power; for nature and art act in time and by degrees, bringing nothing to perfection on a sudden: whereas this cure was wrought in a moment, his strength is restored in an instant. It was also a perfect cure, and as an evidence of it, he takes up his bed. This was to show that he was fully recovered. Note, 3. The effects of this cure: it had such an influence upon the spectators of this miracle, *that all that dwell at Lydda and Saron, when they saw it, turned to the Lord*, ver. 35. That is, they embraced the faith, seeing this cripple so strangely, so suddenly, and so perfectly cured.

36 ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation, is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom, when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that

Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was yet with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning *him* to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and, when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

This chapter concludes with a relation of a second miracle wrought by St. Peter at Joppa, in raising dead Dorcas to life. Where note, 1. The person upon whom this miracle was wrought, Dorcas, a woman rich in good works, full of alms-deeds; yet neither her piety towards God, nor her liberality to the poor could preserve her either from death or from diseases. A dear disciple may be diseased, and die; *Behold he whom thou lovest is sick*, John xi. 3. yea, and dead too. Strength of grace, and deariness of respect, even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. Good Dorcas here lies dead, with her body washed, not only to fit her for burial, but especially to show their hope of the resurrection. Note, 2. The doleful lamentation made by the widows for the loss of this good woman, who used to clothe the naked with the labor of her hands: she did not spend her time in making rich apparel for herself, but in making garments for the poor; and it seems she had good store of them ready made by her for the poor's use, as their necessities did require; *They showed the coats and garments which Dorcas had made*; the undoubted tokens and evidences of her pious charity. Learn hence, That the best relics of saints that can remain in honor of them when departed, are acts of piety towards God and of charity to the poor. Note, 3. The manner of St. Peter's working this miracle. 1. He puts them all out of the room where the dead lay; partly to prevent ostentation and vain-glory; partly to prevent disturbance by their immoderate mourning; and partly to prevent interruption in the exercises of prayer, which he was now about to perform. 2. He kneeled down; which recommends to us that reverential posture in our prayers to the great God of kneeling before him. 3. He prayed;

thereby owning and acknowledging, that the power of raising her was from God, not from himself. Note, lastly, The effect of this miracle: many believed in the Lord: she was raised more for the good of others than her own; for her restoring to natural life was the occasion of raising many to a life of faith; upon the sight of this famous miracle performed by St. Peter, many believed in the Lord.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter acquaints us with the first overtures which the apostles made to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: according to Christ's command, they began at Jerusalem, and preached to the Jews throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; but now the time was come, for beating down and laying flat the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile, which accordingly is done in this chapter by St. Peter's preaching to Cornelius, who was the first fruits of the Gentiles' conversion to christianity.

THERE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band.

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always:

Observe here, 1. The person described to whom St. Peter is sent to preach the gospel: by his name, Cornelius; by his occupation, a soldier; by his religion a proselyte or converted Gentile, of which there were two sorts; some were proselytes of the covenant, that is, such Gentiles as submitted themselves to circumcision, and the whole Mosaiical pedagogy: these were counted as Jews, and freely conversed with as such. Others were called proselytes of the gate; these were not circumcised, nor did they conform to the Mosaiic rites, but were obliged only to observe the seven precepts of Noah; namely, to worship the true God, and not idols; to abstain from blood, from fornication, from robbery, to administer justice impartially, and to do as they would be done unto. Such a proselyte as this the Jews would not converse with, but counted unclean, being a Gentile, and such an one was this Cornelius; but though a Gentile, though a soldier, though a commissioned officer, yet a pious charitable, good man. In all nations, in all places, of all employments, God has a number of holy and gracious persons to honor him in the world, according to their present measure of light received from him. Observe, 2. The evidence which Cornelius gave of his religious fearing God; *He feared God with all his house, he gave much alms, and prayed to God always.* Cornelius was therefore really, because relatively, religious: he obligeth his family to fear God as well as himself, and together with himself, like Abraham, *He commanded his household after him to keep the way of the Lord,* Gen. xviii. 19. And thus the blessing of Abraham came upon this Gentile Cornelius. *He feared*

God with all his house, and his charity was as eminent as his piety: *He gave much alms to the people:* that is, to the people of the Jews, to whom alms was not unclean, though given by an heathen person. It is further added, *That He prayed to God always;* he prayed to the true God not to idols; and he prayed to God always: that is, at every fitting season, and convenient opportunity for the duty. We are said in scripture to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably. Thus to pray always, to pray evermore, to pray without ceasing, is, first to keep the heart continually, as much as may be, in a praying frame and disposition; and, 2dly, To embrace the proper seasons and opportunities for prayer. The beauty of religion lies much in the harmonious performance of the duties of it; when one duty doth not interfere with another, but we prudently find time for all. Thus did Cornelius here; *He feared God with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.*

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Observe here, 1. The extraordinary favor afforded to Cornelius; namely, the vision of an holy angel. This devout man did not seek the face of God in vain; God sends him first an angel to comfort him, then an apostle, to instruct him: *He saw in a vision an angel of God.* Observe, 2. The effect which the sight of the angel had upon Cornelius; *He was afraid.* Learn hence, That whilst our souls inhabit these mortal and sinful bodies, the appearance of angels is terrible and affrighting to them, and cannot be otherwise; partly upon a natural, and partly upon a moral account: upon a natural account, because the dread of spirits strikes our natural spirits, they shrink and tremble at the approach of spirits; both the spirits of men and beasts quail at it; witness the ass, Numb. xxii. 26. that Balaam rode upon: and also upon a moral account, because of our consciousness of guilt: wherever there is guilt, there will be a fear upon an extraordinary appearance of God to us, though it be mediately by an angel. Observe, 3. The joyful message which the angel brings to Cornelius; that *his prayers and his alms were come up for a memorial before God.* Where note, That as God records all the prayers of his people, so he books all the acts of mercy which any of them at any time do exercise and show unto his members: he takes notice of the person, of the action, of the time when, of the manner how, of the measure and degree, how much: if it be but a cup of water, yea, a cup of cold water, given in love to Christ in his members, it shall not be forgotten, but recorded and rewarded.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side:

he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Observe here, 1. That although God sent an angel to Cornelius, to acquaint him with his will; yet the angel was to direct him to the apostle, who was to instruct him in the faith. This, no doubt, God did, to put honor upon the ministers and ministry of the gospel; as also to let us understand and know, that we are not to expect extraordinary ways of teaching, when God affords us the use of ordinary means. "Send to Joppa, and call for Peter, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Observe, 2. What an exact knowledge Almighty God has of particular persons, and particular places; he tells Cornelius, by the angel, in what town Peter was, in Joppa; in whose house he lodged, in Simon the tanner's; in what part of the town the house stood, by the sea-side. It is matter of consolation, yea, of great consolation to the people of God, to know and remember that God knows them; he knows their persons, their purposes, their performances, their places of abode; he knows who they are, what they do, and where they dwell. So dear are the holy servants of God unto him, that he loves the very street in which they lodge, the house in which they dwell, the walls of their habitation are continually before him, and he delights perpetually to look upon them: O let holiness to the Lord be writ in legible characters upon the walls of our houses? Zech. vii. 20. Then will God dwell where we dwell, and the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius, was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually.

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 ¶ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour.

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord: for

I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again, the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Observe here, 2. That as Cornelius had a vision from God, to encourage him to send for Peter, so the apostle had likewise a vision to encourage him to go to Cornelius. In which, note, 1. The time when he had this vision, it was at the sixth hour, or high noon; which was one of the three hours of prayer: when we are upon our knees in prayer, then is the time for receiving gracious manifestations from God. Note, 2. The place where he had this vision; when at prayer upon the house-top. The Jewish houses being flat roofed, with battlements upon them, Peter went up to the house-top to pray, as a place of privacy and retirement, free from noise and distraction; as also to take advantage of the place for divine contemplation, and perhaps to look towards the temple, which was formerly a type of Christ. It teaches us that fitting places, as well as fitting seasons for prayer, are to be sought out and improved by us: Peter went up upon the house to pray. Note, 3. The frame wherein St. Peter was as to his body, when he had this vision; namely, exceeding hungry: God ordered it so, to fit him the more for this vision of dainty meat. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is in sending down a dish of dainties from heaven to his hungry children, that are praying to him here on earth! Note, 4. The manner how the vision was made to St. Peter: it was in the way of divine rapture or ecstasy; he fell into a trance; his soul was as it were abstracted out of the body, and absent from it; that is, drawn off from the perception of all earthly and sensible objects, and enabled unto a more entire attendance upon spiritual and heavenly matters and mysteries: to be sure it made him forget his dinner, and filled him with divine consolation; a soul fed and filled with divine dainties doth sometimes forget bodily hunger: we read no more of St. Peter's sharp hunger after this divine entertainment. Note, 5. The division itself, or what was represented to St. Peter, first to his eye, then to his ear; to his eye first, He saw heaven opened, ver. 11. teaching, that although heaven had been shut to the children of men by the sin of the first Adam, yet now it was opened by the grace of the second Adam to all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Next, he saw a great vessel descending like a large sheet, with all sorts of meats in it, both clean and unclean; and he hears a voice from God, giving him a commission, though he was a Jew, to feed freely without distinction of clean and unclean; signifying to him thereby, that he might indifferently converse with Gentiles as well as Jews, and preach the gospel to one as well as the other. Note, lastly, How St. Peter's Jewish principles made him startle at this large commission, looking upon the command as unlawful and impious, ver. 14. "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." But mark the divine direction: "What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common." His mistake was rectified by God, who gave him by this vision a clear intimation, that the distinction of meats was now taken away, and the difference between nation and nation was now removed by the death of

Christ; and consequently, that he might go and preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, without scruple or doubtfulness; the partition wall betwixt Jew and Gentile being now broken down. Learn hence, That the doctrine of the conversion of the Gentiles came first from heaven, was revealed and made known by God himself, who has graciously declared, Gal. iii. 28. "That there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. For we are all one in Christ Jesus." Thanks be to God, "that the blessing of Abraham is come upon us, through Jesus Christ."

17 Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.

Here note, 1. How St. Peter sets himself to meditate upon what he had seen and heard from God: *He pondered with himself what this vision, which he had seen, should mean.*—Whatever passes from God to man, either by the eye, or through the ear, ought to be the subject of our deepest meditation. We are to contemplate the excellencies and perfections which are in the word and works of God with an intellectual eye, and to dwell upon them in our serious thoughts. Note, 2. The care which the Holy Spirit took to resolve satisfactorily the inward doubtings and reasonings of St. Peter's mind concerning this matter: *I have sent them*, says the holy Spirit; *therefore arise and go down, nothing doubting.*—Where observe, Both the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost: he that knows the thoughts, the doubtings and reasonings of man's heart, as the Holy Ghost here did St. Peter's, is truly and really God: and he that commands and forbids, is really person. So doth the Holy Spirit here; he commands St. Peter to go to Cornelius, and forbids his doubting of the lawfulness or success of his journey: *Go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.*

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of
(No. 33.)

the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea: And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And, as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man.

27 And, as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?

Observe here, 1. The messengers whom Cornelius sent to St. Peter, two of his household servants, and a devout soldier: All soldiers are not rude; but some are religious. Behold a devout soldier under a devout captain, and two household servants, whom their master's example had rendered humble and modest. Observe, 2. The just and laudable, not false and flattering character, which they gave of their master Cornelius: "That he was a just man, one that feared God, and one of good report among all the nation of the Jews." It is both the duty and commendation of servants, to give to their masters due honor: and, when called to it, their deserved character. Observe, 3. How St. Peter's doubts being resolved, he disputes no further, delays no longer, but hastens immediately to Cornelius: when once God's command is plain, we must not dispute, but dispatch; we must no longer object, but obey. Observe, 4. The reverence given by Cornelius to St. Peter; *he fell down at his feet and worshipped him.* It seems to be more than a civil reverence which he gave him: it looks as if Cornelius took him for

an angel in human shape, or a person sent immediately from heaven to him; and accordingly he prostrates himself before the apostle: but St. Peter would by no means receive any undue honor or respect from him, assuring him, That he was but a man, and God's messenger sent unto him. Whatever Peter's pretended successor challenges as his due, of reverence and homage, St. Peter himself would not suffer Cornelius to lie at his feet, much less to kiss his feet: the ambassador would not run away with the honor which belonged to the prince that sent him. Observe, 5. How St. Peter acquaints Cornelius, that the partition wall betwixt the Jews and Gentiles, which was erected and set up by God's command, was now by the same authority pulled down and removed; and that no man is now unclean by any ceremonial uncleanness, because he is not circumcised: and consequently, that Cornelius, though of another nation, might converse with, and be conversed with as freely as if born a Jew. Since the coming of Christ, no person or nation is legally or ceremonially unclean; but every nation, or every person, by nature, morally unclean.

30 And Cornelius said, four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner, by the sea-side; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Observe here, 1. Cornelius relates the occasion of his sending for St. Peter, and the warrant he had for so doing; he declares that as he was fasting and praying in his family, he had a vision, in which an angel directed him to send for the apostle. Where note, That Cornelius doth not talk of his fasting, praying, and alms giving, by way of ostentation, to boast of himself, but only to give satisfaction to St. Peter; that he had certain advice from heaven for what he did in sending for him. Observe, 2. The readiness of Cornelius' obedience in sending for St. Peter: *Immediately therefore I sent to thee.* Joppa from Cesarea is computed to be about forty miles; but no sooner did Cornelius receive the commandment, but without delay he put it in execution, and sent men to Joppa. When our call is clear, our obedience must be speedy. Observe, 3. The kind reception which Cornelius gives St. Peter: *Thou hast well done that*

thou art come: he doth not only approve of the apostle's coming, but thanks him for it. Observe, 4. The preparation and readiness of Cornelius and his friends, to hear and receive the word of God from St. Peter's mouth: *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* Where note, 1. He desires the same holy doctrine which the apostle came to preach, may be delivered to his family, his friends and his kinsfolk, as well as himself. A good man would not go to heaven alone; but is desirous of the instruction, conversion, and salvation of others as well as of himself *We are all here.* Note, 2. The place of God's pure worship is the place of his special presence; *We are all here present before God.* Note, 3. The end for which they were now come into the presence of God; it was to hear what God should speak, yea, to hear all things which God should command the apostle to speak: intimating to us, that as St. Peter himself was, so all the ministers of Christ are confined within their commission, and must only speak what God commands; neither are hearers bound to receive any thing else. Wo unto us, if when God sends us of his errand, we tell our own tale: the word is the counsel of God; now it is the counsel of God only, and the whole counsel of God also, that we are to declare, and our people are to hear; *We are all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded us before God.*

34 ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

As if the apostle had said, "I now very plainly perceive, that the partition-wall is broken down, and that national prerogatives, or personal excellencies, find no acceptance with God: but that any man, be he of what nation or family soever, if he feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall find acceptance with him." Observe here, 1. That no external qualifications, personal privileges and prerogatives, will procure favor and acceptance with God, who neither receives nor rejects men barely for outward respects; *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.* Observe, 2. The true character of a religious man: he is one that feareth God and worketh righteousness; that is, a strict observer of the duties of both tables, of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards man; and the phrase of working righteousness, implies diligence, and delight, and perseverance in the ways and works of righteousness. Observe, 3. The privilege of such a religious and truly righteous man: *He is accepted with God.* Thence learn, That both the person fearing God, and his works of righteousness are accepted with him, of any nation under heaven, of any calling, sex or condition whatsoever; *In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.*

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is Lord of all;

37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which

was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.

38 Now God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree;

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly,

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead,

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God, *to be* the judge of quick and dead.

43 To him, give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Observe here, 1. The antiquity of the gospel, or of the doctrine of reconciliation by Jesus Christ; it was preached to the patriarchs, and by the prophets to the ancient Israelites: "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ," Thence learn, That there is but one way to salvation, namely, reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ; and this was declared to the children of Israel, as well as unto us; to them more darkly, to us more clearly. They went to heaven then the same way that believers do now, namely, by faith in the Lamb of God, who was to be slain; we by faith in him as already slain. Observe, 2. The dignifying title given to Christ: *He is Lord of all*. He is Lord of all, as God together with the Father and the Holy Ghost: 'the absolute and supreme Lord of the whole creation, and unto whom all creatures are subject. 2. He is Lord of all, as Mediator, Lord of all men, whether Jews or Gentiles; he is Lord of his church, Lord over saints and sinners. Hypocrites and sincere christians, all his subjects by obligation, some by voluntary consent, and by an absolute obedience unto his commands. Observe, 3. The argument by which the apostle proveth Christ to be Lord of all: as Mediator, namely, from his divine unction, ver. 38. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost, and with power;" that is, endued the human nature of Christ with the fulness of the graces of his holy Spirit, and consecrated him to the work and office of a Mediator. Observe, 4. How Christ faithfully executed this office which

he was anointed to. He went about doing good, all the time he was on earth, healing diseases, and casting out of devils: for God was with him, in the fulness of the Deity, as he was his eternal Son; and in power, grace, and favor, as he was man, and Mediator. Here note, 1. The great work and business of our Saviour's life; it was to do good, namely, to the souls and bodies of men, to promote the temporal happiness of the one, the spiritual and eternal happiness of the other. Note, 2. Our Saviour's diligence and indefatigable industry in this work of doing good; he made it the great business and constant employment of his life: *He went about doing good*; that is, seeking out all opportunities of being useful and beneficial to mankind. Observe, 5. The evidence and testimony which the apostle produces for all that he affirmed concerning Christ; "We are witnesses of all things which he did in the land of Judea and in Jerusalem." Christ took the twelve apostles as if it were into his family, that by their familiar converse and constant conversation with him, they might be enabled to testify of him: 1. Touching his death, that he was slain and hanged on a tree; dying an ignominious and shameful, as well as a dolorous and painful death. 2. Concerning his resurrection, that God raised him from the dead; though he was laid, he was not lost in the dust; God would not suffer the beloved of his soul to rot in the grave, but raised him up and shewed him openly. And, 3. As to the final judgment, the apostles were commanded to preach and testify to the people, that Jesus Christ was ordained of God to be the judge of both quick and dead; that is, of all that are in their graves, and of all that shall be found alive at his coming.

44 ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God, Then answered Peter.

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Observe here, 1. What a miraculous power of the Holy Ghost did accompany St. Peter's ministry at this time, thereby giving him an assurance of the future conversion of the Gentiles, to the great wonder and astonishment of the Jews, who thought the promise of sending down the Holy Ghost belonged only to the house of Israel. Accordingly, while Peter was thus preaching to Cornelius and his family, the Holy Ghost

by his wonderful gift of tongues, descended on them, though Gentiles; at which the Jews marvelled. Observe, 2. The conclusion which the apostle draws from this; forasmuch as the Gentiles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, he infers, that they ought to be baptized with water; and the argument runs thus: "They that have the grace signified by, and promised in baptism, have an undoubted right to baptism, the seal of the promise; but these Gentiles have the grace signified by and promised in baptism; they have the inward part, or thing signified; why then should the outward sign be denied them? he that has the inheritance, may claim the writings, the seals, &c. belonging to the inheritance. Observe, 3. The apostle without scruple baptized these Gentile converts; *Then commanded he them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*: that is, he either baptized them himself, or gave commandment to others to do it; and though only the name of the Lord Jesus be mentioned, yet this does not imply, but that they were baptized according to our Saviour's prescription, Mat. xxviii. *In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. This done, they desired him to stay some days with them, that they might be farther instructed, confirmed, and comforted by his ministry.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter gives us an account, how the promise of Jews and Gentiles becoming one flock, and enfolded in one church, received its accomplishment: this was performed by the ministry of St. Peter, who was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; of which he gives a satisfactory account in this chapter, to the objections made by the Jews against him for the same.

AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him.

3 Saying, thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Observe here, 1. How the Jews apprehending that Christ and his grace had been only promised and confined to themselves, the call and conversion of the Gentiles became a dreadful stumbling-block unto them, even to the believing as well as to the unbelieving Jews. Hereupon observe, 2. How they contended with Peter for eating and conversing with the Gentiles and especially for admitting them into the gospel-communion without circumcision: whereas, although God forbade marriages with the Gentiles, he never forbade commerce and conversation with them: no conversation with the Gentiles, in order to the gaining of the Gentiles unto God, was ever forbidden by God; but only such as might withdraw the Jews from God, and corrupt them by idolatry.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners: and it came even to me.

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter: slay and eat.

8 But I said, not so, Lord; for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, what God hath cleansed, *that* call thou not common.

10 And this was done three times; and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them

the like gift as *he did* unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Observe here, 1. How far St. Peter was from pretending a superiority over the rest of the apostles; he did by no means think himself so far above them, as to disdain to render an account of his actions to them, but with great sincerity and humility rehearsed and related the whole matter of fact, to their entire and joint satisfaction. Observe, 2. How he acquaints the apostles with the vision he had seen; in which he was commanded to make no distinction of clean or unclean: because there was no natural turpitude in any kind of meat, save only as it was prohibited by God; and that God, who having made the law about difference of meats, had now abrogated it, and made all meats clean, and free to be eaten. Observe, 3. How he gives them the interpretation of this vision, and acquaints them with the end for which this vision was designed; namely, not so much to reveal to him the lawfulness of eating all sorts of meats, as to acquaint him with his liberty and duty to converse with and preach the gospel to the Gentiles; whom he was no longer to look upon as unclean, though they were not circumcised; but as "heirs and fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Observe lastly, The conclusion which St. Peter drew from these premises: "Seeing God hath made the Gentiles equal in grace with the believing Jews; seeing the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the same manner, and with the same effects as he did upon us apostles, I could not reasonably deny them baptism, and by baptism admission into the gospel-church; for having the grace signified by baptism, they ought to have baptism, the seal of that grace; they that have the inward, are not to be denied the outward baptism: and they that were baptized with the Holy Ghost (as Cornelius and his family were) might and ought to be baptized with water, as Cornelius was: for had I denied them church communion for want of the ceremony of circumcision, it had certainly been a downright resistance of, and disobedience against God." Thence learn, that it is a downright opposition to the will of God, to shut them out of the church, and to debar them from the communion of it, who have received the sanctifying graces of God's Holy Spirit; but differ from us in external rites and ceremonies only.

19 ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were
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came to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Observe here, 1. That Antioch becomes the Jerusalem of the Gentile christians: that is, the chief place whither the Gentile converts resorted: as Jerusalem, before the dispersion by persecution, was resorted to by the Jews, and made the principal seat of their residence. Observe, 2. How God overruled the persecution and dispersion occasioned by St. Stephen's death, for disseminating and scattering the gospel as far as Antioch, verse 19. "They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Antioch, preaching the word." Thus has the blood of the martyrs all along been the seed of the church, and what the devil and his instruments have designed for the extirpation, God has constantly overruled for the propagation of the gospel. Observe, 3. The great success which the ministers and ministry of the gospel had at Antioch: "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed." By the hand of the Lord, it meant the power and assistance of the Lord, which did accompany them in dispensing of his word, and enable them to work miracles for the confirmation of it. The hand is the organ or instrument of working in man. When it is attributed to God, it denotes his power and help: the hand of God was manifested in the miracles which they wrought, and in faith and conversion, which the sight of those miracles produced. Learn hence, That faith and conversion are wrought by the hand of the Lord: they are his work: study and endeavour is the minister's, the blessing and success is God's; when he takes the sword of the Spirit into the hand of the Spirit, then shall it work wonders. Observe, 4. How the joyful tidings of the success of the gospel at Antioch, being heard and understood by the apostles that remained at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to confirm the new converts at Antioch in the christian faith. Learn thence, That the news of any sinner's, much more of many sinners' conversion unto God, by the preaching of the gospel, is matter of great delight and rejoicing to the ministers of Christ. Observe, 5. The holy and honorable character which the Spirit of God gives of Barnabas: "he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the

Lord." By a good man, is meant a kind and charitable man; he having actually sold his estate, and laid it at the apostles' feet, for the benefit of the poor, as Acts iv. 36. 37, informs us; and his good works accompanying his good preaching, his good life seconding his sound doctrine, was a great mean of the conversion of so many, and that much people were added to the Lord. Observe, lastly, The holy exhortation which Barnabas gave these new converts at Antioch: "He exhorted them, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:" That is, with a firm and fixed resolution of will to keep close to the profession of the truth of Christ, whatever tribulation or distress they might meet with. Young converts need exhortation and counsel, to establish and confirm them in the faith of the gospel, and to encourage them to hold fast to Christ.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul.

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Observe here, A further instance of the piety of that good man. Barnabas having a great zeal and fervent desire that the gospel might be more and more propagated, he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul, that they might join together in the work of Christ; and having found him, he brought him to Antioch: where, for a whole year, they instructed the church in that city, and taught much people. Oh how happy is it for the church of Christ, when her ministers, laying aside all private interest, do unitedly apply themselves to promote the common interest of christianity, by propagating the gospel far and near! Observe, farther, How the believers, both Jews and Gentiles, were united in one common name at Antioch: the Jews had hitherto called them *Nazirites* and *Galileans*, and they called themselves *disciples*, *believers*, *brethren*, and *those of the church*; but now in this place, Antioch, they were first called *Christians*; a very great honor conferred on this Gentile city, which exalted her now above Jerusalem itself. At Antioch, a Gentile city, Christ set up his standard for the Gentiles, and displayed his banner, and put his own name on the despised Gentiles. They who before were counted dogs, and the outscouring of all things, have, now the venerable name of Christ imposed upon them, "The disciples were called christians first at Antioch," Note lastly, that the disciples did not call themselves christians first at Antioch, much less did their enemies give them that name; but they had it by divine authority imposed upon them; God would have Christ's disciples called christians, As scholars, who receive their denomination from their master, they are taught to learn and imitate Christ, whose name they bear. 2. As the word christians signifies anointed ones, it puts them in mind of their divine unction, which they have received from the Holy One, whereby they are made kings and priests unto God. We are at this day called *reformed christians*. God grant that we may not cheat ourselves with an empty and insignificant name; but let us fill up that glorious title, and be

reformed in our lives, as well as in our religion; beautifying our holy profession by an holy and becoming conversation; otherwise an unbaptized heathen, at the great day, will not change estate with many baptized christians.

27 ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.

29 Then the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Observe here, 1. That the wisdom of God, at the first planting of the christian church, did confer upon some of its members extraordinary gifts; as the gift of tongues, the gift of miracles, the gift of prophecy, and the like. Accordingly, at this time, certain persons who had the gift of prophecy, and did foretel things to come, being now at Antioch, by revelation from the Spirit of God, foretold that there would shortly be a great famine over all Judea, and several other parts of the world: which exactly came to pass in the reign of the emperor Claudius. Where note, that as it is God's prerogative to foreknow future things, so it is his prerogative to enable others to foretel future things. This famine was here foretold, not by Judicial astrology, but by divine revelation: That God, who provided for the patriarchs, by means of Joseph's foreseeing the famine in Egypt, provided now for the christians, by Agabus' foretelling the famine which came upon Judea: "Agabus stood up and signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great dearth throughout all Judea." As God's omnipotence is exerted for his church's protection, so is his omniscience employed for its sustentation and preservation: yea, all his attributes are engaged for her benefit and advantage. Observe, 2. The full proof and evidence which the new converts at Antioch gave of the truth of their conversion to the christian religion: namely, their charity, and alms seasonably sent to the succour and relief of their fellow-members in Christ, which were in Judea. These were become very poor, by reason of the extraordinary malice, and long persecution of the Jews against them. And the seasonable succour now sent them from Antioch, was a singular comfort to them, and a sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God. Observe, lastly, The wise regulation of their charity, "every man gave according to his ability." This is the true standard of charity; we are to give alms of such things as we have, and according to what we have. Christian prudence must direct us in the exercise of christian charity; that must direct us in finding fit and proper objects for our charity, that we may give most to them that have most need. Prudence must also direct us in timing of our charity, that we do not put our poor brethren off

with frivolous excuses and tedious delays. And it must direct us in the measure of our charity, that it doth not exceed the bounds of our estate. Few indeed are guilty of erring on that hand; but it is possible there may be an error in the excess, as well as in the defect, of our christian charity. To prevent both evils, let the practice of these primitive christians be a pattern for our imitation: "Who determined every one according to his ability, to send relief unto the brethren, and sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

CHAPTER XII.

St. Luke the writer of this history, having related what success the apostles had at Antioch; he now returns to Judea, and declares what persecution the church met with at Jerusalem: where St. James was beheaded: and St. Peter imprisoned, but by an angel miraculously delivered, as this church informs us.

NOW, about this time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

Observe here, 1. Satan, the grand enemy of the church of God, never wants instruments for carrying on his persecuting designs against the church; he had many Pharaohs in the Old Testament times, bitter oppressors of the Jewish church; and several Herods under the New Testament; as Herod Antipas and Herod Agrippa, who were very warm in the worst works, namely, that of persecution. "Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church:" that is, to kill some, and to imprison others. Satan's bloodhounds have such an insatiable thirst after the blood of the saints, that they can never be satiated with it, nor satisfied without it. A tyrannical persecutor is like an hydropic person, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts.

2 And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

3 And, because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

Note here, 1. The person slain by the sword of Herod, James the brother of John. We read in the gospel that he was one of the sons of Zebedee, that desired of Christ the pre-eminence to sit at his right hand in his kingdom: and now he is the first of the apostles that suffered martyrdom, who drank of Christ's cup, and was baptized with his baptism. He was called Boanerges, or a son of thunder, for his zealous and earnest preaching: no wonder then that Herod and the enraged Jews hated him, and were stirred up by satan to destroy him. For such as are most useful to, and most eminent in the church, are always the object of satan's wrath and anger, and of the persecutor's rage and fury. "He killed James the brother of John with the sword." Observe, 2. James being slain, Peter is to follow: "He proceeded further to take Peter also." The rage of persecutors is not easily satisfied, and the blood which they shed, is but oil to

feed the flames of their revenge. But mark the overruling power and goodness of God, though St. James was murdered, St. Peter shall be but imprisoned: the husbandman doth not permit all his corn to the oven, but saves some for seed. Persecutors cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can.

4 And, when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Peter being imprisoned, Observe, What an excess of care and caution Herod takes for securing his prisoner: sixteen soldiers are set to guard him; four at a time, and to take their turns at the four watches of the night, to relieve one another. Thence learn, That the enemies of the church make the surest work they can, when at any time God permits his servants to fall into any of their hands. Thus they dealt with the Head, when they had apprehended him; the watch-word was, *Hold him fast*, St. Mat. xxvi. 48. When they crucified him, they nailed him fast to his cross: when they buried him, they made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch: and thus they deal with the members: St. Peter has guard upon guard set over him, some soldiers chained to him, and others always standing at the door to observe him. But all this care, concern, and caution to secure the prisoner, did illustrate the glory of the miracle in his wonderful deliverance.

5 Peter, therefore, was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

That is, fervent and importunate prayer was put up to God by the church on Peter's behalf. With the united strength of their whole souls they stormed heaven, and took him by force out of Herod's hand. Learn, 1. That when the church is plunged into deep perplexities, the only help she can hope for must come unto her in the way of prayer. Learn, 2. That when God suffers any of the ministers of the church to fall under the rage of persecutors, it is the church's duty to wrestle with God by prayer in an extraordinary manner on their behalf; "prayer was made without ceasing of the church." Learn, 3. That when God intends to bestow any extraordinary mercy upon his church, he stirs up the hearts of his people to pray for it in a very extraordinary manner.

6 And, when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers; bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

Observe, Peter continued in prison till the very night before Herod intended to bring him out to the people: and if they desired it, it is probable he intended to put him to death the next day. Learn thence, That God oftentimes suffers his children to come to the pit's brink, and then delivers them, that they may be the more sensible of his mercy, and have the greater cause to magnify his power. Peter was now come to his last night; the tyrant Herod probably intended

his execution next morning. Now was the time for God to step in: our extremity is his opportunity. Observe farther, That notwithstanding Peter's imminent and impending danger, he sleeps very soundly, resigning up himself into the hands of Christ, and resolving, if he may no longer live Christ's servant, that he will die his sacrifice. I question whether Herod that imprisoned him slept half so soundly. Lord! how soft and secure a pillow is a good conscience, even in the confines of death, and in the very jaws of danger! Observe lastly, That God takes most care of Peter, when he was able to take least care of himself: when he was asleep, and altogether insensible of his danger, God was awake, and acting effectually in order to his deliverance. Happy prisoners! who have God with them in prison; such are prisoners of hope indeed and shall certainly experience divine help.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

Observe here, 1. That God hath sometimes made use of the ministry of angels to effect deliverance for his people. Observe, 2. The several good offices which the angels now did for Peter, in order to his enlargement. Peter is asleep, the angel awakes him; he is laid, the angel raises him; he is amazed, the angel directs him; he is bound, the angel unties him; he knows not where he is, the angel goes before him, and guides him; he is to pass through many difficulties, the angel conducts him. Lord! how innumerable are the good offices which at thy command the holy angels do for us, though they are not sensibly in this manner apprehended by us! What love and service do we owe to thee! What honor and respect should we pay to them, for their care over us, and attendance upon us! Observe, 3. Peter must arise, gird himself, bind on his sandals, cast his garment about him, follow the angel, and use his own endeavours in order to his

own deliverance. God will have him use the means, even then when he was about to work a miracle for him. What a tempting of God is it then to neglect the means, when we cannot expect miracles! As to trust to means, is to neglect God, so to neglect the means, is to tempt God. We must always subserve the providence of God in the use of such means as his wisdom has appointed and directed us unto. Observe lastly, That this deliverance was so amazing and surprising, that Peter thought it a dream only, ver. 9. "He wist not that it was true, but thought he saw a vision." Learn thence, That sometimes the deliverances of the godly from imminent and apparent dangers, are so very wonderful, and attended with such a crowd of improbabilities, that they have much ado to believe them, though they see them with their eyes. When God turned the captivity of Peter, he was like unto them that dream, Psal. cxxvi. 1.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying.

13 And, as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And, when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so, Then said they it is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking, And when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said, Go, show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Observe here, 1. The wise and holy course which the church took for the apostle's enlargement, and that was keeping a day of prayer. A number of christians get to-

gether, and importune heaven; the enemies plot, the church prays; they shut the prison doors, the church opens heaven's doors, and God gives Peter in, as an answer of prayer, before they rose off from their knees. Oh how good is it to draw nigh to God! What a prayer-hearing God is our God! How great is the power and prevalency of the conjoined prayers of good men! God's praying people ever have been, and will be a prevailing people. Whilst these pious souls were in the very act of calling upon God for Peter's release, God gives in Peter released to them. God never wants means for his people's deliverance, when he is once set on work by the prayers of his people. Observe, 2. St. Peter being delivered, meditates whilst he was walking in the streets, and going along by himself, of the greatness of his danger, and the graciousness of his deliverance: holy and suitable thoughts, pious meditations and ejaculations, do well become us in any place, at all times and upon all occasions, but especially after signal deliverances from signal dangers. We can never enough ruminate upon them, or be sufficiently thankful for them. Observe, 3. The wisdom and goodness of the divine providence in directing Peter in the dead of the night, to the house where the saints were praying for him. This is the more remarkable, because the angel having done his work which God sent him upon, after he had delivered Peter from his chains and imprisonment, he left him to shift for himself, and to take care of his own safety; but though an angel left him, yet the providence of God conducted him to a place where he was both safe and welcome. Observe, 4. What an ancient opinion it was, that every good man had a guardian angel appointed him by God, to take a special care of him to his life's end; to direct him in his way, to guard him from dangers, and to deliver him in his distresses; *They say, It is his angel.* For which saying there could be no reason, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels. Blessed be God, his holy angels are our keepers, our counsellors, our defenders, our loving and friendly associates: and they shall never depart from us, till they have conducted us safely to our heavenly Father's house, where we shall be "as the angels of God in heaven." Observe, 5. How Peter gives God, and not the angel, the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. "He declared how the Lord had brought him out of the prison." The angel was but the instrument, God was the principal agent, ver. 11. "The Lord hath sent his angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod." All deliverances must be ascribed to him who commands deliverance for his people. Observe, 6. The prudential care which St. Peter takes for his future preservation. "He departed and went to another place." He could not think himself safe whilst Herod was so near, no more than a lamb could be safe near the lion's den. He knew he should be hunted for, therefore escapes for his life. And besides his own danger, he was not willing to endanger his friends, who did not entertain and harbour him: but both for his own and their preservation, he departs to another place. Learn, that a prudential use of all lawful means for our own and others' preservation, in subserviency to the divine providence, is our duty, our wisdom and interest, both as men and christians.

18 Now, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter.

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19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.

Observe here, 1. How wicked persecutors are mightily enraged, when their bloody purposes are disappointed. Herod having lost his prize, is so incensed, that he caused the keepers first to be examined, (and possibly by tortures) and then to be put to death. Observe, 2. The justice of God, and the great injustice of Herod: it was just in God to suffer the soldiers, who were Herod's instruments in persecution, to die by the bloody hand of Herod, whose tools they were. Instruments in persecution God oftentimes meets with in this world, and sometimes they fall by the hands of persecutors themselves; yet was it notorious injustice in Herod to put to death those innocent soldiers, who could not help what was done, and were no ways accessory to the prisoner's escape.

20 ¶ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the King's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

Observe, Herod, upon St. Peter's escape out of his hands, leaves Jerusalem, and goes to dwell at Cesarea, where, being highly displeased with the rich citizens of Tyre and Sidon, he designs to make war upon them. But they being sensible that their cities lying upon the sea coasts, and having little land belonging to them, they must be beholden to Judea and Galilee, which were under Herod's jurisdiction, for a great part of their provisions; therefore they prudently compound the matter with him, knowing that to fight with him who fed them, was the ready way to be famished. And opening the breast of Blastus the king's chamberlain, with a golden key, through that passage they made their access to pacify the king. Interest leads us to pay homage to them, whom our dependency is upon: yet though men depend upon God for all, for life, and for the comforts and supports of life, which they do enjoy, (our country being nourished by the King of heaven's country) yet how few by prayer do own their dependance upon him, or by praise and thanksgiving do acknowledge the hand that supplies them?

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying*, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not

God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Upon a set day, that is, as some suppose, on his own birthday, he was arrayed in royal apparel, in a cloak made of cloth of silver, but dyed with St. James' blood, ver. 2. which being beaten upon by the sun beams, did plainly dazzle the eyes of all spectators; he makes an eloquent oration more gaudy than his apparel, unto the people, who cried out in approbation thereof, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" Herod instead of repelling this their impious flattery, embraces and hugs their praises, as proper to himself; and thereupon an angel, and worms, the best and the basest of creatures, meet in his punishment; the angel smiling him, and the worms eating him up: and no wonder that worms quickly devour him, whom those flesh-flies had blown upon before; no wonder that he is eaten up of worms, who forgot that he was a worm! *Quest.* But why were not the people punished as well as the prince, seeing they were equally guilty of robbing God of his honor? True, Herod was the receiver, but they were the thieves: why then fell not the punishment on the whole multitude? *Ans.* Because more discretion is expected from a prince, than from the rabble: besides, what in them was but a blasphemous compliment, was by his acceptance of it made a reality, and was usurped by him, and assumed to him as due to his deserts. From the whole note, 1. That flattery, either given or taken, is a very dangerous sin, a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. If we flatter men, God will not flatter us, but deal plainly, yet severely with us. One of the ancients said, he was afraid of praise and commendation as much as of a crack of thunder. When men give much glory to men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it; but by keeping that, he lost his life. Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort: "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him:" Agreeably to that of Job, chap. xxxii. 22. "I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The great God will admit of no co-rivals; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false swearer, Malachi iii. 5. He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand; and those that are cried up as gods to-day, are as dung to-morrow.

24 ¶ But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Observe, Herod the tyrant and persecutor being dead, the gospel prospered, and was preached up and down with great success. Persecutors, by their weak endeavours to pull down the church, do build it up the stronger. The church in Egypt never grew so high as when Pharaoh labored to keep

it low: the more he molested them, the more he multiplied them. Thus here, after Herod's death, and Peter's deliverance, the word of God grew and multiplied: that is, the number of believers increased through the preaching of the word, as seed is multiplied by the scattering of the hands; the word preached is the seed sown in the furrows of the field; the ground was now harrowed by the hand of the persecutors, and the seed grew the better, and the fruits of faith and obedience did by every shower of persecution more and more abound. The truth of God may for a time be oppressed, but it shall never be fully and finally suppressed: still "the word of God grew and multiplied."

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Luke the writer of this history, having given us an account how the christian church was first planted among the Jews by St. Peter's ministry, in the twelve first chapters; he now applies his pen in declaring how the gospel was planted and propagated amongst the Gentiles by St. Paul's ministry, to the end of the book. Now in this chapter we have the solemn mission of Saul and Barnabas to the ministry among the Gentiles, fully related.

NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Observe here, That the city of Antioch being the first Gentile city which entertained the gospel, there were at that time several prophets and teachers in that city to instruct the people, and to lay a foundation of a christian church amongst them: and amongst others, there was found one very eminent person named Manaen, who was of that high rank and quality, that he was brought up with Herod at court; and, as the learned Lightfoot thinks, was converted there by the preaching of St. John the Baptist; yet this man, contemning with Moses the pleasures of the court, did think it no disparagement to him to be a teacher at Antioch. Learn thence, That God is pleased to manifest the freeness of his grace in effectually calling some of all sorts and ranks of men, to the knowledge and obedience of the gospel, and to a participation of the benefit offered in and by the Lord Jesus Christ: "Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch."

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and pray-

ed, and laid their hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Observe here, How the Holy Ghost takes occasion, when the teachers of the church at Antioch were assembled together in God's presence, and about his work, to give them particular instructions and directions concerning his will and their duty. Observe farther, The solemn charge given by the Holy Ghost, to set apart Saul and Barnabas by solemn imposition of hands, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles: this was a great work, and not to be undertaken without a special call from God: therefore, says the Holy Ghost "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them:" Which words prove both the Duty and personality of the Holy Ghost: he who calls ministers to the office, and unto whose service they are separated, is both God and a distinct person in the Godhead; but this the Holy Ghost did: "separate me Barnabas and Saul." Here note, 1. That the work of the ministry is a separate work. Ministers must be set apart for the work of the ministry before they undertake it; a call from God is not sufficient without a separation by man. Note, 2. That this separation ought to be performed by the chief ministers of the church, who have authority from Christ to separate and set others apart for the work of the ministry. The Holy Ghost said to the teachers of the church at Antioch, "Separate me." Note, 3. That this solemn act and ordinance ought to be performed in a very solemn manner, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. Note, 4. That when thus performed, it is agreeable to the mind, and according to the institution and appointment of the Holy Ghost: "The Holy Ghost said, 'Separate, &c.'" Note lastly, Though the office of the ministry be an honorable office, yet withal it is a laborious work. Separate them for the *work* whereunto I have called them. It is a work that requires attendance, and zealous application, both in season and out of season. Praying, preaching, administering sacraments; guiding and governing the flock by private admonition, and public censure: these are weighty works, found so now by those that perform them faithfully, and will be found so at the great day, by the slothful and negligent. How can that be esteemed to be any slight and inconsiderable work, unto the faithful performance whereof so great a reward is promised, and to the omission thereof so dreadful a woe is denounced? If Satan destroy men's souls he shall answer for them as a murderer only, not as an officer intrusted with the care of them: but if the watchman doth not warn, if the shepherd doth not feed; if the prophet doth not instruct, if the steward doth not provide, he shall answer not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered. Lord, how unable shall we be at the making up of our accounts, to endure the hideous outcries of distressed souls, saying, *Parentes sensimus parricidas*: Our guides have misled us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our stewards have defrauded us, and the following of their evil example has undone us.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia: and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they

preached the word of God, in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him.

10 And said. O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist, and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The apostles Barnabas and Saul having received their commission, set forth for their work to which they were designed; and their first journey was from Antioch to Cyprus, an island of the Gentiles, lewd and wicked; where Venus was worshipped: and much filthiness was committed by them in that abominable Pagan worship. Yet the free grace of God cast a look of pity and love upon sinful Cyprus: the Holy Ghost directs these apostles thither, to reclaim them from sin, and reduce them to the obedience of the gospel. Observe, 2. That though Saul and Barnabas were sent forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, yet they made the first tender of it to the Jews wherever they came; accordingly here in Cyprus, there being a great number of Jews, the apostles went into the synagogues, and preached to them. Christ was the minister of circumcision, who was himself "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and accordingly sent his apostles out first, to feed and gather those poor scattered sheep: these were accounted the chil-

dren of the house, and the Gentiles reckoned as dogs; but when those wanton and full-fed children began to waste their meat, and cast it under their table, then did the Gentile dogs gather up their leavings; Acts xiii. 46. "It was necessary," both by virtue of Christ's command and example also, "that the word of God should be first spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Observe, 3. What an early opposition the devil made against the apostles in their preaching the gospels to the Gentiles; he feared the battering down the walls of his kingdom, and therefore stirs up his instrument Elymas the sorcerer to withstand them, and particularly to endeavour to divert Sergius Paulus, who governed that island, from the faith. Where note, The character given of this vile man by the apostles, "Oh full of all subtilty and mischief; a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness:" Intimating, 1. That to be subtle, to do mischief, is the genius or disposition of the devil's children. 2. That to be an opposer of good is to be conformable to the devil: it is the height of wickedness, not only to do evil, but to oppose good; to be an enemy to, and an opposer of goodness, is the very character of Satan and his children. So much as any man opposes goodness, so much he has of the devil's disposition in him: "thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness." Observe, 4. The judgment inflicted by God on this wicked instrument of the devil, and the suitableness of the judgment inflicted on the sin committed: he wickedly shut the eyes of his understanding against the light of the gospel, and God deprives him of his bodily sight. Thus the wisdom of God doth oft-times so suit his judgment to the sins committed, that a person may ever read his sin in his punishment. Yet how did God temper mercy with the judgment, inflicting blindness upon this vile wretch only for a season? Even the very judgments of God are medicinal and in mercy: when God punishes, it is with a design not to ruin, but reform. Observe lastly, What success St. Paul's ministry, together with this miracle, had upon Sergius Paulus the governor; he was thereby converted to the faith: "When he saw what was done he believed; being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." The word never works more kindly, than when it is received with admiration. Yet doth the word sometimes work admiration, where it doth not produce faith: many marvelled who never believed; but this governor was astonished, and believed also.

13 Now, when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

14 ¶ But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down.

15 And, after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

Here we have an account of another journey which Paul and Barnabas took to preach, plant, and propagate the gospel: namely, to Perga, in Pamphylia; and from thence to Antioch in Pisidia, so called, to distinguish it from the other Antioch in Syria, from whence they were sent forth, ver. 1, 2, 3, where their colleague and companion John Mark withdrew from them and went no farther with them to the work. This Paul took very ill, as he might, if he left them, because of the difficulties and dangers which he saw did accompany and attend them in the planting and propagating of the gospel; for he that putteth his hand to that plough, and then draweth back, justly deserveth censure and reproof. However such was the zeal of the two apostles, that they travel on to Antioch without their companion, where entering into one of the synagogues of the Jews on the sabbath-day; after the reading some sections in the law and the prophets, as their manner was, the rulers of the synagogues desired a word of exhortation from them. Where note, How wonderfully God overrules the hearts of these rulers of the synagogues, not only to suffer, but to desire the apostles to preach the gospel to them. Hereupon the apostle St. Paul stands up and makes a most excellent sermon to them in the following verses. Where note, How readily the blessed apostle embraces an opportunity to preach the gospel: the rulers need not ask him twice: little opportunity will serve to persuade an holy heart to undertake the work of God. The faithful ministers of Christ are forward for, as well as zealous in their Master's work. No sooner did the rulers of the synagogue request a word of exhortation from the apostle, but immediately, though not unpreparedly, he stands up, and preaches to the people.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that, he gave unto them judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony,

and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus;

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And, as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

This latter part of the chapter containeth an historical and practical sermon, preached by St Paul at the request of the rulers of the synagogue. Where observe, 1. His prologue or preface, in which he craves their careful attention; withal intimating that none of them would attend but only such as truly feared God, *Men of Israel and ye that fear God, give audience.* That is the proper character of a right attentive hearer. Observe, 2 The narrative which the apostle gives of the many divine favors, benefits and blessings, which the Lord bestowed of old upon Israel his people; namely, his free election and choosing them before all nations: his wonderful deliverance of them out of Egypt; his great indulgence towards them for forty years in the wilderness, as a mother bears with a child's frowardness and stubbornness: and his constituting a form of government for them under the judges first, and kings afterwards, particularly Saul and David; who is described first by his conformity to the nature of God; *he was a man after his own heart.* Secondly, by his conformity to the will of God; *He shall fulfil all my will.* Having thus ended the historical part, he next begins the practical part of his discourse; and lays down this grand proposition, That Jesus is the Christ and Saviour of the world. This assertion he defends and proves, 1. From his stock and family according to the flesh, foretold by God. 2. From the testimony of John the Baptist his forerunner, ver. 23, 24, "of David's seed hath God, according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, when John had first preached the baptism of repentance." After this he makes a close application of the whole of them: "Men and brethren, to you is the word of this salvation sent." Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings; the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation: and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation, is threefold; 1. By way of satisfaction and discovery; the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered

(No. 34.)

it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel. 2. By way of tender and offer. Oh this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it. 3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power, to put men into a state of salvation; and hath also an establishing and confirming power, to preserve them in that estate. Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel? they are enemies to our salvation: the only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word. It cometh by hearing.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are ready every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And, when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers.

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Observe here, 1. The apostle declares the ignominious death; 2. The glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus, whom he proves to be the true and promised Messiah. 1. For the ignominious death, *the Jews hanged him upon a tree.* The Son of God was not only put to death, but to the worst

of deaths, even the death of the cross, by the wicked Jews: yet the apostle acknowledges, that neither the Jewish rulers nor people did understand him to be the Messiah, as they might have done, had they considered the predictions of the prophets; and therefore their ignorance would not excuse them; for the ignorance and heedlessness of men, enjoying the means and opportunities of knowledge, will certainly bring destruction upon them. To sin blindly without knowledge, or to sin wilfully against knowledge, when we have the means of knowledge, is a damnable sin; the rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, have fulfilled them in condemning him." Observe, 2. To take away the scandal of the cross, the apostle shows, that our Saviour's resurrection was as glorious as his death was ignominious. God wiped away the reproach of the cross, by raising up Christ from the grave, and declared him to be his Son with power, by the resurrection from the dead: and accordingly the apostle applies that prophecy to Christ, in Psal. ii. 7. *Thou art my Son this day have I begotten thee*: as if the Father had said, "Now thou hast again recovered thy glory, and thy resurrection-day is to thee as a new birth-day." Three ways is Christ said to be begotten: 1. Of the essence of the Father before all worlds. 2. When his body was formed of the substance of the Virgin's flesh. 3. When God raised him from the dead: *this day have I begotten thee*: this is, declaratively, for he was the Son of God before, even from all eternity; but whilst he was in a suffering condition, his divinity was veiled: whereas after his resurrection it was more apparent, and he was then declared to be the Son of God; not then made the Son of God, but then made manifest to be the Son of God, by the resurrection from the dead. Learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God antecedent to his resurrection, even from all eternity! he was declared and manifested, but not made or constituted the Son of God by the resurrection. Then it was that his divinity brake forth as the sun, after it had been shut up under a dark and thick cloud. Christ was the eternal Son of God; but his resurrection was a declaration, and full manifestation of it to the world; Rom. i. 4. "Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead."

36 For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.

The Holy Ghost here gives a compendious account of David's life and death: of his life, "He served his generation according to the will of God: of his death, He fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption." In the account given of David's life, note, 1. His activity and zeal for God, he served as well as reigned: this serving implies not a single or individual act, but a series and succession of good actions throughout the whole course of his life. Note, 2. The publicness of his activity; he served not himself, but his own generation. Note, 3. The rule of his activity, and that was the will of God, as he served his generation, so he served God in his generation faithfully according to his will. All our serviceableness of God and our generation, must be guided and directed by the word and will of God. David served his own generation by the will of God. This is the account of his life. Observe, next,

the relation of his death. "He fell asleep, was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption." *He fell asleep*; death to the servants of God is a sleep, and but a sleep. As a sleep it gives rest and cessation from labor; and as a sleep, it gives refreshment after labor; and they that sleep shall certainly awake, so those that sleep in Jesus, shall awake in the morning of the resurrection, to see their glorified Redeemer face to face. Note, 2. No serviceableness to God in our generation can exempt from death; for David fell asleep; this is the lot of the faithful, as well as of the slothful servants. Note, 3. It is a blessed thing when we fall asleep with our work in our hands; when death meets us after a life spent in the service of Christ. David, after he had served his generation, fell asleep; it follows, he was gathered to his fathers; that is, he was buried among his ancestors: and he saw corruption; that is, his body corrupted in the grave like other men's.

37 But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

That is, Jesus Christ, whom God the Father raised to life the third day; he saw a dissolution, but no corruption. Sin had no inheritance in him; therefore death could have no dominion over him; but he overcame death in its own territories, the grave. Thus the apostle draws the argument home, that the foregoing word could not be meant of David's person, but of the Messiah, whom David typified and represented.

38 Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets.

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

The apostle having proved this point, that Jesus was the true, the promised, and expected Messiah, by his resurrection from the dead, he now applies it to his auditory: and tells them, that by the meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession of this Jesus, remission of sins is to be obtained, and deliverance from the wrath of God, from which the law of Moses could not with all its ceremonial washing and sacrifices, cleanse and free them. Here note, the impossibility of our being justified by the law, and the certainty of our justification by the faith in Christ; *by him all that believe are justified*. Where observe, the procurer of our justification, *Christ*; the qualification of the subjects justified by him *them that believe*; and the extent and measure of our justification; not from some, but from all things, *by him all that believe are justified from all things*. Next the

apostle exhorts his hearers to take heed, lest by their obstinate rejecting and refusing this way of salvation now preached to them, they bring such a remarkable destruction upon themselves now, as God threatened to bring upon their forefathers of old. The sense is, "If ye reject this Jesus, and the way to life and salvation by him, ye shall be destroyed by the Romans as your ancestors were by the Chaldeans." Sin is as odious to God at one time as another, and in one people as another; particularly the sin of obstinate infidelity and unbelief, is a God-provoking, and a wrath procuring sin: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

42 ¶ And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath,

43 Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 ¶ And the next sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles:

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against

Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Observe here, 1. The apostle having ended his sermon to the Jews, the Gentile proselytes desired to hear more of this subject the next sabbath-day. Such to whom the word of God is savory and sweet, are not soon cloyed with it, but hunger after it. Neither do they loath the heavenly manna, because it is rained down frequently about their tents. Observe, 2. The apostle readily complies with their desire; he preaches again the next sabbath, when almost the whole city came together to hear the gospel. But this angered the devil, and occasioned great envy and persecution to the apostles. Learn thence, That a crowd of hearers, but especially of young converts, is very hurtful to satan, and doth usually stir up abundance of rage in his servants against the ministers of Christ. "When the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy." Observe, 3. The instrument satan makes use of, to carry on this fierce persecution against the apostles: "He stirred up the devout and honorable women, and chief men of the city." Learn thence, 1. That the power and successful preaching of the gospel, usually stirs up violent persecution against the preachers of the gospel. 2. That devout women, and great men, nourished up in ignorance, are oftentimes great opposers of the truth, and instruments of persecution; "The Jews stirred up the devout women, &c." Observe, 4. How the apostles with great boldness and courage acquaint them with their sin and danger; "Ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life." But how so? Not directly and formally, but interpretively and practically: they thought very well of themselves, no doubt, and judged themselves worthy of eternal life, but their practice pronounced them unworthy, and gave sentence against them, whilst they acquitted themselves; for this their contempt of the grace of the gospel, did declare them unworthy of eternal life. Observe, 5. The emblematical action performed by the apostles, to signify God's rejection of this miserable people; they shook off the dust of their feet against them." This signifies, 1. That the very earth was polluted where such refusers of the precious gospel did inhabit, and was therefore to be shaken off as a filthy thing. 2. That they were a base people, vile as the dust, and that as such God had now shaken them off. 3. That the dust of the apostles' feet there left might be as a witness against them, that the gospel had been preached to them. This action of shaking off the dust of their feet, was a dismal signification of a forsaken people. Observe, 6. With what joy and gladness the poor Gentiles entertained the glad tidings of the gospel: "when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." That is, when the Gentiles heard the good news, and understood their own interest in it, they rejoiced exceedingly, and as many as were by the Holy Spirit of God prepared and disposed to seek after eternal life, believed.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

That is, "The apostles and disciples, in this city were

nothing discouraged with the Jews' blasphemies, oppositions and persecutions, but were filled with spiritual joy that they had embraced the gospel, and went on courageously in the profession of it. Learn thence, that God's grace, and the church's joy, may and do increase under the greatest opposition and persecution of men. Infinite wisdom and sovereign power knows how to overrule the contradiction of sinners, for glory to himself, and good to his church.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together unto the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed.

2 But the believing Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.

Here we have an account of the fourth journey which Paul and Barnabas undertook in their travels, to plant and propagate the christian faith, and that was to Iconium. Where observe, 1. The unity of these two great apostles, both amongst themselves, and in the word of God; "They went both together into the synagogue." Oh how happy is it for the ministers of Christ to walk and work together in unity! to go hand in hand together in the service of the gospel: and with united endeavours promote the glory of God, and the interest of souls! Observe, 2. As their unity, so their great constancy in performing their duty, notwithstanding all their persecutors' fury and obstinacy; though "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles against the apostles," yet they continue preaching in the synagogues. Observe, 3. The great success with which it pleased God to crown the endeavours of the holy apostles, "a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed;" and that which doth constantly attend the success of the ministry of the word, namely, the envy and opposition of wicked men; they exasperated or made the Gentiles' minds evil-affected against their brethren.

3 Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Note here, 1. The manner of the apostles' preaching at Iconium: they speak boldly; that is, openly in the synagogues: and there, with great freedom and plainness of speech, asserted truth, condemned error, reprov'd sin, and denounced judgments against impenitent sinners; and this with a wise but convincing boldness; with a meek, but zealous boldness; knowing, that if they had not now been bold for Christ, they could not at the great day be bold before him. That minister that is afraid to speak and plead for Christ now, will certainly be ashamed to look him in the face then. A serious thought of this, when we are going to preach, will make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit. Note, 2. The time of their preaching at Iconium; it was

not a single sermon or two, *in transitu*, but "long time they abode speaking boldly in the Lord." A constant course of preaching is needful to root that word which one or two sermons oft leaveth loose; the end of the ministry is to build up, as well as bring in, and this is done by our constancy in preaching, and exemplariness in holy living. Note, 3. How God honored his word in the mouth of his ministers, confirming their doctrine by miracles; "He gave testimony by the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." The miracles which the apostles wrought, were the convincing cause of the credibility of the apostles' testimony.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them;

6 They were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about.

7 And there they preached the gospel.

Observe here, 1. How upon the preaching of the gospel, there follow great divisions; "the multitude was divided." Not that the gospel is the cause of division, but the occasion only, and that by accident too. The sacred institutions and ordinances of Christ, are not to be quarrelled with, or objected against, because, through man's corruption, they breed differences, distords and divisions. Observe, 2. How this division was the cause of persecution; "the city was divided; and an attempt was made to use the apostles despitefully, and to stone them." Lord! what ill usage have thine ambassadors met with from the first publication of the gospel! The unkind world has treated them as if they were not fit to live, driving them from place to place, and persecuting them from city to city. But observe, 3. The prudent care which the apostles use for their own preservation: "They were aware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe;" according to Christ's command, "When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another." Christ allows his ministers a liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. We must not expect safety by a miracle, when we have it in the use of means: yet probably it might not be fear, or desire to save their lives, which made the apostles flee; but because they were unwilling to lose time there, when their ministry was obstructed, and when they saw the gospel was rejected. Accordingly they fled to Derbe and Lystra, and there preached the gospel. From whence note, How greatly persecution, by scattering, tends to the increasing of the gospel. Thousands had never heard of Jesus Christ, if persecution had not driven the ministers of the gospel unto them. The wisdom of God well knows how to order those things which are designed for the prejudice, to tend to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 12.

8 ¶ And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked :

9 The same heard Paul speak : who, steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed.

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand up-right on thy feet. And he leaped and walked,

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Here we have an account of the fifth journey which the apostles Barnabas and Paul undertook in their travels to plant and propagate the christian faith ; and that was at Lystra, and Derbe. Here their first work was to preach the gospel ; which done, God honored Paul to work a glorious miracle for the confirmation of what they had preached. Where note, 1. The subject whom this miraculous cure was wrought upon, a man that was a cripple, not by accident, but by nature, from his mother's womb, and consequently had never walked. They that are lame by casualty, may possibly be relieved by art and industry ; but to cure one that is born lame, nothing less is required than a divine power : such defects as are from nature, can only be relieved by the God of nature. Note, 2. What an extraordinary spirit of discerning was at some times, and upon certain occasions, found with the apostles : St. Paul perceived that this poor cripple had faith to be healed ; that is, by that extraordinary gift of discerning spirits, which at this time the apostles had. The like had St. Peter also upon a special occasion ; (for this gift of discerning spirits, was not at all times found with the apostles) he discerned the hypocrisy and falsehood of Ananias and Simon Magus. The gift of working miracles, and the gift of discerning of spirits, were for a time conferred upon the apostles, for confirming their testimony, but are long since ceased in the church ; the reason of them ceasing, the gospel being sufficiently established and confirmed. Note, 3. The reality of this miracle ; it was not a lying wonder, but a real miracle : the man not only walked, but leaped for joy, to show, that he was perfectly cured, and thoroughly recovered. All the works of God, especially his miraculous works, are perfect : whom God cures, he cures effectually. Note, 4. What influence the sight of this miracle had upon the minds of the people of Lystra ; they ascribe the honor of this glorious miracle to their dunghill-deities, not to the true God : they pay their rent to a wrong landlord. Such was the blind superstition of these poor Pagans, that believing

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their gods were come down to them in the likeness of men, they called Barnabas, Jupiter, who was their chief god : and Paul, Mercurius, whom they accounted the messenger and interpreter of the gods. Lord ! how blind are the principles of corrupt reason in fallen mankind ; and how forcible is an evil custom, and a vain conversation received by tradition from our forefathers ! and how hard a matter is it to rectify such mistakes in religion, as time and general consent have rooted and riveted in the minds of men !

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people ;

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out.

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things ? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein :

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness,

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Observe, 1. How far Paganish superstition did transport and carry these men ; they come to the gates of the house where the apostles had lodged, and bring oxen with them trimmed with garlands of flowers, according to their heathenish rites, verily intending to offer sacrifice unto them. Learn, How forward the devil is to put honor, much honor, yea, over much honor, upon the ministers of Christ, when it is to contradict their doctrine, and gain advantage to himself by it. The devil laughed to see the blind superstitious Lystrians adore the apostles, and adorn them with the names of their heathen gods, hoping to make advantage thereby to himself. Observe, 2. With what indignation and disdain, detestation and abhorrence, the apostles reject this vile idolatry, telling them they were men of like passions, and in the same condition of mortality with themselves, and that their business was to turn them from their idols, which were mere vanities, and nothing compared with the living and true God, who made them and all the world. Learn thence, 1. That the worshipping of idols is the most

senseless and irrational vanity that ever the devil put into the heart of man. 2. That all good men hate idolatry in others, and abhor to be idolized themselves. Observe, 3. The description which the holy apostle gives of the true God, to draw the people off from worshipping idols: he styles him the living God, that made the glorious fabric of heaven and earth, the sea and all things therein. A good God, that giveth rain, and fruitful seasons, filling his creatures' hearts with food and gladness. Intimating, 1. That whatever concerns the happiness and felicity of man in this life is wholly derived from God. 2. That there is no nation or person under heaven, to whom God exhibits not the evident tokens of his goodness. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Observe, 4. This character which the apostles give of the former times, in which the heathen world lived; "in times past they were suffered to walk in their own ways;" that is, of old, God suffered all nations (except the Jewish nation) to walk in their own ways. The meaning is, he did not check nor stop them in their sinful ways and courses, as he did his own people the Jews. Yet we must not understand the apostles absolutely, but comparatively only; there never was any man, much less any nation, whom God suffered to go on in a course of sin without any stop. Every person, and every nation, has had the stop of the light of nature at least: but every nation has not had the stop of the light of the gospel, the stop of ordinances, the preaching of the word, the Holy Spirit; these the Jews had; but the Gentiles had not. In this sense God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he did not give them his word, his statutes, or his judgments, to show them his ways, or to hinder them in walking in their own ways; and this was a sore judgment: to suffer either nation or person to walk without control or check from word or rod, from ordinances or providences, in the ways of sin and wickedness, is a very dreadful and tremendous judgment: "in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."

19 ¶ And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Note here, 1. The ill requital St. Paul had for his excellent discourse to these blasphemous idolaters: *they stoned him to death*, to their own apprehension. The sharpest and keenest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and fall heaviest on the prophets of God. The devil will do his utmost to take away their lives, who are continually endeavouring the destruction of him and his kingdom. Note, 2. The great inconstancy and incredible fickleness of the common people, who one day would sacrifice to the apostles as gods, and the next day stone them to death as malefactors. What wise man will value himself by the applause of the multitude, and live upon the breath of the people, (that contingent judge of good and evil) which

rather attend the vain than the virtuous? But thus the common people dealt with Christ himself, crying one day, *Hosannah!* and the next day, *Crucify!* Note, 3. The miraculous recovery of the apostle, after his persecutors had stoned him, *He rose up and came into the city*: his recovery seems to be miraculous, else his stoning would have disabled him from walking. God had farther work for this great apostle to do; and therefore neither the wrath of men, nor the rage of the devil, could at that time cut him off.

21 ¶ And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.

Observe here, The great and good use which the apostle makes of his miraculous recovery; he is no sooner upon his legs, but he travels to Derbe, to preach the gospel: nothing do the faithful ministers of Christ more fervently desire and more diligently endeavour, than to lay out their lives, their strength, their time, their all for God, in his service, and to his glory. Yet observe farther, that notwithstanding the apostles were persecuted at Lystra, and Iconium, yet they returned thither again; having planted churches there, they go back to water their own plantations. Persecutions did not, could not make them forsake the plantations which they had newly made. It is not enough that the seed of the word be sown, it must be watered also, otherwise it will fade and wither, languish and die: but what did the apostles do, when they returned to visit their new planted churches? Answer, 1. They confirmed and established them in the doctrine of the gospel; they exhorted them to steadfastness and perseverance in their holy religion, and armed them against the fears of affliction and persecution, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; acquainting them, that they "must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." Afflictions, like the waters of Marah, must be met with in our way to the heavenly Canaan; there is no coming at the crown but by the cross; the head having been crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses. Christianity is the doctrine of the cross, which the ministers of Christ ought to let their people understand and know, that they may not "think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen them; but rather rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Here we have two farther instances and evidences of the

apostles' care of these now planted churches; and the first was to settle them in church order, ordaining elders in every church to be the guides and teachers of the rest, and this with fasting and prayer, in regard of the great solemnity and importance of the work. Hence learn, That ordination of ministers is a ministerial act; the officers of the church, and not the people, must separate and set apart, consecrate and ordain the persons who are to attend upon God and his church in holy things: when they, that is, Paul and Barnabas, had ordained them elders in every church. Learn, 2. That this solemn action ought to be very solemnly performed by fasting and prayer, "They ordained elders in every church, and prayed with fasting." The second instance of the apostolical care was, "their commending them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." That is, they committed them as young converts to the power of Christ, to strengthen and confirm them, and they committed them as their treasures to the care of Christ, to preserve and keep them. The greatest and best thing that the ministers of God can do, either present with, or absent from their people, is to commit and recommend them to the power and care of Christ, "who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia;

26 And then sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

This last paragraph of the chapter acquaints us with the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Syria, from whence they set out two years before, and where they were, by the prayers of the church, most affectionately recommended to the grace and assistance of God, for carrying on of that great work, to wit, the conversion of the Gentiles; which God had abundantly succeeded them in. Learn thence, that the best provision and preparation for any business, especially any business of importance, wherein the glory of God is concerned, is fervent prayer: thus the apostles here, being sent out from Antioch with prayer, they return with praise: the Lord granted them both safety and success: safety as to their persons, and success as to their labors. Observe farther, being returned to Antioch, they call the church together, and declare the great things which God had done with them, and by them; to the intent, no doubt, that the church might join with them in their praises and thanksgivings, who had before assisted them with their prayers and supplications

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them," that he might have the entire praise and glory from them. Observe lastly, The subject matter of that report which they joyfully made to the church of Antioch; namely, how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; that is, given them an opportunity to know, and ability to believe the gospel, which, like a door, was formerly shut to them, but now mercifully opened: and which was the far greater mercy yet. Almighty God did not only open the door of the gospel to them, by bringing his word amongst them, but he opened the door of their hearts to receive, and entertain it, when brought. The opening the heart and mind of sinners, effectually to receive the truths of the gospel, is the special work of the Holy Spirit of God. Lord! How insufficient are all external means, how excellent soever in themselves, to operate savingly upon men's minds, unless the Holy Spirit opens the understanding, as well as his ministers open the scriptures? He that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, opened the Gentiles' hearts to receive the doctrine of faith, and inclined their wills to the obedience of faith. Eternally praised be God for the gracious illuminations, the sanctifying impressions, the powerful assistances, and the quickening influences of the Holy Ghost, which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter relates the second journey of St. Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem, where the first and most famous general council was held for deciding of this question, whether the Gentiles converted to christianity, and living among the Jews, should be compelled to be circumcised, and observe the ceremonial law? which was determined in the negative, as the chapter informs us.

AND certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Observe here, 1. How very forward satan and his instruments were to sow the seeds of discord and dissension among the converted christians at Antioch: he takes the first opportunity to break the church in pieces, before it was well settled. O the restless malice of an envious devil against the gospel and the kingdom of Christ: "certain men came down from Judea," no doubt of the devil's sending, to disquiet the brethren, and distress the church. Observe, 2. The bone of contention, thrown in by the false apostles, to disturb the disciples of Christ, and that was, the urging the necessity of

circumcision, and imposing that part of the Mosaic yoke upon the neck of the converted Gentiles, excluding them from all hopes of salvation, unless they were circumcised; although circumcision was not commanded but only to the posterity of Abraham; and as to them also, had received its abolishment at the death of Christ. Observe, 3. With what warmth of zeal the meek apostle, St. Paul, opposes this antichristian design of introducing circumcision into the christian church; "Paul and Barnabas had no small disputation with them." He that could become all things to all men could not become sin to any man; he therefore enters the list with them, and earnestly contends for the faith of the gospel, urging, that by the death of Christ, we are freed from the whole ceremonial law; and that if circumcision were retained for the same reason, all the other ceremonies ought to be restored; for the circumcised person was obliged to observe the whole ceremonial law. Observe, 4. The prudent course which the disciples at Antioch took for the deciding of this controversy; they determined to send Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem, where, in a full and free synod of the apostles, the matter is debated, and finally decided. Learn hence, That the use of synods, or general assemblies of the bishops and pastors of the church, for deciding of controversies, for determining matters of faith, and directing to matters of practice, as it has been of ancient authority in the church of Christ, so it is of singular benefit and advantage both to ministers and people. Here Paul and Barnabas go up to the first synod, or general council at Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And, being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

Here note, 1. How that great but humble apostle, St. Paul, who had learned of his Master to be meek and lowly in spirit, was willing and content to be a servant and messenger of the church to the apostles, though he was nothing inferior to the chiefest apostles: "Paul and Barnabas went up to the apostles that were at Jerusalem." The more holiness a christian has, the more humility he has; humility is a great part of our holiness, it is an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; it is the great design of the gospel to make us humble, and keep us humble. Note, 2. With what great pleasure and satisfaction Paul and Barnabas make report of the success of their ministry, both at Phenice, Samaria, and Jerusalem, in the conversion of the poor Gentiles, and with what joy the report was received and entertained; "They declared the conversion of the Gentiles, and it caused great joy unto all the brethren." Thence learn, That nothing more rejoices the hearts of believers, than the hearing of souls brought home to God by converting grace, and thereby of the increasing and enlarging of the kingdom

of Jesus Christ: the Gentiles' conversion was joyful news to the saints at Jerusalem. Note, 3. With what great and due reverence and respect the church at Jerusalem received and entertained those laborious apostles, Paul and Barnabas, who were now sent unto them by the church at Antioch: "when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church:" that is, received with great veneration and regard for their indefatigable labors, in order to the Gentiles' conversion. Thence learn, That double honor and respect is certainly due and payable to such ministers of Christ as labor in the word and doctrine, and perform their duty to God and their people, with such zeal and application, as becomes persons of their holy character and profession. O how beautiful should the feet be of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things, even the joyful tidings of salvation, to the ears of a lost world?

5 But there arose up certain of the sect of the pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 ¶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

That is, some Jews of the sect of the pharisees, converted to christianity; thought and taught, that circumcision, and keeping of the law of Moses, were necessary to salvation, both to Jew and Gentile christians. Where observe, 1. How early the sound doctrine of christianity, was corrupted by erring teachers. Observe, 2. That the spirit of infallibility, with which the apostles were at that time certainly endued, did not prevent the rise of controversies and disputes in the first ages of the church, nor yet silence and put an end to such disputes when risen; much less can a pretended infallible head of the church, and an unesring judge of controversies, now do it. Observe, 3. That errors and false opinions, creeping into a church, are not a sufficient warrant to forsake the communion of that church. We find here, that in the most primitive and purest churches, even whilst the apostles themselves were upon the spot, dangerous errors crept into the church, and proved of such fatal and pernicious consequences, that the apostle wishes "they were even cut off, that thus troubled them." Gal. iv. 12. Separation then from a church is not warrantable upon any other grounds, than that which makes a separation between God and that church, which is either the apostasy of that church into gross idolatry, or, in point of doctrine, into damnable heresy, Rev. 2. We read of Christ's walking among seven golden candlesticks; and although some of them were sufficiently besmeared, yet were they favored with Christ's gracious presence. Observe lastly, The regular and prudential means used by the apostles, for the suppressing of this error which endangered the church's purity, and for quenching of this spark of dissension, which threatened the church's peace; "they gathered together at Jerusalem to consider of the matter," that is, to consult about it, and debate upon it. Where note, 1. That though the apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost, yet they made use of their own reason and judgment for the decision of this controversy; God's inspiration did not make the apostles' consolation

needless, either for satisfying themselves, or silencing gain-sayers.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us :

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.

Observe here, 1. The council assembled, the first and most famous council at Jerusalem, the council of councils : in other councils were holy bishops ; in this inspired apostles, who could not err in matters of faith. Observe, 2. The grand debate, or matter in controversy, namely, whether faith in Christ were not sufficient to justification, unless circumcision, and an observation of the ceremonial law, were joined with it. Observe, 3. The persons managing this debate : the three great apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. The first that speaks in the council is St. Peter : from whence the papists would infer, that he, as head of the church spake first ; and consequently that the pope, whom they will have to be St. Peter's successor, ought to have the first and chief voice in all general councils : but all this is but presumption ; for we shall find, at verse 13, St. James who was then bishop of Jerusalem, says *Hearken unto me* ; and, at verse 19, gives the definitive sentence, saying, *My sentence is* ; or thus I judge and determine. Had St. Peter said this, it had been a better proof of his pre-eminency, and made a louder noise than *Pasce oves*. Observe, 4. St. Peter's argument, to prove that the believing Gentiles might be justified and saved without circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law. The argument runs thus, "The way of justification for all men, both Jew and Gentile, is one and the same ; but Cornelius, a Gentile, with his whole family, by the blessing of God upon my ministry, was converted and justified without being circumcised, therefore circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, ought not to be imposed as necessary to justification and salvation." Observe, 5. How St. Peter strengthens his argument, by declaring that what was done to Cornelius and his family, was by the special command of God ; that God gave testimony of his approbation of Cornelius, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, by sending down

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the Holy Ghost upon him and his, as well as upon us and ours by purifying their hearts by faith. When note, 1. That purifying begins at the heart, not at the head, nor at the hands, but at the heart ; the head may be purified from false principles, the hands from false practices, and yet the heart remain unpurified, and continue a sink of pollution and uncleanness ; therefore we must purify our hearts as well as cleanse our hands ; yea, first begin with our hearts : "Having purified their hearts by faith." Note, 2. That as purifying begins at the heart, but must not end there ; so faith is the instrumental cause of our purification : the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin meritoriously, the spirit of Christ efficiently : but faith is the instrument in the hand of the Spirit, which apprehends and applies the merit of that blood for pardon and purification. Observe, 6. The character given by St. Peter of the ceremonial law ; he calls it a yoke, an intolerable yoke, too heavy to be borne by the Jews themselves, much more the Gentiles whose necks God never designed this yoke for, but for the seed of Abraham only. Now the law of-ceremonies imposed upon the Jews, might well be called a yoke, if we consider, 1. Their number and variety : they were a multitude of legal observances. 2. Their burden and difficulty ; the ceremonial law was a most laborious administration of a very painful service. 3. They were very costly and chargeable ; so many bullocks, rams, and lambs for sacrifice, that the misers of this age would think themselves undone with the expense. 4. Their insufficiency ; they were only shadows of good things to come, and could not make the observers of them perfect. Thus was the ceremonial law in itself a yoke and burden ; and the imposing of it upon the Gentiles is called a *tempting of God* ; that is, a dangerous provoking of him, because it never belonged to them, but to the Jews only, which yet were never able to bear it : that is, so to observe it, as to be justified and saved by it. Learn thence, That it was never the intent or design of God, that his people should be justified by their obedience to the ceremonial law ; but that being pressed with the weight, and pinched with the uneasiness of the yoke, they should seek unto Christ for righteousness and life, who alone was the fulfiller of it. There was this difference between the ceremonial and moral law : the ceremonial law was therefore good, because God commanded it ; the moral law was therefore commanded, because good : Christ, by his death, abrogated the former ; but by the obedience of his life, fulfilled the latter.

12 ¶ Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

The second speech made in this council, was that of Barnabas and Paul, who declared what miracles God had enabled them to work among the Gentiles, which was an evidence of God's approbation of the Gentiles, though uncircumcised, and that he was pleased with their administration among them. Hence they conclude very well, that the miracles wrought among the Gentiles, and the Holy Ghost descending upon the Gentiles, was God's approving testimony in the case, that the believing Gentiles, without circumcision, should find no less acceptance with God than the believing Jews, who were of the circumcision.

13 ¶ And, after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, *Men and brethren, hearken unto me;*

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophet; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up;

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Observe here, 1. The excellent order in which this grand debate was managed by the apostles; they do not break in upon one another, like proud magisterial talkers, so full of themselves, that they could not hear one another speak; but while one speaks, all the rest silently and attentively hear, no one stopping another by rude and uncivil interruption; "after they had held their peace, James answered." Observe, 2. The third and last speech uttered at this council at Jerusalem, was by St. James the bishop, and residuary apostle of the place: James said, "Hearken unto me." Where note, 1. He puts the council in mind of the special favor and grace of God in sending the gospel among the Gentiles, which he calls his *visiting* of them; and the design of God in that gracious visitation, namely, *to take out of the Gentile world a people for his name*. Hence learn, 1. That when God gives his gospel to a people, he gives that people a merciful and gracious visitation. 2. That God's design in visiting a nation with and by the gospel, is to take out of them, and from amongst them, a people for his name: that is, a people to call upon his name, a people to be called by his name, and a people to honor and glorify to advance and magnify his holy name. Note, 2. With what wisdom and caution St. James, the president of the council, proceeds in the final deciding of this controversy: he proposes a mean betwixt the two extremes, between those that would have all the Mosaic rites imposed, and those that would have none at all; designing by this

medium, that neither the Jews should be too much offended, or the Gentiles too heavily burdened; but brotherly love between both be maintained and preserved. Note, 3. How St. James, in deciding of this controversy, appeals to scripture, ver. 15. "To this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written;" not to the authority of the council: the holy canon of the scriptures ought to overrule all debates; this is the infallible judge, which all the councils are to appeal to, and none must presume to appeal from. Note, lastly, that the sum of the council's determination came to this: that circumcision should not be imposed upon the Gentiles, that the Gentiles nevertheless should so far Judaize or comply with the Jews, as to abstain from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood, and from fornication: all which are called indifferent things, because the three first were made so by the death of Christ, (after which there was to be no more distinction, either of meats or nations) and the fourth, namely, fornication, is reckoned amongst the indifferent things, because the Gentiles, though falsely, did think and speak it to be so: *non est flagitium adolescentem scortari*. To prevent therefore giving offence to the Jews, the Gentiles are required to abstain from these things, till time and fuller acquaintance with the gospel did better inform them concerning their christian liberty. From this example, learn that whenever differences do arise in a church about tolerable matters, and indifferent things, the nearest course to unity, and a charitable compliance, is for both parties to step towards, and meet one another; and what may be left at liberty without apparent prejudice to purity, to be left for peace sake.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

22 ¶ Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas, surnamed Barnabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23 And wrote letters by them after this manner, the apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia;

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no *such* commandment:

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul:

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things :

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Observe here, 1. That though the apostles were the infallible deciders, yet the elders, and the whole church, were unanimous consenters ; for no contradiction to this determination of this controversy did arise from any hand, but there was an happy acquiescency in this apostolical decision ; *It pleased the elders, and the whole church*. Observe, 2. The decrees of this synod, and the determinations of this council of Jerusalem, are committed to writing, and dispatched by unprejudiced messengers of their own to the church of the Gentiles, which was at Antioch. In which decretal epistle, 1. The false apostles, who started this controversy, are sharply reprov'd. 2. Paul and Barnabas, for their courage and constancy, are highly commended. 3. Judas and Silas are mentioned, to testify, that these decrees were not forged nor counterfeited. 4. That it would conduce much to their advantage to have these decrees duly observed. Observe, 3. The divine authority of these decrees, they were dictated and directed by the Holy Ghost ; *"It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us ;"* That is, it seemed good unto us, being directed and assisted by the Holy Ghost, whose inspiration and conduct we have followed, not to impose unnecessary things upon you. Where note, That the Holy Ghost is against imposing unnecessary things as necessary, making them the terms of church-communion. Here are four things imposed ; namely, abstaining from meats offered to idols, from blood, from fornication, and from things strangled ; but they are called necessary things. Two of them, to wit, abstaining from fornication, and from things offered to idols, were of a simple and absolute necessity ; the other two, namely, abstaining from things strangled, and from blood, were of an accidental and temporary necessity for the present time, and to avoid giving scandal to the weak Jews, till they should be better informed, and better understand their liberty in Christ ; for afterwards, St. Paul showed that no creature of God is unclean, but that unto the pure all things are pure ; 1. Tim. iv. 4. Tit. i. 15.

30 So when they were dismissed they came to Antioch : and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle :

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

Observe here, 1. With what fidelity and care Paul and Barnabas, and Judas and Silas, delivered this decretal epistle to the church of Antioch : That is, to the whole body of christians, believing Jews and Gentiles, then and there assembled ; *"When they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle ;"* That is, they called the whole church together and presented the epistle to them. Observe, 2. How this decree was received, namely, with universal joy and satisfaction. *When they had read, they rejoiced.* Every one in this christian council was a star devoted by his office to lead men to Christ ; but now, being gathered together, and condensed into a council, they become a most bright and glorious constellation, every way prepared, by the emanations of heavenly light to guide the church, in this obscure affair ; and accordingly their authority being so illustrious and commanding, and the decree so pious and prudential, their determination was received with universal satisfaction. *"They delivered the epistle, which when they had read, they rejoiced."* Observe, 3. What was the subject matter of their joy, and the special occasion of their rejoicing ; *They rejoiced for the consolation :* That is, for the great consolation which they had, in being free from the burthen of the legal ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, and appointed by God himself. From whence we learn, that liberty from tedious ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, much more a freedom from superstitious ceremonies of human invention, is a matter of great joy to the church of Christ. Lord, what numerous and burdensome ceremonies has the church of Rome imposed upon her blind votaries ? When in their worship they would be thought truly zealous, they are really ridiculous. They please themselves, perhaps, but cannot please their Maker ; all the acceptance they will find with God will be signified to them in that chiding question, *"Who hath required these things at your hands ?"*

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*.

33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Judas and Silas being prophets ; that is, persons extraordinarily inspired, and endued with eminent gifts for teaching and interpreting the holy scriptures ; they employed themselves at Antioch, confirming and building up their brethren in the faith of Christ. And after they had stayed at Antioch some time, they were with all kindness dismissed of the church there ; and Judas returned to Jerusalem, to acquaint the apostles with the reception which their letter had met with, and what obedience was readily given to their decrees.

36 ¶ And, some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they do.*

Observe here, The pious and prudential care, which St. Paul, who had planted churches, takes to visit and inspect them; that he might see and understand how they did thrive and grow in the knowledge of Christ, and in their sincere obedience to him. This great apostle had been sowing the good seed of the word of God: his next care is, to examine and inquire, whether the envious ones had not sowed tares in his absence. A minister's work, and a husbandman's business are never at an end, but run round in a circle: *redit labor actus in orbem*; after ploughing and sowing, there must be weeding and watering, before reaping and ingathering. Accordingly, St. Paul resolves upon the visitation here mentioned; "let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Here note, 1. The visitors, *Paul and Barnabas*. 2. They visited our brethren, both the elders and members of the church. 3. The action performed, *visiting*: the word imports a strict view, a most diligent and solicitous scrutiny, lest some errors in their absence might be crept into the doctrine and conversation of these new-planted churches. 4. The place where the visitation is to be held, "in every city where they had preached the word of the Lord:" where they had planted, they were obliged to water: and where they had begotten any to the christian faith, they thought it their duty to nurture and nourish them; and therefore thought there were presbyters no doubt in every city, yet Paul and Barnabas challenged to themselves a power of visitation, where they had personally preached. The apostles who first converted them, had a peculiar right to inspect and govern them. Converted souls, and planted churches, must be farther visited, observed, and watered. 5. The end and design of the visitation, *to see how they do*, and what they do; to take an account of their faith and practice. From the whole, observe, 1. A disease which the churches of the apostles own planting were supposed to be liable and obnoxious to; the purest of churches, and best of men in this military and mortal state, are apt to fall into distempers, witness this chapter: where we find the converted Jews nauseating the bread of life, and making it their choice to pick and eat the rubbish of the partition-wall which Christ had demolished; I mean circumcision, and the legal ceremonies, which though expired at the death of Christ, and by this time had an honorable burial, yet they attempt to pull out of their graves, and give a resurrection to them. Such distempers will be in the purest churches, if we consider the hereditary corruption which is in all by nature; the remains of it in those who are renewed by grace, and the endeavours of satan, to solicit these remains, and invite them forth into act and exercise. Observe, 2. The remedy resolved upon for preventing and healing of this disease: namely, apostolical visitation, and episcopal inspection, as the word signifies: the constitution of the church is such, that it cannot continue long in repair, without inspection and government. For though the universal church is secure, being built upon a rock: yet particular churches are liable to dilapidations;

and accordingly it is the duty of the governors of the church, frequently to inspect the authority of those who preach, to examine their doctrines, to inquire into their lives, to give rules for preserving order, and to censure those who neglect those rules, and disturb that order. In fine, we see the church of Christ must be governed; in that government there must be a superiority in some, and a subordination in others: superiors must frequently visit, and narrowly inspect the doctrine, the lives and manners, both of the ministers and members of the church, according to the practice and example of these two great apostles, Paul and Barnabas, who said, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city, where we have preached the word, and see how they do."

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

St. Paul having made a motion to Barnabas, in the foregoing verses, to visit and inspect the new-planted churches, Barnabas very readily complied with the motion, but desired that he might take his nephew John Mark along with him: this St. Paul consented not unto; because he left them at Pamphylia, and did not accompany them constantly in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. St. Paul was in the right; Mark's cowardice in leaving them when they undertook a tedious and hazardous journey to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, was a considerable objection against his present going with them, and weighed more than his consanguinity or nearness of blood to Barnabas. Accordingly, St. Paul insisted upon it, that he should not go now along with them; but this occasioned a very sharp and unhappy contention between them; insomuch, that those two great and good men parted asunder, Barnabas going to Cyprus, and St. Paul to Cilicia; but God overruled this evil for good, causing their separation to tend to the publication and farther spreading of the gospel. Hence learn, 1. How industrious, yea, ambitious the devil is to sow the seeds of discord and dissension amongst the members, but especially amongst the ministers of Jesus Christ; and how ready he is to take all occasions to divide them. These holy men of God, these great apostles, whose hearts were united in the work of God, and went hand in hand together, to plant and propagate the everlasting gospel, divide among themselves, and are parted by satan's policy and their own passions,

Learn, 2. That the holiest and wisest of men are but men; men of like passions with other men, and whilst on this side of heaven, not wholly free from passionate infirmities. These two great apostles verified here by their actions, what they affirmed before in their words, Acts xiv. 15. *We are men of like passions with you.* Learn, 3. That natural affections are apt to overweigh the wisest and best of men. Barnabas' great love to his kinsman here, prevailed contrary to his judgment. Learn, 4. That such is the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, that he knows how to bring good out of the greatest evil, and to overrule sin itself, and make it subservient to his own glory and the church's good. The Lord was pleased to overrule these divisions and dissensions betwixt Paul and Barnabas, for enlarging the kingdom of Christ, and for spreading the gospel farther into several nations. Observe lastly, How this reflection upon John Mark's faint-heartedness in declining the hardships and the hazards of the ministry, made him for the future more vigilant and valiant in the cause of the gospel, which occasioned that kind salutation which St Paul gives him, Col. iv. 10. Though sin be only evil, absolutely evil, and infinitely evil; yet the wisdom and goodness of God sanctifies the miscarriages of his saints, rendering them more humble for the time passed, and more watchful and vigilant for time to come. Thus it was with Mark here: he was humbled for his sin, and afterwards became profitable to St. Paul for the ministry, was his fellow-laborer; and the apostle gives a special charge to the Colossians to entertain him kindly whenever he should come unto them, Col. iv. 10. *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas; when he comes unto you, receive him.*

CHAPTER XVI.

THEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews, which were in those quarters; for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter gave us a sad account of a dissension and difference arising between Paul and Barnabas, upon which they parted; Barnabas sails for Cyprus; but what success he had there, the scripture says not. St. Paul goes through Syria, and Cilicia, confirming the churches, and doing good service for God in his peregrinations and travels. Here observe, That St. Paul and Silas, before they set forth to their work, were in a solemn manner (by prayer) recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, chap. xv. 40. And accordingly their labors are succeeded and blessed. Barnabas and Mark set forth for Cyprus; but we read not of any solemn recommendation of them by the brethren to the grace of God; not a word of

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any success they had in their work: teaching us the great necessity of fervent prayer to precede, accompany and follow the preaching of the gospel. Let ministers pray, and people pray, and engage all the prayers they can for the success of their ministry. Lord, let me steep that seed I sow amongst thy people in tears and prayers before I scatter it! Oh pour out thy Spirit with thy word, that it may be mighty through God for pulling down of strong-holds! Verily there is so little efficacy in ordinances, for want of fervent wrestlings with God in prayer. Observe next, The places which Paul and Silas in their travels first came unto; namely, Derbe and Lystra, where he finds young Timothy, whom he takes along with him, and breeds him up for a gospel minister, calls him his fellow worker, and companion in his travels. Note farther, The account here given of Timothy's birth and parentage; his mother Eunice was a believing Jewess; his father was a Greek, a Gentile; for which reason Timothy was not circumcised, because it was not lawful for the mother to have her child circumcised against her husband's consent. Now St. Paul intending to take Timothy along with him as his companion in preaching the gospel, that his ministry might be the more acceptable to the Jews, who knew him to be circumcised, because the son of an uncircumcised father, he takes him and circumcises him; but at the same time, Titus, who was a Gentile, both by father and mother, him he would not circumcise, neither suffering the yoke of circumcision to be laid upon the Gentiles, which God had never imposed, nor would he seem to countenance those who held circumcision necessary to salvation. Oh what an admirable pattern has this great and humble apostle left to posterity! he became all things to all men, and either used or refused indifferent things according as the use or disuse of them tended to the church's edification, and men's salvation. From whence learn, That in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, christians ought to act prudentially, and either do, or not do, some things of lesser moment, according as it may promote, and best conduce to, the church's peace and edification.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders, which were at Jerusalem.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The sense is this, That as Paul and Silas passed through the cities in Syria and Cilicia, they delivered to the several churches, as they passed along, the decrees to observe, which were ordained by the apostles and elders met in council at Jerusalem, whereby those churches were established in the faith, and many more every day converted unto Christ. Here note, 1. The messengers which delivered these decrees, Paul and Silas, with a special regard unto the church's unity and peace. Behold here an excellent pattern for christians in general and the ministers of the gospel in particular; as to maintain truth, so to procure, promote, and preserve the church's peace. Truth and peace which God has joined together, Zech. viii. 19. let none dare to put asunder. Note, 2. What it was that St. Paul here made the delivery of, the decrees made by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem: not the decrees made by the whole church, but

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by the ministers of the church only. None so fit to determine church differences, as church officers. Note, 3. To whom these decrees were delivered; namely to the churches as they passed along through the several cities; so many cities, so many churches: the whole company of christians within a city, and adjacent territory, were wont to be framed into a christian society or church, and several congregations made but one church. To set up churches against churches, to set up churches in churches, and to gather churches out of churches, has no precedent, no warrant, no countenance from any phrase of scripture, or practice of the apostles' times. Note, 4. The end for which these decrees were delivered; namely, to bring all the churches to unity and uniformity; to unity in judgment, and uniformity in practice, that they might all be of one heart, and one way. Learn thence, That unity and uniformity among the churches of Christ, is a thing to be earnestly desired and endeavoured: their unity is their strength and beauty both. Note, lastly, The success and fruit of the delivery of these decrees to the churches, ver. 4. *So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.* Where observe, A double blessing accruing to the churches, the one of confirmation, *So were the churches established*; the other of augmentation, *They increased in number daily.* Learn, 1. That as divisions do shake and unsettle, so unity and uniformity do establish and confirm the church of Christ: *So were the churches established.* 2. That it is a blessed thing to hear of the church's increasing, provided it be a way of addition, not division: to hear of the churches multiplying, by the number of converts increasing, is happy; but to multiply churches by breaking churches in pieces, is a sad multiplication. The Lord keep his church from such increases! and the Lord pardon those, who, for private interest, have so increased churches by gathering churches out of churches, pretendingly for greater purity sake, but really for worldly advantage sake! Doctrines crying up purity to the ruin of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity as well as for purity.

6 Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

Observe here, How the apostle and his companions had a desire and design to propagate the gospel in several provinces, but were forbidden by a secret impulse of the Holy Spirit. Learn thence, That the frustrating our attempts and disappointing our designs to preach the gospel to particular places, which we were purposed to go unto, doth sometimes arise from the Holy Ghost: the apostle intended to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not. The very journeyings of the apostles, and first preachers of the gospel, as well as their divine exercises, were all ordered by the wisdom and will of God; they might neither speak, nor act, nor walk, but according to divine directions: *They were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.* Thus Almighty God at pleasure orders the candle of the gospel to be removed out of one room into another, sends

it from one place and people to another, and accordingly ought all places and persons to prize it highly, and improve it faithfully.

8 And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And, after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

These words are a relation of a message from heaven unto St. Paul, to direct him in his preaching and publishing of the gospel, both as to the place where, and as to the persons to whom he was to deliver it. Where note, The manner of it; it was by a vision, *A vision appeared.* The time of it, it was in the night; the bringer of it, a man of Macedonia; the matter of it, help for the Macedonians, interpreted ver. 10, to be by the preaching of the gospel. Learn hence, 1. That no men in the world want help like them that want the gospel: of all distresses, want of the gospel cries loudest for relief and help; for by want of the gospel they want every thing that is worth having; they want Jesus Christ, who is revealed only by the gospel. They want communion with God; they want the comforts and refreshments of ordinances; and they will at last want heaven and salvation. But that which is most deplorable is this, those that want the gospel, though they want all these things, yet are they not sensible that they want any thing. Learn, 2. That the sending of the gospel to one nation, place or people, and not to another, proceeds from the determinate will and pleasure of Almighty God, and is the effect of his own free grace and good pleasure: stay not in Asia, go not into Bithynia, but come over into Macedonia; *Even so, Father, for thus it seemeth good in thy sight.*

11 Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight coast to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis:

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And, on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down; and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 ¶ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thya-

tira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

A farther account is here given of St. Paul's travels to preach the gospel; he departs from Troas to Samothracia, from hence to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia. Here on the sabbath day he went out of the city to the river's side, where a meeting-place for prayer say some, was built, and made use of as being remote from the noise and observation of the multitude. In this oratory St. Paul preaches to the women, they being both most numerous and most zealous, and God gives him the seal of his ministry in the conversion of Lydia. In which famous conversion, observe how particular the Holy Ghost is in relating the several circumstances belonging to it: she is described by her person and sex, a certain woman; by her name, Lydia; by her calling and employment, a seller of purple; by her city, Thyatira; by her pious disposition, she worshipped God. Her conversion is described, 1. By the efficient cause of it; the Lord opened her heart. By the instrumental cause of it; her attending to the things that were spoken of Paul. *Learn, 1. That the hearts of persons are naturally shut up, and fast barred against Jesus Christ. 2. That the opening of the heart to receive Jesus Christ, is the peculiar effect of the sovereign power, and omnipotent grace of God. 3. That till God opens the heart of a sinner, the preaching of the gospel little affecteth, though never so plainly and persuasively preached. That when once the heart is opened, the ear will not be shut, the person is truly attentive to the preaching of the gospel; The Lord opened Lydia's heart and she attended.* Observe next, The seal of her conversion and salvation received by her, *she was baptized, and her whole house.* It was the ordinary way of the apostles to baptize householders; not that they were sure that they were all believers, or that the family-governors could make them so; but it was their duty to devote all in their power to God, and to do their utmost to persuade: and God usually succeeded their endeavours. Note here, That the church of God, for near seventeen hundred years, never refused the baptizing of infants of believing parents, as being taken into covenant with themselves. Having then for so many ages been in the possession of this privilege, we may more reasonably require the anabaptists to prove by express scripture, that children were not baptized by the apostles, (when they baptized who's families, yea, whole nations, according to their commission, Mat. xxviii. 19.) than they can require us to prove that they were. Lydia and her house were baptized, says the text, that is, says the Syriac, Lydia and her children. Lydia, by reason of her faith in Christ, having a right to baptism, all her family, upon her undertaking to bring them up in the knowledge of Christ, were admitted to the ordinance with her. Observe lastly, A special fruit

and evidence of Lydia's conversion, she constrained the apostles with an amicable violence: by fervent entreaties and passionate importunities, to receive the civilities of her house. Converted persons have so much love to Christ's ministers, who were the instruments of their conversion, that they greatly desire to express it by all acts of possible kindness; *If ye have judged me faithful, come into my house, and abide there; and she constrained us*

16 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters much gain by sooth-saying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned, and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

19 ¶ And, when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the market-place unto the rulers,

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.

21 And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

23 And, when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

As we went to prayer, a damsel possessed met us. That is, as the apostles went towards the forementioned place of prayer, a damsel possessed with a devil, by whose inspiration she foretold future things, and revealed many secrets to them that consulted her, followed them, crying out, *These are the servants of the most high God, who declare unto*

us the way of salvation. Where observe, 1. That the father of lies sometimes speaks the truth, though never for truth's sake, but for his own advantage: here what the devil said was truth, but it was for devilish ends; he transforms himself now into an angel of light, to draw men on to believe him, the prince of darkness. Observe, 2. How St. Paul refuses the devil's testimony concerning himself, even when he spake the truth. The testimony of truth from the father of lies, is enough to render truth itself suspected. Observe, 3. The authority which St. Paul takes upon him in the name of Christ to dispossess the devil, and cast him out of the damsel: *Paul said, I command thee in the name of Jesus to come out of her: and he came out the same hour.* These words St. Paul uttered by the motion of the Holy Spirit, and relying by faith on the promise of Christ made by himself to his apostles, Mark xvi. 17. *That in his name they should cast out devils;* accordingly he received power from on high to cast out this darling devil. Observe, 4. How satan seeks to be revenged on Paul for dispossessing of him; he raises up an hot persecution, and soon casts him into prison, who had cast the devil out of the damsel. If we disturb and trouble satan, he will be sure to trouble and disturb us. Such ministers as make the greatest opposition against satan, must expect to meet with the greatest opposition from him. Observe, 5. Who were the instruments which satan stirs up to raise up this persecution against the apostles; they were the rulers and the rabble; *The multitude rose up, and the magistrates rent their clothes, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.* Thus were the holy apostles, and innocent servants of Jesus Christ imprisoned, and treated as the vilest malefactors, only for opposing satan, and seeking the welfare of mankind. Observe lastly, That love of money was the root of all this persecution. The damsel's masters perceiving that their gain was gone, and that she could help them to no more money by telling people their fortunes, the devil of discontent possessed them. They stir up persecution against the apostles, they cast them into prison, into the inward prison, and to make all sure, set them in the stocks.

25 ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

The apostles are here, by satan and his instruments, cast into prison; but observe, they have their prison comforts:

1. The joy of their hearts run out of their lips, they sang praises unto God, when their bodies were in prison, and their feet were in the stocks; these holy servants of God were not only meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful under persecution, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for him who had undergone so much indignity and shame for them. 2. They enjoy sweet communion with God in prayer; *At midnight they prayed, and the prisoners heard them:* no place can be improper, no time unseasonable for prayer. No prison can bolt out God, nor deprive us of our communion with him; prayer will get up to heaven in spite of all the opposition, either of hell or earth. Observe, 3. How sudden the answer, and how sensible the return of prayer was which the Lord graciously gave his suffering servants: *Suddenly there was a great earthquake.* This earthquake was an infallible sign of God's audience; that he heard them, and would stand by them. Observe, 4. The powerful efficacy of St. Paul's prayer; his prayer shook the heavens, the heavens shook the earth, the earth shook the prison, even to the very foundations of it. Prayer has a divine kind of omnipotency in it: *Vincit invincibilem et ligat omnipotentem;* "It overcomes God with his own strength." Observe, 5. What influence this earthquake had upon the jailor, it occasioned such a heart-quake in him, that to give himself ease, silly soul, he resolves to murder himself. Lord! how miserable are the consolations which the carnal and unregenerate world have recourse and fly unto, when trouble and distress take hold upon them? They run to an halter, to rid them of their trouble, having no God to go unto, and thereby plunge themselves into endless troubles, yea, eternal torments. Observe lastly, How kind the apostle was to his cruel keeper; he that hurt the apostle's feet in the stocks, hears the apostle crying to him in the midst of the earthquake, *Do thyself no harm.* Good men ever have been, and are men of tender and compassionate dispositions; not so solicitous for their own liberties, as for others lives. The apostles might have held their peace, and suffered the jailor to have slain himself, and thereby made their own escape: but they preferred the jailor's eternal salvation, before their own temporal liberty and happiness. Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, do thyself no harm.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas;

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved: and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

As if the jailor had said, "Sirs, now I see and acknowledge that the doctrine taught by you, is the truth of the eternal God; and he hath by this miraculous earthquake testified to me, that you are his true and faithful servants; tell me therefore, I beseech you, what I must do to attain

salvation?" They answer, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* That is, "if you and your family receive the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and regulate your lives according to it, you shall be saved." Here note, 1. That scorners and persecutors will become tremblers, when once God hath touched their hearts, and wounded their consciences with remorse for sin. The jailor here came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; trembling under a sense of his guiltiness, and falling down upon his knees to ask them forgiveness. Note, 2. That trembling sinners are always inquisitive, yea, very inquisitive persons: an awakened conscience will put a man upon inquiry, upon great and much inquiry, what he should do. Note, 3. That the chief thing which the trembling soul inquires after, is the business of salvation. *What shall I do to be saved?* Note, 4. That trembling sinners, and troubled souls, must be directed to Jesus Christ, and to faith in him, as the only way to obtain salvation by him; *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Behold how sudden and strange a change was wrought in this jailor! Before his conversion he was cruel, barbarous, and hard-hearted: now he is meek, merciful, and compassionate. He that before had beaten, imprisoned, and hurt the holy apostles' feet in the stocks, now pities them, mourns over them, and washes their stripes. Learn thence, that religion, and the grace of God, softens and mollifies the hardest hearts, sweetens the sourest natures, and changes the most barbarous and bloody dispositions. Behold this jailor, before his conversion, a savage persecutor, a tiger, and a vulture, like the den-niac in the gospel, exceeding fierce, but now dispossessed of his fury, and by grace turned into a lamb for meekness, and a dove for innocency. Observe, 2. How the jailor believing, he and all his house were baptized. The apostle denied not baptism, to the jailor's household, upon the jailor's sincere profession of the christian faith; yet no doubt he promised to use his utmost endeavours to bring them to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ. Observe, lastly, How improbable it is that the jailor and his household were baptized by dipping: we do not deny the lawfulness of baptizing by immersion, but we cannot assert the absolute and indispensable necessity of it. St. Paul, who was newly washed, and his sores dressed, occasioned by stripes, cannot be supposed either to go out himself, or to carry the jailor and his family in the dead of the night, to the river or a pond to baptize them; neither is it in the least probable, that St. Paul himself was baptized by dipping: See Acts ix. 18, 19. "He arose and was baptized, and when he had received meat, he was strengthened." The contest may convince us, that he was baptized in his lodgings, being sick and weak, having fasted three days, and being in a very low condition, partly by his miraculous vision, and partly by his extraordinary fasting; it was no ways probable that Ananias should carry him out to a river in that condition, to plunge him in cold water. Dipping then, surely, cannot be so essential unto baptism, as for want of it to pronounce the baptism of all the reformed churches throughout the world, to be null and void, as some amongst us do.

34 And when he had brought them

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into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

See here, a special evidence, and sweet fruit of the jailor's conversion; he brings the apostles, who were the instruments of his conversion, into his house; and having washed their stripes, refreshes their bowels: he sets meat before them. The truth of conversion will manifest itself in all thankfulness, and other tokens of respect towards those whom God has made the instruments of our conversion. True conversion changes men's thoughts of God's ministers, and causes men to love and honour those whom before they did disdain and scorn, persecute and hate. Observe, 2. How full of joy and spiritual rejoicing this new convert was, *he rejoiced.* Oh the sweet fruit of faith in Christ! namely, *peace* with God, and *joy* in the Holy Ghost. Conversion always puts men into a joyful state: rejoicing, spiritual rejoicing is the portion, the proper portion and the peculiar portion of converted persons, as it is sometimes their present portion: the jailor, upon his believing in God, instantly rejoiced.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, the magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, they have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out.

Observe here, 1. The willingness of the magistrate to release those innocent prisoners, the holy apostles, and what might be the probable occasion of it; namely, 1. The terror of the earthquake which affected them with fear. 2. The consciousness of their own guilt from the injurious dealing with the apostles, scourging them, and casting them into prison, only for casting a devil out of a possessed servant. The consciences of the vilest and worst of men, at one time or other, do make serious reflections upon them for their cruelty and injustice towards the ministers and members of Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. How the innocent apostles refused to be thus clandestinely released, and privately brought out of prison: they were unjustly laid in prison, and without any legal trial scourged and bound, contrary to the law and privileges of the Romans; and therefore the apostles insist upon their privilege, and would not be content with a sneaking clandestine dismissal, after such a public ignominious punishment, injuriously inflicted on them. Learn thence, that it is lawful to plead our right by law against unjust magistrates; and though we must not return evil for evil, yet we may use all lawful means for redressing and removing our own grievances. Thus did St. Paul here; yet more for

the gospel's sake than his own, lest the word of God should be despised with their persons.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house* of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.

Observe here, 1. What an awe God has over the consciences of men in general, and of magistrates in particular: they stoop to their prisoners, and beseech them to come out of prison, and depart from the city. The same can God do for all his servants who have been disgracefully and spitefully used. He can make their enemies become their benefactors at his pleasure, and their very persecutors shall be their deliverers. Observe, 2. That, as desirable as liberty was, those honest hearts chose rather to go without it, than to accept it upon dishonorable terms, either to the blemishing of their innocency, or to the aspersion of the gospel. Had they been privately released, they might have been publicly slandered, for making their escape by compact with the jailor, whom they had now made their own; therefore they stay in prison, till publicly discharged, and then they go forth; *the magistrates besought them, and brought them forth*. Observe, 3. The holy use which these good men made of their restored liberty: they *visit the brethren, and comfort them, and confirm them, and strengthen them in the faith of Christ*. Thus this chapter concludes with an account of what St. Paul did and suffered at Philippi; where he laid the foundation of that eminent church, to which he wrote his epistle, which bears the title of his *epistle to the Philippians*: wherein he mentions many fellow-laborers that he had there, in the work of the gospel, Phil. iv. 3. "Help those which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement, and other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life." It is an happy encouragement to the ministers of Christ, when they are all found helping and not hindering one another, strengthening each other's hands, and not saddening one another's hearts; but by united endeavours, in public preaching, and private inspection, promoting the grand design of the gospel; namely, to fear God, honor their superiors, love one another. So be it.

CHAP. XVII.

This foregoing chapter acquaints us with the travels of St. Paul to Lystra and Philippi, and also with the hard usage which he met with at both places: at Lystra he cured a cripple, and was stoned for it; at Philippi he cast out a devil, and was scourged and imprisoned for it. Thus bonds and afflictions did abide him wherever he went. To

do good, and to suffer evil, is the portion of the ministers and members of Christ.

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

3 Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

This chapter begins with St. Paul's travels to Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia, where this apostle gathered a famous church, unto which he wrote two excellent epistles. Coming to Thessalonica at this time, he went, (as his manner was) into the synagogue, not into a private house. As Christ taught daily in the temple, so did his apostles teach in the synagogues; it was the false apostles that crept into houses, and led captive silly women, as St. Paul complains, 2 Tim. iii. 6: Truth seeks no corners, but rejoices to be publicly seen: besides, the gospel was first to be preached to the Jews, and upon their rejection, to the Gentiles. Accordingly the apostle takes the advantage of the synagogue, where all the Jews were gathered together, and preaches to them Jesus and the resurrection. Where observe, the first grand point which the apostle insisted upon, was to demonstrate that this Jesus whom he preached, was the long expected Messiah. Now to prove this, he produces the prophecies of the Old Testament, and compares them with what was both done and suffered by Christ, making all things as plain and obvious to the eye of their understanding, as if they had been seen with their bodily eyes, satisfactorily demonstrating to their judgments, that Jesus is the Christ. Observe, lastly, how the gospel is like the sea, what is lost in one place is gained in another; St. Paul is sent away from Philippi, but by that means the gospel was preached at Thessalonica. God overrules the motions of his ministers, and the madness and malice of their persecutors for the furtherance and spreading of the gospel.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas: and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few,

5 But the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

9 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, these that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also :

7 Whom Jason hath received : and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, That here is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

The foregoing verses acquaint us with St. Paul's preaching at Thessalonica in the Jewish synagogue, as also with the argument he insisted upon ; namely, that the Messiah, according to the scriptures was to die, and rise again from the dead ; and that Jesus, whom he preached, was that Messiah. Now these verses before us acquaint us with the different success which this sermon had upon the hearers : some believed, others were blinded ; some were converted, others enraged. Oh the different and contrary effects which the word has upon its hearers ! opening the eyes of some, closing the eyes of others ; to some it is a savor of life unto life, to others the savor of death. First, to whom the clearest light is afforded, who boldly shut their eyes against it, and say they will not see, how just is it with God to close their eyes judicially, and say they shall not see ! Observe, 2. How the apostle specifies, and particularly declares the success which the preaching of the gospel had upon the people at Thessalonica, both good and bad. The good success in the fourth verse ; some (though few) of the Jews were converted, but many proselytes, and not a few of the Gentiles, and a considerable number of the devout women and honorable matrons of the city. The bad event and success is recorded, ver. 5. The unbelieving Jews called the lewd fellows of the city together into a confederacy with them, and raised a persecution against the apostles. Thence note, 1. That the progress and prosperous success of the gospel ever was, is, and will be a grievous eye sore to the devil and his instruments. Note, 2. That the worst enemies which the gospel ever met with in the world, are the unbelieving Jews. Here, *the Jews which believed not*, engaged the rabble on their side, who are the fittest tools to raise persecution against the ministers of Christ ; "the Jews which believed not, took certain lewd fellows of the baser sort and assaulted, &c." Note, 3. That the devil's old method for raising persecution against the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, has been, and still is, to lay the most grievous crimes falsely, to the christians' charge. Here the apostles are charged with innovation and sedition, with *turning the world upside down*. Thus afterwards, in the primitive times, whatever calamities came upon the state and kingdom, whatever commotions or tumults did arise in nations, presently christianity was blamed, and instantly the christians were cast to the lions ; whereas it is not the gospel

but men's corruptions, which breed disturbance ; as it is not the sea, but the foulness of the stomach, that makes the men sea sick. Note, how mercifully and marvellously the Lord delivered the apostles, Paul and Silas, at that time, out of the hands of their persecutors : "They sought them in the house of Jason, but found them not." The devil now missed of his prey, for the Lord hid the apostles here as he did the prophets before, Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer. xxxvi. 26, having more work and farther service for them to do. The wise husbandman doth not commit all his corn to the oven, but reserves some for seed. Note, lastly, that as the panther, when it cannot come at the person, will fly upon and tear the picture in pieces ; so these enraged persecutors, finding that the apostles were escaped their hands, fall foul upon Jason, who had entertained them, and drag him before the rulers and magistrates, charging him as an abettor of treason. Yet observe, how God overruled the hearts of these rulers, that they did offer no violence to Jason, but only took security of him, for his own and others appearance before them, when called for. "Thus the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of tribulation, and to make a way for escape."

10 ¶ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea ; who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed ; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came *thither* also, and stirred up the people.

Observe here, 1. The pious and prudential care which the brethren took of the holy apostles, and the means which they used for their preservation : "they presently sent them away into Berea." The devil seeks nothing so industriously, as the lives of the ministers of the gospel (they making the greatest opposition to him and his kingdom ;) but God finds out ways and means for their preservation, to reserve them for farther works and future service : "the apostles came by night unto Berea." Observe, 2. St. Paul makes again the Jews' synagogue his preaching-place, here at Berea, as he had done before at Thessalonica, ver. 2. and did afterwards at Athens, v. 17. Oh how close did the apostle keep to his commission, to preach Jesus Christ ! first to the Jews, and to wait upon them with the repeated tender of the gospel, till they put it farther from them, and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, before he turned to the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The honorable character which the Holy Ghost here gives of these Bereans : *They were more noble than those*

of Thessalonica; that is of a more ingenious, mild, and pliable temper of mind; they were not so possessed with prejudice and obstinacy against the gospel; they did not meet it with rage, but thought it worthy their search and serious inquiry; for which they are styled *more noble*. Thence learn, that to be of a teachable temper, and attractable towards the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the best sort of gentility and nobleness. The Bereans were better bred, and better descended than the Thessalonians, yet not by civil human dignity, but by spiritual and divine dignation; God gave them this preparation of their heart, and made them to differ from their neighbours: "these were more noble than those of Thessalonica." Observe, 4. What it is these Bereans are so highly commended for; namely, for *searching the scriptures*. Where note, 1. That the scriptures were then in the vulgar tongue. 2. That, as they were in their own tongue, so the laity had them in their own hands. 3. That the common people did read them, and heard them read, searched, and examined them; and yet were so far from censure and blame, that they met with commendation for it from God himself. From the whole, note, that a diligent reading of, and daily searching into the holy scriptures, is a duty incumbent on all those in whose hands the scriptures are, or may be found. These christians at Berea searching the scriptures, were a noble pattern for all succeeding christians to imitate and follow. Observe, lastly, how the inveterate malice of the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica pursues the apostles as far as Berea, ver. 13. "When the Jews at Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." As Christ sends his ministers, so the devil sends his messengers from place to place: and as the ministers of Christ are never weary of his service for the good of souls; so persecutors are restless, they will compass sea and land to harass and drive the faithful ambassadors of Christ from city to city, and, if it were in their power, to banish them out of the world. Lord help all thy faithful ministers so execute this piece of holy revenge upon satan, that we may be even with him for all his malice and spite against us. Oh let us endeavour to do all the possible service, and the uttermost good we can, wherever we come.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the de-

vout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, what will this babbler say? other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, may we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing.

The prudential care which the believing brethren took of the holy apostle, was observed before, ver. 10. His life being in danger at Thessalonica, they sent him to Berea; being pursued to Berea, they send him to Athens, and detain Silas and Timotheus: not that St. Paul was more fearful than the other two, but more useful, and consequently more hateful to the unbelieving Jews, and his life more sought after. To preserve which, his friends use an innocent policy; they make as if they sent him away to sea; but really he goes on foot to Athens: "Immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea." Hence learn, that human policy and prudence may lawfully be made use of, in subserviency to divine providence. It was good policy and great providence in the apostle and his friends, to look one way and go another; to look towards the sea, and go to Athens by land. There is a wise and holy subtlety in foreseeing the evil, and hiding ourselves: a serpent's eye is a singular ornament in a dove's head; piety without policy is too simple to be safe, and policy without piety is too subtle to be good: the sagacity of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove, both may and ought to go together. Observe, 2. The place which the apostle comes to, Athens, a sovereign city, a famous university; the eye of Greece, as Greece was reputed the eye of the world: yet, notwithstanding all their scholarship, they were ignorant of God in Christ; all their learning could not teach them to attain any saving knowledge, but both city and university are wholly given to idolatry. Learn hence, that human learning alone can never teach any place or people the divine truths of Christ and his gospel. 'Tis a good handmaid, but a bad mistress; 'tis good in itself, but when corrupted by a busy devil, and a base heart, it degenerates into the worst instrument in the world: for *corruptio optimi est pessima*: "The sweetest wine makes the sourest vinegar." Observe, 3. The temper of the men of Athens described to us; They

were great and greedy news-mongers, they spent their time in telling and hearing news of any sort. All which was the effect of an itching curiosity; a disease which has descended from age to age, from place to place, from person to person, occasioning a sinful expence of time, which can never be recalled; the neglect of our necessary affairs, which can never be redeemed; spreading false stories of others, and provoking displeasure against ourselves. O how wise and happy were it, if we inquired after news, not as Athenians; but as christians, that we might know the better how to manage our prayers and praises for the church and nation. Observe, 4. How the wickedness and idolatry of this place did vehemently affect this great apostle: *his spirit was stirred, when he saw the city full of idols, and wholly given to idolatry.* Their idolatry put him into a *paroxysm*, as the word signifies; his mind was in a concussion by contrary passions: he was affected first with sorrow and grief, that a city should be so learned, and yet so blind; next with indignation and anger, at the superabounding idolatry of that knowing people; and lastly, with fervent zeal, and an ardent desire to undeceive them, and better inform them. In order to which he takes all opportunities, both in the city, in the synagogue, and in the market-place, to preach to the people, to dispute with the philosophers, particularly the Epicureans, who denied the providence of God, and the immortality of the soul; who placed all their happiness in pleasure, and held nothing to be desirable but what delighted their senses. A doctrine which made them rather swine than men. And also with the Stoics, who placed all happiness in want of passion, denied all freedom of will, and ascribed all events to an absolute and irrevocable *faith*; and having disputed with them, he preaches Christ crucified, risen, and glorified, to them; but he seemed a babler to them, and a setter forth of strange gods. Whence learn, That Christ and his doctrine, the gospel, was the grand stumblingblock both to Jew and Gentile, learned and unlearned. St. Paul took most pains to convert Athens, yet here his success was least, though it was a learned university, where, no doubt, were many men of excellent natural accomplishments. From whence we may infer, that, if moral dispositions, and improvements of natural abilities, had fitted men for grace, we might have expected the greatest number of converts at Athens, where many were mocking but very few believing. Surely the apostles' plantations there were different, not so much from the nature of the soil, as from the different influences of the spirit. Observe, 4. How wonderfully the overruling providence of God concerned itself for the apostles' preservation here at Athens; they hauled him away to their high court of judicature, which sat upon Mars-hill (so called, because the temple of Mars stood upon it) where the most learned men assembled, to hear and determine what new god was to be worshipped. Here note, 1. How the providence of God brought St. Paul to a public place to preach in, Mars-hill, where was a confluence of all the people, and a congregation of the most learned Gentile philosophers: this gave the apostle a mighty opportunity for the service of preaching. And, 2. note, how tenderly the apostle was treated in this cruel court; although this court had condemned Diagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates himself, for undervaluing their gods, and bringing in new deities; yet the apostle's life is not only spared by these judges, but they speak candidly

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and kindly to the apostle, and court him to gratify their curiosity, by informing them of this novelty, which they were so inquisitive after, and desired to hear more of his divine discourse. Thus the Lord eminently shows how the hearts of men are in his hand, and that without his permission all the bitter enemies of his church shall not move a tongue, nor lift a finger against any of his ministers and members.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

As if the apostle had said, "Ye men of Athens have a great number of gods, whom ye ignorantly worship: the God therefore whom ye acknowledge not to know, and yet profess to worship, is he that I preach unto you: for as I passed up and down in your city, beholding your altars and images, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Here observe, 1. The light of nature discovered: the altar is inscribed TO A GOD. The true God of the Jews was an unknown and uncertain God to the wisest of the Gentiles. Learn, that some discoveries of God may be made, even by the light of nature: these Heathens, who had nothing but the dim light of nature to guide and direct them, do yet own a God and acknowledge a worship due unto him, by the erection of an altar. Observe, 2. The darkness of nature declared; the altar though erected to a God, yet it is a God unknown. Thence learn, that natural light, in its most elevated and raised improvements, can make no full and saving discoveries of God: the true God was but an unknown God, even to the wisest of the Heathens, to the men of Athens, who were the most famous, in their day, for the severest wisdom and gravity.

24 God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped, with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find

him, though he be not far from every one of us :

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Here begins St. Paul's famous sermon to the men of Athens ; in which the first thing that occurs to our observation is, how the preacher doth adapt and accommodate his discourse to the capacity of his hearers, as also to their sentiments and opinions, his auditory consisted of philosophers, particularly of Epicureans and Stoics : the former, instead of a God and a wise providence to make and govern the world, brought in *fortune* or blind chance, to bear all the sway. The latter, though they acknowledged a God, yet introduced a rigid fatality, as superior to the Deity, denying to man all freedom and liberty of choice. Accordingly, St. Paul addresses himself, first, to prove a God and a providence, to the exclusion both of *faith* and *fortune* : and then, Secondly, from the very nature and notion of God, he infers the folly and absurdity of their Pagan superstition. Observe, next, the apostle's arguments to prove the being of a God, and a providence : 1. From the works of creation : " he made the world and all things therein, he giveth life and breath and all things." The whole universe is his work, and he planted the earth, and replenished it with inhabitants. The invisible God is made visible in his creatures, and the being of God demonstrated from the formation of a world of creatures ; from the formation of man in particular, " In him we live and move, &c." Here are three great benefits enjoyed by human nature ; life, motion and being, all derived from God, and demonstrating the being of God. 1. Life : this is valuable above all blessings, because it renders us capable of enjoying all blessings. 2. Motion : A great mercy, but little considered : how uncomfortable would life be without it ? Were we staked down to the earth, as trees ; or did we move by the constant law of nature, as the sun and moon do move, it had been a favor beyond our desert : but to move as we do at pleasure, with choice and ease, to help ourselves and to assist others, is at once a demonstration of God's being, and an evidence of his bounty. 3. Being : this is essential and necessary to none but God. To us it is an act of divine favor ; and this being is a mercy : then being what we are, is a double mercy, that we do not creep and crawl upon the earth as worms and toads, but are built high upon the earth, with wonderful wisdom and care ; and that a soul which is an immortal and an eternal being, inhabits within us ; a being which shall continue when heaven and earth shall be consumed. Observe, next, the apostle having proved the being of a God, next demonstrates the certainty of a divine providence ; " He hath determined the times that are fore-appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. That is, God has, as it were, chalked out, and drawn a line, where the bounds and habitations, whither the dominions or possessions of men should be extended, and where they shall be confined. The common blessings of God are not dispensed without a special providence ; and the special providence of God, in upholding, disposing, and governing of the world, doth as much prove the being of a God, as a general creation of it : every hour's preserva-

tion is virtually a new creation, and both of them sufficient demonstrations of the divine being and bounty. Observe, lastly, The duty which the apostle infers on man's part, from all this goodness and bounty demonstrated on God's part : " That they shall seek the Lord, and find him who is not far from every one of us." It is the duty of all men to follow after God ; that God hath made man should draw man after God : inasmuch as we are his offspring, (ver. 29.) our hearts should spring and rise up to him in love and thankfulness : as the rivers, because they come from the sea, go back thither ; so we, being the offspring of God, and derived from him, should be always returning to him. And if it be the duty of all men to follow after God, because they have natural life, breath, and motion from him ; how much more should the new creature, who has a spiritual life breathed into him, and bestowed upon him, follow hard after God, in the enjoyment of whom his present happiness and future felicity doth consist : to follow God in his way, and to propose God as our end, contains the sum of all duty.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not think that the God-head is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by heart and man's device.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle quotes one of the Heathen poets in this his divine discourse. This poet was Aratus ; what he attributes to Jupiter, St. Paul applies to the true God ; we are his offspring. Where note, For the honor of human learning, and the lawfulness of making use of it in our sermons, the Holy Ghost is pleased three several times in the New Testament, to make mention of the Heathen poets ; of Aratus here, Acts xvii. 28. of Menander, 1. Cor. xv. 33. of Epimenides, Tit. i. 12. Truth is God's wherever it is found : as a mine of gold is the king's, in whose ground soever it is discovered. Observe, 2. The force of the apostle's argument, seeing we are God's offspring, that is, seeing God is our Creator, we cannot suppose him to be the workmanship of our hands, as an image of gold, silver, or stone is ; and consequently, how irrational it is for a man to adore an image made by his own hands, for, and instead of God. Learn, that there is a strong propensity and inclination in the heart of a man to the sin of idolatry. Secondly, that the sin of idolatry is not only a very great sin, but a very unreasonable and absurd sin ; it is not only sacrilegious, but silly, for a man to worship his own workmanship, and to fall down upon his knees to the work of his own hands.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

That is, " though God of his infinite patience hath long borne with the world lying in darkness and ignorance ; yet now by causing his gospel to be preached to all nations, he calls and invites them to repentance, to forsake their idols, and serve the true God." Here observe, 1. The censure of the past times, they were times of ignorance, and God winked at them, or overlooked them ; not that God did allow or approve of their idolatry, but did not destroy and cut them off for the same ; nor afford them such helps and means as

now he did, having brought his gospel among them. Observe, 2. The duty of the present time declared, *to repent*. This is a commanded duty, and an universally commanded duty; *now he commands all men, every where to repent*. From the whole, note, 1. That times of Paganism were times of ignorance. 2. That it is an unspeakable misery to be born and brought up in such times. 3. That to live impenitently in times of knowledge, is a sin that God will by no means wink at. 4. That the great purpose and design of the gospel, wheresoever it is sent and preached, is to invite men to repentance; *now he commandeth all men every where to repent*.

31 Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that man whom he hath ordained*; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

These words are an argument or motive to enforce the foregoing duty of repentance; God requires every man, every where, and that now immediately, to forsake their idols and sinful ways; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Christ Jesus, of which he hath already given assurance, by raising him from the dead. Where note, 1. A judgment to come asserted: he (that is, God) will judge the world; he that hath now an observing eye, will hereafter have a rewarding hand. Note, 2, That there not only is a judgment to come, but the day or time of it is determined and fixed; *He hath appointed a day*. As the precise time of Christ's first coming was fixed by an unalterable, though unknown decree, so is also the time of his second coming; that not knowing the hour, we may be upon our watch every hour. Note, 3, That as the day of judgment is determined, so the person of the judge is also constituted and ordained. *He will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained*. This is an act of justice to our Saviour, that he, having humbled himself to take our nature, should, as the reward of his humiliation, judge that world which he died to save. And an act of kindness towards us, that he should be our Judge, who took upon him our nature, and had so much love to us as to die for us. Had we leave to choose our own judge, what choice could we make better for ourselves, than that man whom God hath ordained? Observe, 4. The assurance which God has given us of having Christ for our Judge; namely, his raising him from the dead: but how doth that assure us of Christ being our judge? Answer, our blessed Saviour, when he was in the world, often declared that he was appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead, and appealed to his resurrection as the great proof of what he said. Now when Almighty God did accordingly raise him in such a wonderful manner, (as we know he did) what is it less than God setting his seal to his commission, and openly proclaiming him to be the Judge of all the world? Observe, 5. The manner of this judgment, or the measures which this Judge will proceed by at the great day; and that is, according to righteousness. *He will judge the world in righteousness*: not in rigor and severity, taking all the advantages that power can give him; nor yet arbitrarily and upon prerogative, but according to known laws: nor yet

partially with respect of persons, but every man's doom shall depend upon the holiness or unholiness of his heart and life. Farther, our Judge will candidly interpret men's actions, and make the very best of things that the case will bear; principally looking at the sincerity of men's intentions, and making all favorable allowances for their failings and infirmities that can consist with justice; and will distribute his rewards of happiness and glory to good men in the other world, in proportion to the measures of their difficulties and sufferings, which they met with here in this world. Now, having this high and full assurance of a judgment to come, let us seriously believe it, daily expect it, and duly prepare for it; let neither profit tempt us, nor pleasure allure us, nor power embolden us, nor privacy encourage us to do that thing which we cannot answer at the great tribunal. When St. Paul preached of judgment, Felix, though a Pagan, trembled at the sermon: Lord! what shall we say to those worse than Pagan infidels amongst ourselves, who ridicule a judgment to come, and cry beforehand, God will judge me! yea, God will damn me! Also! unhappy men! he will judge you sure enough, and damn you soon enough, if a serious repentance prevent it not.

32 And, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 ¶ Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Here we have the success of St. Paul's sermon declared; it was various and different, some of his hearers derided, others doubted, and a few believed; those that derided and mocked, it was very probable, were the Epicureans, who denied that the world was either created or governed by God: as also that there were any rewards or punishments for men after death; therefore they ridiculed St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The sublimest doctrines, and most comfortable truths of the gospel, are matter of derision and mockery to sensual minds. Those that doubted, probably were Stoicks, who did own the resurrection and a state of rewards and punishments in another world; and therefore for obtaining better satisfaction to their doubts, desired to hear the apostle again discoursing farther of that matter. Those that believed are few indeed, if no more than are here mentioned, which are Dionysius and Damaris, with some others; Dionysius was a famous person, one of the great council, mentioned ver. 19. whose conversion probably might afterwards have a great influence upon many others; and it was no small honor and advantage to the gospel, to be owned by such an honorable person as this Dionysius was; not many wise, not many noble were called: blessed be God that any were, that any are, that any of the great ones of the world stoop to the sceptre of Jesus Christ, and pay their homage and subjection to him. Thus ends the apostle's divine sermon at the famous university of Athens, which yielded few, very few converts to St. Paul: for we read of no church founded here, as we

did before at Philippi, and in the next chapter at Corinth; what reason can be assigned but this, that these grave philosophers, profound scholars, venerable senators and citizens, who had a name for wisdom throughout the world, were too wise to be saved by the foolishness of preaching? As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the wisdom of God in the gospel is accounted foolishness by the wise men of the world; according to that of the apostle, 1. Cor. i. 21. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

CHAP XVIII.

AFTER these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

The foregoing chapter acquainted us with the small success which St. Paul found of his ministry at Athens; upon his preaching Jesus and the resurrection there, the philosophers and wise men mocked and derided him. If natural dispositions and abilities had fitted men for grace, we might have expected the greatest number of converts at Athens, where many were mockers, but very few believers: hereupon St. Paul leaves Athens, and goes to Corinth, a famous city in Achaia; where he meets with more encouragement and better success; for here he gathers a famous church unto which he wrote two epistles, under the title of the first and second epistles to the Corinthians.

2 And found a certain Jew, named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

3 And, because he was of the same craft, he abode with them; and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tent-makers.)

The apostle being now come to Corinth, where he was altogether a stranger, and wanting money for his subsistence, the providence of God directed him to the house of Aquila, and Priscilla; who being of the same trade with himself (*tent makers*) he works with his own hands to maintain himself, that he might not be burdensome to others. Here observe, 1. The occasions of Aquila's and Priscilla's coming to Corinth, with whom St. Paul lodged. The Roman emperor Claudius had banished them from Italy and Rome, ver. 2. *Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.* Thence note, that a wicked world is soon weary of the saints of God, and longs to worm them out of their cities and societies, never considering that their own preservation from ruin is for the saints' sake: as the alleys in a garden are watered for the sake of the flowers, which otherwise would lie dry. Observe, 2. That the apostle had learned

a trade, tent-making, before he was called to the ministry, and he wrought upon it occasionally after he was a minister. The most learned among the Jews did always learn some handicraft trade, it being a tradition amongst them, "that he that doth not learn his child to be a trade, teaches him to be a thief." So that although their children were designed for students, yet they learned some trade. Accordingly St. Paul having learned to make tents, (much used in those hot countries, by soldiers and others to keep off the violence of the weather) he works at Corinth upon his trade for his own subsistence. Men separated to the ministry of the gospel, may, upon an exigency, labor for their living; not but that the apostle had power and sufficient warrant to challenge maintenance for his preaching, as he often intimates in his epistles, but there was not yet any church in Corinth to maintain him; and when there was, they were mostly of the poorer and meaner sort of people, and he would give them a convincing demonstration, that he sought not theirs, but them; he demands therefore no maintenance, lest it should hinder the success of his ministry; but being of the same trade with Aquila and Priscilla, he takes up his lodging with them at Corinth, and works at their trade.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And, when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads; *I am clean*: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Observe here, how vehemently desirous the holy apostle was to plant a christian church at Corinth, and to bring the Jews of Corinth to embrace the gospel; *he was pressed in spirit, and testified*; that is, reasoned with them, with great vehemency and earnestness of affection, as well as with great judgment, concerning the Messias. Observe, 2. That the Jewish synagogue at Corinth was the preaching-place that St. Paul made choice of, hoping to gather the beginnings of his christian church out of the converted Jews; *He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath-day.* Still the apostle kept to his commission, to preach the gospel, first to the Jews, and afterwards, upon their rejection, to the Gentiles. Observe, 3. The blasphemous opposition which the Jews made to the doctrine of the gospel; *they opposed themselves, and blasphemed*; that is, they opposed his doctrine, reviled his person, and blasphemed Christ, whom that apostle preached. Observe, 4. How the holy apostle clears himself of the blood of those Jews, whom he had now preached the gospel unto; he said, *your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean.* The faithful ministers of Christ shall never have the blood of a perishing people laid to their charge; they having warned them of their damnable state, discovered the way of life and salvation to them, deliver and

clear their own soul: whilst the people which they preach to, die in their sins, and for their sins.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.

9 ¶ Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Observe here, 1. That the opposition which St. Paul met with, while he lodged in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, moved him to change his quarters, and betake himself to a new lodging; he goes into the house of Justus, by birth a Gentile but a Jewish proselyte, whose house joined nigh to the synagogue where St. Paul's preaching-work lay, to such as would be willing to hear him. Observe, 2. The good success which the apostle had in his preaching at Corinth; Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his household were brought to believe, and were baptized: after whose example, many of the people in Corinth believed also. Rulers and great men are like looking-glasses in the places where they live, by which many dress themselves. Observe, 3. That notwithstanding this good success which St. Paul had at Corinth, he seems through human frailty, to be possessed with fear, and under an apprehension of danger from the Jews, and accordingly had thoughts of leaving the city; against which fears God antidotes him with a gracious promise of his presence with him: "be not afraid, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Hence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's saints and servants are sometimes under sad and slavish fears, and prone to be discouraged; when they meet with difficulties in the way of their duty. 2. That the promise and assurance of God's gracious presence with them, will raise them up above all their fears, and be a sufficient encouragement to them, for their abiding in any place, and amongst any people, let the difficulty or danger be what it will: "be not afraid, for I am with thee, and none shall hurt thee." Observe, 4. A farther encouragement given by God to the apostle to continue his ministry still at Corinth; *I have much people in this city*; that is here are many souls, whom I design effectually to call and bring home by thy ministry; accordingly the apostle continued his ministry among them a year and six months. Learn hence, That although

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the ingratitude and perverseness of a people do sadly discourage their ministers, and tempt them to remove from them, yet God encourages them to their duty; that for the malice of some, the salvation of others may not be neglected. 2. That no opposition may discourage the ministers of God in the way of their duty; God's servants must not suffer themselves to be outdone by the devil's slaves, but bear down all opposition made against them with patience and joyfulness: and notwithstanding all the malicious opposition made by the Jews against the apostle, yet did he continue a year and six months to preach at Corinth: Christ had a great harvest a ripening in that city, to be reaped by the apostle's ministry; and being encouraged with the promise of his protecting presence, he committed himself to the divine care, and the Lord both preserved and succeeded him.

12 ¶ And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection, with one accord, against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat.

13 Saying, this *fellow* persuaded men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it: for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them to the judgment-seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat: and Gallio cared for none of those things.

Observe here, 1. How St. Paul taking heart from the foregoing promise made by God unto him, goes on courageously in the work of his ministry at Corinth; but the unbelieving Jews were so enraged against him, that they combined together as one man, and *with one accord, made insurrection against Paul*. Where note, What great unity and unanimity there is amongst wicked men, the devil's friends; he well knows that his kingdom could not long stand if it were divided. The unity of all societies is their strength. Observe, 2. They accuse the apostle before Gallio the deputy, for persuading men to worship God contrary to the law of Moses. Who would not think but that these men were truly pious, virtuous and good, who were so zealous for the worship of God according to the law? And yet were they wicked men, and fiery persecutors. There is a noisy religion in the world; some men think, by crying, The church, The church, and by pleading loud for the worship of God, as established by law, to atone for all their immoralities;

praying is good, hearing and receiving the sacrament is good, if they be joined with holy walking; but if otherwise, the howling of wolves is, as acceptable to Almighty God, as the prayers of those men who call Christ Master, and the church mother, but do not the things which they have commanded; yea, the very dogs which follow them to the public assemblies, shall as soon find acceptance as themselves, if they do not obey him whom they pretend to adore. It is no matter what church a wicked man is of, for it is certain he can be saved in none. Observe, 3. What low and mean thoughts Gallio had, and all persons prejudiced against religion and the power of godliness have, of sincere christianity: *if it be a question of words and names*, says Gallio. As if he had said, "do not trouble me about the niceties of your religion, decide such questions among yourselves; for I will be no judge in such matters." The great men of the world little care to trouble their heads about the matters of religion; they look upon it only as a matter of notion and speculation: whereas it is not a *speculative science*, but a *practical art of holy living*. And accordingly, like Gallio, they care for none of these things. Observe lastly, That although this Gallio had no kindness for christianity; yet God made use of him as an instrument, at this time, to preserve and screen St. Paul from the rage of his enemies, inasmuch, that *he drove his accusers from the judgment-seat*: thus God performed his promise to Paul, *suffering no man to hurt him*; but causing Gallio the governor to defend him, who his enemies were in hopes would have destroyed him. Lord, how happy and wise is it for thy servants to commit the care of themselves to thee in well doing! If we with the purity of intention, concern ourselves for thy glory, thou wilt certainly take care of our safety; or if any danger should come, danger itself shall do us no harm.

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria: and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not:

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

22 And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time

there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia, and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

A farther account is here given of the laborious travels of the great apostle St. Paul; namely, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Antioch, &c. Where observe, 1. That St Paul having continued a year and a half at Corinth, and planted a church there, which yet soon after sadly degenerated; he determines now to sail to Ephesus; and accordingly at Cenchrea, a haven near to that city, *he shaved his head for he had a vow*, that is, the vow of a Nazarite, which he, (that is, Aquila say some, St. Paul say others) had before taken upon him for a time, whereby he was obliged to abstain from wine, and shaving his head, and touching of the dead. But having now accomplished his vow, he shorn his head, and returned to the common way of living; where the wisdom and moderation of this great apostle, in complying in different things, is to be noted and imitated. "To the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews:" He willingly complied with their weakness, to show that he was no contemner of their law; for which reason he caused Timothy to be circumcised, and purified himself in the temple at Jerusalem. And behold the success of this his compliance; for by gratifying the Jews in this condescension to the prescription of the law, he brought over very many of them to the faith of Christ. Let not any suspect this for a sinful compliance with the Jews, in observing a ceremony which the gospel had abolished, nor censure it for a low and mean stoop in so great a man to the humor of the people; for though the ceremonial rites died with Christ, yet they were a long time in burying, and the Jews were indulged in the observation of them till they came to a clearer sight of the christian liberty: accordingly, the apostle yielded to them for the present in indifferent things, without dissimulation or blame. Observe, 2. The apostle being now come to Ephesus, he taught in the synagogue of the Jews, and reasoned with them: where we may note, both how close the apostle kept to his commission, in first preaching the word of life to the Jews, and also the fervent love which he bore to his own countrymen, whom, though he had suffered all manner of indignities from, yet doth he give them precept upon precept, line upon line; and, with an unwearied diligence, dispenses the word of life and salvation to them. Observe, 3. Our apostle stays not long at Ephesus, but hastens to Jerusalem to keep the feast there: namely, the feast of the passover; not that he thought himself obliged to observe the feast, or any of the antiquated ceremonies; but because of the vast concourse which he knew would be at Jerusalem at the time of the feast from all quarters, and which would give him an opportunity to make Christ known to a great multitude. The ministers of the gospel, without the imputation of vain glory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon an opportunity of dispensing the word to a numerous auditority, in hope that casting the net among many, they may inclose some. Observe lastly, the incessant care, indefatigable diligence, and unwearied pains of this great apostle, in travelling from place to place, and at such great distance, to preach the everlasting gospel to lost sinners: from Ephesus he sails to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Galatia and Phrygia,

See how the care of all the churches was upon him, and how he labored more abundantly than they all. Lord, what a pattern is here of ministerial diligence and faithfulness! What pains did St. Paul take, what hazards did he run, in planting and propagating the gospel of Christ! In labors more abundant, in sufferings above measure! Well might he say, *I am able to do all things through Christ that strengthens me.* And blessed be God, the same power that assisted him, stands ready to succour us; and if ever he calls us to extraordinary service, he will come in with more than ordinary strength.

24 ¶ And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace.

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that, publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

The first thing here observable, is, how the wisdom of God provided for the several churches, that in the absence of one powerful preacher, they were supplied with another; when the providence of God called St. Paul from Ephesus and Corinth, it brought Apollos thither; so that what Paul planted, Apollos watered. The judicious Calvin, upon the place, piously admires the providence of God over his church, in not suffering it to be without a settled minister; but upon the removal of one to raise up another. Observe, 2. How admirably qualified Apollos was for the work of the gospel, and excellently fitted and furnished for the places he was called to, Ephesus and Corinth, famous for philosophers and orators; accordingly he is a man of ravishing eloquence, who, by his profound knowledge in the sacred scriptures, was both apt to teach the truth, and able to maintain it. Hence learn, That scripture knowledge is the choicest qualification, and highest commendation of a gospel minister; *Apollos, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*: without this, he can never truly and savingly make known and discover Jesus Christ; without this he can

never rightly divide the word of truth; without this, he can never convince gainsayers, either gainsayers in opinion, or gainsayers in practice; without this, he can never instruct the people fully in their duty, nor declare to them the whole counsel of God. Observe, 3. The great humility of Apollos: although he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, yet he did not disdain farther instruction. Those that are most knowing, if humble, are most sensible of their ignorance. The knowledge of the best, while they are on this side of heaven, is capable of improvements. Apollos knew much, yet Aquila and Priscilla farther enlightened him, so that he knew more. An humble man will be content to learn of the meanest woman. These poor tent-makers, Aquila and his wife Priscilla, catechize the great Apollos, and add something to the treasure of his knowledge. Observe, 4. The place where Apollos preached; in the Jewish synagogue, ver. 26. *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue.* It was a custom among the Jews to allow a liberty for learned men, though no priests, to teach in their synagogues. Thus Paul, though of the tribe of Benjamin, and not of the tribe of Levi, was permitted to preach in their synagogues; as we read throughout this book of the Acts. In like manner we find Apollos here preaching in the synagogue; *Non ut abens auctoritatem, sed scientiam* says Estius: taking the advantage of that indulgence which the Jews gave him in their synagogues, to preach and spread the doctrine of Christ. Observe lastly, That this Apollos afterwards became an eminent authorised preacher in the church of Corinth, and is called St. Paul's helper and brother; and when he came to Corinth, was so eminent, that he proved the head of a sect and faction; *One saith I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos*; and here at Ephesus he mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND it came to pass that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples.

2 He said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter informed us how Apollos was employed at Corinth: the beginning of this acquaints us how St Paul spent his time at Ephesus. He finds there twelve disciples, he catechizes them, lays his hands upon them, and God confers the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Here observe, 1. The question put by St Paul to the twelve disciples: *have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* He doth not mean in its sanctifying operations, but in its miraculous gifts; as speaking with tongues, the gift of prophecy, and the gift of healing. Observe, 2. The disciples answer, *we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*; not that they were ignorant of the essence or person of the Holy Ghost, but had not heard of the effusion of the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; for it was a received opinion among the Jews, that after the death of Haggai, Zachary, and Malachi, the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of prophecy, departed from Israel, and they never heard that he was returned, or of his being given anew with his miraculous gifts. Observe, 3. How the apostle sets them right: they tell him they were baptized into John's baptism: the apostle tells them, that John's baptism and Christ's were the same for substance, and had both the same end, though they differed in some circumstances. The disciples of John believed in Christ to come, the disciples of Jesus believed in Christ as already come, and were baptized in that faith; and the ordinance sealed unto both the remission of sins: yet it being essential to christian baptism, to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, thereby professing ourselves to be buried and risen with Christ; and John's baptism having not this, when the disciples heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; that is, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which is the essence of christian baptism. Observe, 4. How the apostle lay his hands upon these disciples, to confirm them in the faith they were baptized into; whereupon the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were immediately conferred on them, and they spake divers tongues, which before they understood not, and were endued with the gift of prophesying; that is, of declaring things to come, and interpreting the writings of the prophets that they might be fit to teach and instruct others. Hence learn, that at the first planting and propagating of the gospel, the wisdom of God thought fit to furnish the preachers and dispensers of it with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, to qualify them for, and to give them assurance of the success of their ministry; and also to assure those, whom they preached unto, that their doctrine was from heaven, Almighty God never setting the seal of his omnipotency to a lie. Such miraculous gifts are long since ceased in the church, the cause of them, and occasion for them, being long since ceased.

8 And he went into the synagogue,

and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul;

12 So, that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

St. Paul being now come to Ephesus with a design to stay there for some considerable time, as his manner was, he enters into the synagogue, and preaches the gospel first to the Jews, and this for the space of three months; but when, instead of embracing the gospel, they opposed it, blaspheming Christ the author, and the apostle the dispenser of it, and vehemently contending with him for preaching the gospel, (which some conceive he calls his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*, 1 Cor. xv. 32,) he left the Jews and their synagogue, separating the christians that were in Ephesus from them whom he daily instructed in a certain place, called *the school of Tyrannus*. Here note, 1. The vehemency of St. Paul's affection to his own countrymen, the people of the Jews, notwithstanding all the opposition they made against his doctrine, and the virulent reproaches which they cast upon his person; he continues to preach in their synagogue at Ephesus, for three months, without ceasing, thereby keeping close to his commission, which was to preach the gospel first to the Jews, and upon their rejection of it, to tender the word of life unto the Gentiles. Note, 2. As great an apostle, and as faithful a minister as St. Paul was, yet he wanted to see the success of his labors: many of his hearers at Ephesus believed not his word, but were hardened under it. The same sun that softens the wax, hardens the clay: the same doctrine of the gospel becomes the savor of death unto some, which is the savor of life unto others. Woe be unto that people, who, by their habitual hardness, through their actual resisting the impressions of God's word, to provoke the Almighty do superadd judicial hardness of heart unto them, making their sin to become their punishment. Note, 3. How upon this opposition which St. Paul met with in the Jewish synagogue, he leaves it, and retires to a more private place, the school of Tyrannus, where he had more freedom and less opposition. Learn hence, That such places of public worship, where

nothing but contradiction to the pure christian doctrine can be met with, may be lawfully withdrawn from. The apostle separates himself and the disciples from the Jews' synagogue, where he had preached three months, meeting only with contradiction to his doctrine, and blasphemy against his dear Redeemer. Note, 4. How it pleased God to confirm St. Paul's ministry at Ephesus by his working miracles; and the miracles he wrought were *special*, that is, very extraordinary, insomuch that even handkerchiefs or aprons having but touched St. Paul's body, and being brought unto the diseased, became a miraculous means both to cure diseases, and cast out devils. Thus according to our Saviour's promise, his apostles did greater miracles than himself, John xiv. 12. not greater in regard of the manner, but in regard of the matter of them: Christ wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power; but the apostles wrought theirs in the name, and by the power of Christ; yet it ought to be observed and considered, that although it pleased God, at the first plantation of the gospel by the apostles to confirm christianity by many special miracles, (as new set plants are well watered, till they have taken fast rooting) yet that church which wants miracles may be a true church: because, 1. There is no promise made in the scriptures to the church for her perpetual enjoying the gift of miracles. That promise, Mark xvi. 17. *These signs shall follow them that believe, &c.* was only a temporary promise. 2. We are forbidden to expect miracles, John iv. 48. and forbidden to trust to miracles without scripture, or to regard such miracles as are wrought to confirm any doctrine that is contrary to scripture, Deut. xiii. 3. because the miracles of the last times are declared to be the signs of Antichrist. 2. Thess. ii. 2. 13. From all which it follows, that miracles are no infallible note of the true church, as the papists would make it; who also produce St. Paul's handkerchiefs here, and St. Peter's shadow, Acts v. 15, as a warrant for their superstitious relics; but the text assures us, it was God that wrought the special miracle, not St. Paul, nor his handkerchiefs, but God by his hand. The miracles in the church of Rome, pretended to be wrought by the relics of saints and martyrs, are no better than lying wonders.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leapt on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

19 Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

Here observe 1. That we read not of any in the Old Testament, that were bodily possessed with devils and evil spirits; but in the New Testament, we meet with many, both in our Saviour's time, and also in the apostles; to the intent that the power of Christ might more signally appear in their ejection and casting out. Observe, 2. How some of the Jewish exorcists (like our jugglers) who made it their trade to wander up and down, to get a livelihood by pretending to cure diseases, and cast out devils, seeing what great miracles Paul had wrought in the name of Jesus, attempt to cast a devil out of a possessed man, by using the same name, though in Jesus they believed not: but satan was so far from obeying them, that he made the possessed man fall violently upon them, and wound them. Thence learn, 1. That satan scorns all human attempts, as weak and impotent, and is conquered only by a divine power. *Jesus I know, but who are ye?* Learn, 2. That the devil would gladly be God's ape: the Jewish jugglers would by all means imitate the apostles in casting out devils; accordingly they use the name of Jesus as a charm; but saying the same words with the apostles, signified nothing without exercising the same faith and grace. These exorcists soon found that words without faith would not work to cast out devils, and that Christ would not give power to his name, when used as a charm. Learn, 3. That the devil, by God's permission, has power over those, who profane the name of Christ: satan here was too hard for these conjurers, he rushes upon them and masters them, tears their clothes, wounds their bodies, and had not God restrained him, had unavoidably destroyed them. Satan's malice is infinite, but his power is limited and bounded. Lord, abate his power, since his malice cannot be abated! Observe, lastly, how this execution of divine vengeance wrought wonderfully for the conviction and conversion both of Jews and Greeks, ver. 18. *Many believed, and came and confessed their sinful deeds.* And as an evidence of their detestation of their former faults and follies, they make a bonfire of all their magical books; burning so many of them; as the learned say, the price amounted to eight hundred pounds. Thus these conjurers evinced themselves to be real converts, by plucking out their right eye, and cutting off their right hand; that is, sacrificing their bosom and best beloved lust and corruption. Thence learn, that there is no better evidence of the truth of a person's conversion, than cheerfully to part with a very profitable and pleasing lust.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; *but* he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth:

26 Moreover, ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands:

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Observe here, 1. How angry the devil grows at the success of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses; there we read how the whole college of diabolical conjurers were brought over, by the apostles' preaching at Ephesus, to burn their books, and leave their wicked course of life. Hereupon the devil bestirs him, and raises a persecution against the apostle. Those that will disturb satan in the quiet and peaceable possession of his kingdom, shall be sure to meet with trouble and disquiet from him. Let not any of the saints of God in general, nor any of the faithful and zealous ministers

of Christ in particular, expect any long continuance of their outward tranquillity, and peace in this world, where they are every day up in arms against satan, and meditating the ruin of him and his kingdom; for which he will certainly seek revenge. Observe, 2. The instruments which the devil employs to raise the storm and persecution against the apostle, namely, Demetrius, the silversmith, and his craftsmen; they looking upon St. Paul as one that impaired their profit, and spoiled their trade of making silver shrines for Diana's temple, by his crying down the worship of idols. "But what were these silver shrines made for Diana's temple?" *Ans.* The temple of Diana was at that time one of the seven famous structures of the world; and the silver shrines made by these silversmiths, were certain models or images of this temple, wherein their idol goddess Diana was set forth; which shrines or portable temples, all the people of Asia carried about with them, to stir up the more their own devotions towards this idol: so that this shrine making must needs be a very gainful trade, when all Asia was addicted to this superstition. No wonder then that Demetrius, upon the sight of the loss of his gain, made an horrible outcry, and sets the city in an uproar: for carnal men, whose gain is their god and their godliness, account themselves undone when their god Mammon is in danger; if you take away their gods, what have they more? Learn hence, That gaining and maintaining of men's livelihood, are mighty temptations to carnal men, to use impious means for supporting superstition and idolatry. Observe, 3. The arguments which Demetrius used to stir up the people against the apostle; and they are three: 1. The plea of profit, *By this craft we get our gain*; if this man's doctrine obtain, our trade will quickly fall under disgrace, and die. This was the most cogent, the most pungent argument, that could be used; for although an argument drawn from our own interest is not the most weighty, yet usually it is the most persuasive. 2. The pretence of piety; not only are we like to lose our livelihood, but our religion too: *our Goddess Diana* will be despised, her temple profaned, and her worshippers scorned. This easily heated the rabble's blood, put the multitude into a ferment, and caused an hideous outcry for two hours together, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. 3. The plea of the antiquity and universality, and the common consent of all worshippers; *Diana whom all Asia and the world worshipped*. As if Demetrius had said, "What! Shall we suffer the temple of Diana to be set at nought by the preachments of this babbling Paul; a place so magnificent for structure, being, some say one hundred, others two hundred and twenty years a building; so renowned for the oracles of the gods, so magnified for the image that fell down from Jupiter, so honored by the oblations of the Asiatic potentates, and crowded with the devotions of the Ephesians, and admired throughout the whole world? Lord! what danger was the life of the great apostle now in! How did this popular tumult threaten the present destruction of him and his companions, Gaius and Aristarchus! Now is supposed to be the time when the apostle says, *That after the manner of men he had fought with beasts at Ephesus*; and this probably the deliverance which he gratefully commemorates in 2 Cor. i. 10. *Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us.*

30 And when Paul would have enter-

ed in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, *Great is Diana, of the Ephesians.*

Observe here, 1. The undaunted courage of St. Paul in the cause of Christ; he resolves to venture his life, by going into the theatre, there to make an apology for himself and his companions, and in defence of the christian religion: he did not account his life dear unto him, but was willing not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus. Observe, 2. How the divine providence is to be admired, and awfully adored in directing to ways and means for the apostle's preservation in this time of imminent danger. God now made use of the advice, not only of the apostle's fast friends, the disciples, but of his foes, that is, certain of the people of Asia, who were now become his friends to dissuade him from going into the theatre, lest he should have been torn in pieces by an outrageous rabble of insolent idolaters, in this unaccountable uproar. It is all one with God to save by many or by few, by friends or by foes; for he can make enemies become benefactors at his pleasure, and command deliverance for his people, sometimes without means, sometimes by weak and contemptible means, sometimes by improbable and unlikely means, sometimes by opposite and contrary means: Lord, who would not trust thee in a time of imminent or impendent danger, who hast all created nature at thy beck, the hearts of all in thy hands, the tongues and hands of the most unruly and outrageous in thy power; and wilt deliver thine in six troubles, and in seven, and there shall no evil touch them? thou canst and wilt deliver as often as thy children need deliverance, and save them from evil, even when they are in the midst of trouble. Observe, 3. How the rabble at Ephesus treated Alexander, being in the theatre; the place where they judged offenders, and cast them to the wild beasts; they would not suffer him to make any defence for himself, or the people of the Jews. This Alexander is supposed by many to be that Alexander, who St. Paul afterwards told Timothy did him much evil; if so we find here, he was first a proselyte, then a professor, next a confessor, almost a martyr; yet,

after all, an apostate, making shipwreck of the faith for which he was excommunicated by the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. *Of whom Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto satan.* This excommunication of the apostles probably was the provocation that occasioned him to do so much mischief to the apostle, of which he complains, 2 Tim. iv. 14 *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; of whom be thou aware also.* Learn thence, 1. That it was possible for a glorious professor to turn a furious persecutor. This Alexander did not only withstand the apostle's person, but his doctrine also; for which being excommunicated, he sought revenge. Learn, 2. That excommunication not only angers, but enrages impenitent men; so that instead of being reformed, they seek revenge: yet must the censures of the church be executed and inflicted, without either fear or favor.

35 And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?*

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

27 For ye have brought hither these which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open; and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

4 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Observe here, 1. The instrument which God stirs up to stem the tide, and to stop the stream of this hair-brained assembly; and that is, *the town-clerk*; who was always present at their public meetings, and registered all their city-acts. His presence and eloquence God made use of to appease this tumult, to preserve the apostle, and to dismiss the assembly. Observe, 2. The town-clerk's oration was full of

craft, and policy, of fraud and fallacy! for he tells the multitude, that St. Paul and his friends are against images only that were made with hands; whereas theirs was not such, but one that fell down from Jupiter. It was his duty, by office, to appease the rabble's rage, with reason and authority; he ought not to have done it fallaciously. But we must consider he was a Pagan, and his design was only to still the people; accordingly, he encourages the credulous multitude to believe, what the crafty priests had insinuated into them, that the image which they worshipped was not made with hands, but fell immediately down from heaven: hoping thereby to gain more veneration to their idols, and get more pounds into their own purses. Thus God made use of the worldly (and somewhat) wicked eloquence of this heathen to preserve St. Paul. Observe, 3. How God opens the mouth of this man to vindicate the apostle's innocency and his companions also. *These men, saith he, are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.* It is very likely, that the apostle and the christians in Ephesus had in wisdom asserted christianity, without saying much against Diana, which would but have enraged the multitude; much less did they offer any violence either to her temple or her image. Here note, that although the apostles were great enemies to these men's idolatry, yet did they offer no outward violence to their idol-temples neither to demolish them, or deface any image in them: they well knew that such a work of public reformation was not their business, but the magistrates; therefore they endeavoured by preaching to cast idols out of the people's hearts, but not by violence to throw them out of the temple. Thus ends this chapter, with the account of St. Paul's marvellous, if not miraculous preservation at the city of Ephesus; where being surrounded with difficulties and dangers on all hands, yet being found in the way of his duty, and in the work of his Master, he escapes all perils. Safety evermore accompanies duty: when we are in God's way, we are under God's wing; preservation and protection we shall have, if God may thereby be more glorified; but sometimes danger is better than safety! a storm more useful than a calm: and blessed be God for the assurance of his promise, that all things, be they mercies or afflictions, comforts or corrections, dangers or deliverances, life or death, all shall work together for good to them that love God, and are found steadfast in their obedience to him, Rom. viii. 28.

CHAPTER XX.

AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece.

3 And *there* abode three months, and when the Jews laid wait for him as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus, and Trophimus.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

The foregoing chapter acquaints us with a very great and imminent danger, which the apostle escaped at Ephesus, where he had like to have been torn in pieces by those heathenish idolaters; which gave him occasion to say, 1 Cor. xv. 31. *That after the manner of men he had fought with beasts at Ephesus.* In this chapter we find, that the apostle, yielding to the fury of his persecutors, prudently withdraws from Ephesus into Macedonia; yet not so much for his own safety, (for he was willing to die Christ's sacrifice, if he might live no longer Christ's servant) as for the church's future advantage, that the disciples in Ephesus might be no farther persecuted upon this account. Hence learn, that the ministers of the gospel may depart from a place and people, where their ministry has been very successful when driven from thence by the fury of persecution: thus St. Paul here obeyed the command of Christ elsewhere; *When they persecute you in one city flee to another*, Mat. x. 23. Observe, 2. Though St. Paul withdrew from Ephesus to allay the fury of persecution there; yet he left Timothy behind, to confirm and comfort the disciples, as his substitute, and to strengthen them in the faith of the gospel, 1. Tim. i. 3. *I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia*, &c. Observe, 3. The apostle no sooner escapes the fury of the heathens at Ephesus, but he is in danger of his life at Macedonia, by his own countrymen the Jews, ver. 3. *The Jews laid wait for him*: Well might the apostle say, *he was in deaths often, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils among false brethren*, 2 Cor. xi. 26. The wicked Jews when they could not prevail against St. Paul by open force, contrive his ruin by secret treachery; but God gave him knowledge of their designs, and he avoided them by turning another way. Thence learn, That it is high presumption and a bold tempting of God, to run headlong upon evident and imminent dangers; and not to improve all lawful means we can to prevent and decline them: to trust to means, is to neglect God; but to neglect the means for our own preservation, is to tempt God. St. Paul would not tempt God by running into dangers, though his cause was never so good. Observe, 4: The persons are mentioned by name, who accompanied the apostle, and administered unto him: *to wit, Sopater, Aristarchus, and Secundus, Gaius and Timotheus, Tychicus, and Trophimus*: these accompanied the apostle, not out of state, but for necessary services; to which may be added St. Luke; but being the penman of this book, he declines mentioning of himself by name, though his praises will for ever be in the gospel, and ecclesiastical history.

6 ¶ And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and

came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man, named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and, as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him*, said, trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he, therefore, was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

The next journey of St. Paul is from Macedonia in Greece, to Troas in Asia, where he abode seven days. During his stay here, several things are to be remarked and observed. Observe here, 1. How this great apostle became all things to all men, though he would not become sin to any man: *to the Jews he became as a Jew*, for he stayed his journey all the seven days of the Jewish passover's solemnity, and would not set forth to travel that time, because he would not offend the weak Jews: accordingly he sailed not from Philippi till after the *days of unleavened bread*. Thus St. Paul did comply with the Jewish rites, which though dead by the death of Christ, yet were not buried; and therefore his compliance was not sinful, but managed with design to gain the Jews. Observe, 2. That the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, was of apostolical observation now, as it was before Christ's institution. On this day the Lord arose; on this day the disciples met, "and Christ honored them with his presence," John xx. "on this day the collection for the poor saints was made," 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Now, this necessarily infers the abrogation of the saturday sabbath: for six days they were commanded to labor; and if they rested the seventh day and first day too, they violated the law of God, which we cannot suppose they did: and consequently the apostles and primitive christians observed the first day of the week in remembrance of the work of redemption, as the Jews of old observed the seventh in remembrance of the work of creation. Observe, 3. The fervent zeal and unwearied diligence of the great apostle for the

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souls of men; and also the patience and complacency with which his auditors attended upon his sermon at this time: *Paul preached till midnight*. ver. 7. A very long sermon upon a particular occasion is neither unscriptural, nor unapostolical. We do not find that either the apostle was weary, or the auditory drowsy at the dead time of the night; their wakefulness at midnight under a sermon condemns our sleepiness at mid-day. Observe, 4. The pious and prudent care which the apostle and his hearers took, that their night-meeting should not fall under any calumny, or themselves reproached for doing any thing indecently in the dead of the night; to prevent this, the 8th verse informs us, that "there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together," exposing themselves, and what they did to the view of all. Religious meetings in the night-seasons are not only lawful in times of persecution, but necessary; yet a special care ought to be taken to avoid all occasion of calumny, that the least suspicion may not arise concerning the honesty and holiness of those that do assemble at such unseasonable times. Observe, 5. What a warning the Holy Ghost here leaves upon record, for such as sleep under the preaching of the word; Eutychus, when asleep under St. Paul's long sermon, falls down from the third loft, and is taken up dead. Here note, The time when he was overtaken with sleep; not at noon-day, but at midnight; and it was not a sermon of an hour long, that he fell asleep under; but after St. Paul had preached several hours: this is not the case of our common sermon sleepers, who at noon-day sleep under the word; nay, settle and compose themselves to sleep, and do what they can to invite sleep to them. What if, with Eutychus, any of them fall down dead? Here is no Paul to raise them up; or what if this wretched contempt of the word provoke God to say, *sleep on*, and be so stupified, that no ordinances shall awake you; *sleep on*, till hell flames awake you? Observe, Eutychus is raised to life by a miraculous power communicated to St. Paul, which was a matter of great consolation to the spirits, and great confirmation to the faith of the disciples, ver. 12. "They brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted; not only for the young man's sake, but especially for their own sakes; for hereby God gave a convincing testimony to the word of his grace; God did hereby bear witness to it, and many were thereby confirmed in the belief of it.

13 ¶ And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go a-foot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hasted, if it were

possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Here an account is given of several travels of the apostle, namely, from Troas to Assos, from thence to Mitylene, next day to Samos, then to Trogyllium, and the day following to Miletus, passing by and not touching at Ephesus; for the apostle having an earnest desire to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, so that he might in that concourse have a larger opportunity of spreading the gospel, he would not now call at Ephesus, lest he should be detained too long by the brethren there. From the whole note, 1. The indefatigable diligence of this great apostle, and his unwearied industry in the service of the gospel; how he travels from place to place, and here from Troas to Assos, on foot all alone by land: he did not affect to ride with pompous train and retinue, but he goes on foot, expecting to meet with more opportunity of sowing the seed of the gospel as he passed through towns and villages by land, among those he conversed with: so intent was this holy man upon the work of winning souls: whereas had he travelled by sea, this opportunity had been lost. An happy example for all the ministers of Christ, to prefer an opportunity of doing good to the souls of others, before their own ease or profit. Note, 2. The true reason why St. Paul was so very desirous to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost; not that he placed any religion in observing this abrogated feast, but because that vast concourse of people at such time would give him a fairer opportunity to glorify Christ, and to propagate the gospel: this made him so desirous to get to Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost. Learn thence, That the ministers of Christ, without the imputation of vainglory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon an opportunity of dispersing the word to a numerous auditory, in hopes that, casting the net of the gospel among many, they may inclose some.

17 ¶ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befel me, by the lying in wait of the Jews;

29 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house:

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The foregoing verses acquainted us, how very intent St. Paul was upon his journey to Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, he hoping then and there to have a precious opportunity for preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified, to his countrymen the Jews: now, lest he should be hindered in his expedition, he determines to slip by Ephesus, without touching there; but could not satisfy himself without seeing of, and speaking to the ministers of Ephesus, whom for that purpose he sends for to Miletus, and there in a grave and pious discourse, which warmed their hearts, and melted them into tears, he takes his farewell of them. Here note, 1. That St. Paul speaks much in his own vindication, but nothing by way of ostentation: a minister, when he is leaving a people, may modestly enough say something in his own vindication; for there are enough, as soon as his back is turned, will say more than is true by the way of accusation. Note, 2. That when the apostle here speaks much that looks like self-commentation, it is rather to propound himself as a mirror for gospel-ministers, and a pattern for all pious pastors, that whenever they leave their people, they may go off with a clear conscience, and be able to appeal to the consciences of their people, as touching their carriage and conversation amongst them. Note, 3. The several particular instances of his ministerial faithfulness: 1. He instances in his own humility; though he was lofty in his ministry, yet was he lowly in his mind: "he served the Lord with all humility of mind." The better any man is, the lower thoughts he has of himself. Almighty God renders that man most honorable, that minister most serviceable, whom he finds most humble. 2. In his affectionateness in preaching the gospel: he mingles tears with his exhortation. "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears." In his constancy in preaching, in private inspection, *publicly* in the synagogues, and *privately from house to house*, like a good shepherd laboring to understand the state of his whole flock, and of every lamb in it, that no soul might miscarry through his neglect, for which the great and good shepherd died. 4. He acquaints them, not only with the manner, but also with the matter of his preaching; namely, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:" which two graces comprehend the sum of a christian's duty. Ministers must join these two together in their preaching, and our hearers must not separate them in their practice. They who repent without believing, or believe without repenting, indeed do neither.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye

all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Here the apostle proceeds not to boast of himself, but to clear himself of any charge or surmise of ministerial mis-carriages, and also to propound himself as a pattern of ministerial faithfulness to the elders of the church at Ephesus: and here again, 1. Our apostle instances in his holy and heroic resolution and activity for God: "I know that bonds and afflictions abide me; nevertheless I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, and nothing moves me." As if he had said, "I am fully resolved, by the grace of God enabling, that nothing shall divert me from my duty, neither deterring fear, nor deluding favor of men, shall ever affect me; but I will go out, and go on in the strength of Christ, running my race with patience, and finishing my course with joy." Hence learn, 1. That the apprehension of sufferings must not shake the resolution of a christian, much less daunt the courage of a gospel minister, ver. 24. *None of these things move me.* True ministerial courage delights in the air of that danger where duty dwells, and will neither be beaten off from doing an incumbent duty, nor be beaten on to complacence with any known sin. Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should endeavour, not only to finish their ministry and course of christianity with faithfulness, but with joy; and, that they may do so, let them see that they give up themselves wholly to the service of Christ, without restriction or reserve, and live daily by faith on the meditation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here was such a masculine spirit in our apostle, as bid defiance to death and danger; and the argument that excited him was, that he might finish his course with joy. Next the apostle declares his impartiality in preaching the gospel, ver. 27. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Where observe, He doth not say he had declared the whole counsel of God, for who but God himself can do that? But he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God; that is, he had not concealed from them any truth necessary to salvation; and this freed him from the blood of souls; if any perished, it was not long of him, but their blood was upon themselves. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." It is happy when the ministers of God can appeal to the consciences of their people, and summon them as witnesses to bear record for them at the bar of Christ. Lastly, the apostle tells them, they were never like to see his face again; A cutting, killing word! How would it fire the zeal of ministers, and inflame the affections of the people, did they remember that in a short time they must see the faces, and hear the voices of each other upon earth no more? Lord, what fervent prayer for, what yearning of bowels towards perishing sinners would be found with us! what zeal for their conversion, what endeavours for their salvation, did we believe that the grave was making ready to receive us! how should we louden our cry to God, and how fulfil our trust to man, did we consider our grave and coffin are at hand! Our glass

had but a little sand; now we are preaching, but anon it will be said of us, we are gone; "and now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching, shall see my face no more."

28 Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that, by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

The blessed apostle having, in the former part of his farewell sermon to the elders of Ephesus, vindicated his own sincerity among them, both as to his doctrine and practice, and cleared himself by close addressed and smart appeals to their consciences: he now urges them in a rousing and heart-melting exhortation to the utmost care and diligence in the exercise of their pastoral charge; and to take heed to themselves and the flock, to the whole flock which Christ had purchased with his blood, and the Holy Ghost had committed to their care; ver. 28. "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Here observe. A twofold duty, and a threefold motive to enforce that duty: the first duty is to take heed to themselves: the second is to take heed to all the flock. The first part of a minister's duty is to take heed unto himself. *Committite animam diligentibus suam*, says St. Bernard: he that neglects his own soul, will never take a faithful care of the souls of others. We must first look to ourselves, that our judgments be sound, our hearts holy, and our lives exemplary: we must take heed to ourselves, that we be fit for the employment which we undertake; this is not a burden for a child's shoulder; he that is himself a babe in knowledge, is altogether unfit to teach men the mysteries of salvation. Take we heed that our example doth not contradict our doctrine, that our practice doth not give our profession the lie: that we do as well as teach: not preach angelical sermons, and lead diabolical lives; but securing that grace to ourselves which we offer unto others, and shunning that sin ourselves which we condemn in others: and this, because we have a depraved nature, and vicious inclinations in us, as well as others; because we have a heaven to win, and a soul to save as well as others; yea, when others have only their own souls to account for, we have not only our own, but others too; in a word, because our sins do more dishonor God, more discredit religion, more gratify the devil, more harden sinners, and have more of wilfulness in them, more perfidiousness in them, and more hypocrisy in them, than other men's: and we shall certainly be adjudged by God to a double damnation

for them. Well, therefore, might the apostle say to the Ephesian elders, *Take heed unto yourselves*; next he adds, *and to all the flock*. That is with a constant care and laborious diligence acquaint them with their duty, inform them of their danger, show them where their happiness lies, and the ways and means for attaining of it: and, in order to this, *all the flock* must be known, that it may be heeded, and we must labor to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can; we must, as the apostle before us did, visit our people from house to house, that we may know their persons, know their inclinations, and know the manner of their conversation; what sins they are most in danger of, what temptations most liable to, and what duties they neglect, either for the matter or manner of them, and give them the best encouragement, directions, and assistance we are able: this is the sum of the apostle's exhortation to the elders of Ephesus: "take heed unto yourselves, and unto all the flock." The motives to enforce the duty, follow: and they are, 1. Drawn from their office, they are *overseers* of the flock; that is, officers appointed by solemn ordination to teach, to guide, to govern the churches, committed to their care, and under their charge. 2. From the authority and excellency of him that called them to their office, *the Holy Ghost*. We read of some that were nominated by the special and immediate instinct of the Holy Ghost, as Acts i. 24. and xiii. 2. Others were ordained by the apostles, who were guided by the Holy Ghost then; and whoever is set apart to that office now, according to the rule of God's word, may truly be said to be an *overseer* by the Holy Ghost; Almighty God concurring to own and bless his own institution. 3. From the dear purchase which Christ paid for, and the tender regard he bears to, this his flock; "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Where observe, the divinity of Christ asserted, he is expressly called God, in opposition to the Arians, and their unhappy spawn the Socinians, who will allow him to be only man; but then his blood could never have purchased the church, which it is here said to do; being God and man in one person; man, that he might have blood to shed; and God, that his blood might be of infinite value, and inestimable preciousness when shed. Observe also, the force of the apostle's argument; "If the church be thus dear to Christ, the chief Shepherd, she ought to be very dear to all under-shepherds: if Christ judged her salvation worth his blood, well may his ministers judge it worth their sweat." 4. From the danger which the church is in by seducers and false teachers, ver. 29. Grievous wolves will enter, not sparing the flock; and even from among yourselves shall arise heretics, who will vent their unsound doctrines to debauch men, first in their principles, and then in their practices: therefore *take heed to all the flock*. Now from the whole note, I. The church is Christ's flock, consisting of sheep and lambs; Christ himself is the great and good Shepherd; his ministers under-shepherds and overseers; bloody persecutors, heretical seducers, and false teachers, are wolves which worry and divide the flock. Note, 2. That every flock should have its own pastor, and every pastor his own flock. Note, 3. That the flock should be no greater ordinarily, than the overseers are capable of taking heed of. 4. That every overseer of Christ's flock ought to take great heed, both to himself and to the whole flock, in all the parts of his pastoral work, particularly; public preaching, and private inspection.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Here the apostle takes a very solemn farewell of the elders of the church at Ephesus, commending them to the guidance and protection of the grace of God, which was able to build them up in holiness here, and bring them to heaven hereafter. Where observe, 1. His courteous compellation, and herein his great condescension. Although he was an apostle of the highest eminency, yet he disdains not to call these elders, who were both in office, and also in gifts and graces, much inferior to him, by the name of *brethren*. And now, *brethren*, says the apostle to the elders at Ephesus: but probably together with the elders of Ephesus, here were some of the church and people of Ephesus, who came to take their last leave of the departing apostle; and then we may remark, that there is a near relation, even that of brethren, between ministers and people, as well as between the ministers themselves, and this founded upon the account of religion and grace. Observe, 2. The apostle being now to take his last leave and farewell of the ministers and people at Ephesus, he commends them to God. It well becomes the faithful ministers of Christ at all times, when they are with their people, but especially then when they are about to leave their people, to commit and commend them unto God; that is, to commend them to God's care and keeping, and to commit them to his conduct and guidance; and this as a testimony of our faithfulness to God, whose our people are, and for whom we must become accountable to him: and also as a testimony of our love to our people, and of our fervent desires for their salvation. Observe, 3. As the apostle commends them to God, so likewise to the word of his grace: to God as the efficient cause, and to the word of his grace, as the instrumental cause of their building up; *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up*. Here note, 1. That the gospel is the word of God's grace, so called, because it is the effect, the fruit, and product of rich mercy and free grace: because it reveals the free grace of God in Christ to poor sinners; because it works inherent grace and holiness in the hearts of sinners; and because it carrieth on, and perfecteth the work of grace unto glory. Note, 2. That believers who are in a state of grace, have need of the word of God for their edification and building up. Note, 3. That the word of God is able to build up believers; it is able to preserve and keep them from decaying in grace and holiness, and is able to further their growth in grace, and to bring it to perfection. Well, and wisely therefore doth the apostle say, *I commend you to God and to the word of his grace*; he doth not say, *I commend you to God*, and the impulse of his Spirit; or *I commend you to God*, and to the light within; or, *I commend you to God*, and to the traditions of the church; but *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up*. Observe, 4. A superadded commendation, which is here given of the word of God's grace; it is not only able to build us up, but to give us an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified; that is, the word of God, if we follow the dictates and directions of it, will infallibly bring us to the glorious inheritance which God hath provided for all his saints.

or sanctified ones. Here note, 1. That heaven is an inheritance, not like an inheritance on earth; but it is the most sure, the most satisfying, the most durable, and the most delightful inheritance, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* Note, 2. That heaven is the inheritance of *saints*, of all sanctified or holy persons, and only of such; it is purchased for them, it is promised to them, it is taken up in their names, and possession of it kept for them by their forerunner. In a word heaven is prepared for them, and they are daily preparing for it; and it shall be adjudged to them at the great day. Note, 3. That this inheritance of heaven is a gift, and free gift. Luke xii. 32. "It is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom." This inheritance is all of grace, our right and title to it is of grace, our fitting and preparing for it is of grace; all of grace, nothing of merit: all of God, nothing of ourselves; nothing in a way of meritorious casualty, but only in the way of ministerial endeavour. Note lastly, That God gives this inheritance by his word.—*to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance.* The word reveals to us the notice and knowledge of this inheritance; the word makes an offer of this inheritance to every one of us, yea, it calls us to the acceptance, and invites us to the participation of it. Finally, God by his word begets his people to a lively hope of this inheritance, 1 Pet. i. 2, 4. And also prepares and fits them by the word, for the participation and possession of it, Col. i. 12. "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And how doth the Father make us meet for this inheritance in glory, but by the word of his grace; "I commend you, therefore, brethren," says the apostle, "to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified."

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

In the conclusion of St. Paul's discourse to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he vindicates himself from the sordid sin of covetousness, affirming, that he had coveted no man's silver or gold; but by the labor of his hands, had maintained himself, and them that were with him. Where note, That it is not simply unlawful for a minister of the gospel to labor with his hands, for his own and his family's support, when the poverty of the members of the church is such, that they cannot maintain him without it. Observe farther, he directs these elders to labor as he did, if the case required it with them, as he did with him, that they might by laboring as he, be in a capacity to support the weak, and relieve the poor. Yet note, He doth not propose this his practice as a precept or precedent, or rule to all ministers; for though St. Paul labored with his hands in a case of ne-

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cessity, and because false teachers were watching all advantages against him; yet he often declares a right and privilege which he had to be maintained by the church, without laboring with his hands for his own livelihood and subsistence; nay, asserts it to be the ordination and appointment of God himself, that *they which preach the gospel, shall live of the gospel.* Observe lastly, A remarkable saying of our blessed Saviour not recorded by the Evangelists, but undoubtedly spoken by him; namely, *that it is more blessed to give than to receive:* that is, the condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver, and giving is more commendable than receiving. 1. The condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver; because, 1. Giving is a sign of sufficiency and power; he that gives to another, is supposed to be well provided himself; he that gives, looks like a full being, and like a swelling river; whereas receiving implies want and weakness, emptiness, and unsatisfied desires. 2. Because giving includes choice: for what a man parts with to another, he has a freedom to keep himself; but the receiver is not to be his own carver, but must depend upon the courtesy of his neighbours. 3. Because the condition of the giver implies an honorable trust committed to him by God Almighty. Givers are God's almoners and stewards, the poor's guardians and patrons. An honorable trust this is, by which the lives and livelihood of the poor are in a manner committed to us. By all which it appears that the condition of the giver is more desirable than that of the receiver. Note, 2. That giving is more commendable than receiving: it is a clear evidence of a noble and virtuous disposition of mind: for, 1. It is a sign of our victory over the world, and that our conversation is in heaven; that we have worthy apprehensions of God, and honorable thoughts of his providence; and that we can trust him and give him a part of his own whenever he calls for it. 2. Giving is better than receiving, because there is a more lasting pleasure in giving than in receiving: an alma taken is soon spent and forgotten, and the pleasure of it is over in two or three moments: but the pleasure of giving bears us company all along in this world, and will keep us company in the next; there is no such satisfactory pleasure as in doing good. Let us then often remember, and always put in practice, the words of our Lord Jesus, which he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

36 ¶ And, when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him;

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Observe here, 1. What a solemn and sacred farewell St. Paul and the elders of Ephesus take of each other; they kneeled down and prayed together; instead of a parting cup, here is a parting prayer, and is accompanied with tears; they all wept sore. There is a sufficient occasion for sorrow and weeping, when the church loses a faithful pastor, it is a public loss, and many are concerned in it. Observe, 2. How

loath, how very loath they were to part with the apostle, who had so exceedingly endeared himself unto them, by his holiness, humility, and universal usefulness: accordingly, they accompany him unto the ship, and when gone off to sea, send a long look after him; being more especially grieved at these words, *that they should see his face no more.* Learn thence, That a faithful minister of Christ is enjoyed with much love, and finally parted from with much sorrow by those who believe and obey the gospel; parting work is hard work: how hard is it for husband and wife, for parents and children to part? and perhaps it is as hard sometimes for ministers and people, who have lived in mutual endearments, to the glory of God, and singular comfort of each other; when they are pulled one from another alive by cruel persecutors, or when dying by the king of terrors: the parting is sad; but blessed be God, the next meeting will know no parting. When ministers and people meet together at the right hand of God in heaven, they shall never part more, but shall for ever be with the Lord.

CHAPTER XXI.

The chapter before acquaints us with St. Paul's dangerous voyage to Jerusalem, and enumerates the several places through which he passed in his journey thither; namely, through Coos and Rhodes, Phenicia, Ptolemais, Tyre, Cesarea, through many parts of Europe and Asia; and at last arrives safely at Jerusalem. Oh blessed apostle! what tongue can declare, what pen can set forth the pains which thou tookest, and the hazards which thou didst run, in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to the heathen world? And who can sufficiently magnify and holily admire the conduct of divine providence, in carrying thee cheerfully through all the difficulties of life, and enabling thee to finish thy course with joy? Lord! who would not be found faithful in thy service? Who takest such an uninterrupted and unintermitting care of thy servants, that safety evermore accompanies duty.

AND it came to pass, that, after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the sorrowful and heavy parting of the elders and church of Ephesus, from the holy apostle. Now the first verse of this chapter informs us, that it was not less sorrowful on the apostle's and his companions' part: so much the word here imports, *after we were gotten from them, and* *παρῆλθας ἀπ' αὐτῶν*: "after we were torn from, and pulled as it were limb from limb from each other;" intimating the mu-

tual endearments which were between them whilst together, and that inexpressible sorrow which was found among them at their parting. Verily there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection betwixt any relations upon the earth, than betwixt the ministers of Christ, and such of their people as they have been instrumental in bringing home to God. Spiritual affections are stronger than natural; the removing of a spiritual father by death, or otherwise, is like tearing limb from limb; yea, like rending the head from the body. Lord, with what great difficulty and deep reluctance did the holy apostle and the church of Ephesus here part from one another! They were pulled and torn one from another, as the word imports.

3 Now, when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burthen.

4 And finding the disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

The divine providence is not more signally discovered in governing the motions of the clouds, than it is in ordering the spirits and motions of his ministers: the motion of the clouds is not spontaneous, and from themselves, but they move as they are moved by the winds; neither can the ministers of Christ choose their own stations, and govern their own motions, but must go when and whither the Spirit and providence of God directs and guides them; as evidently appears by St. Paul's present voyage to Jerusalem; though the journey was full of danger, yet his spirit was fully bent and set upon it; *I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem.* It was happy for the apostle, and his great advantage, that the will of God was so plainly revealed to him, touching this his journey to Jerusalem: for no sooner did he prepare himself to obey the call of God, and undertake the journey, but he is presently assaulted by many strong temptations to decline it. The first rub he met with in his way, was from the disciples at Tyre, *who spake by the Spirit*, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. But did not the spirit of God then contradict itself, in bidding the apostle go, and then speaking to him by those disciples not to go? not at all: St. Paul, by extraordinary revelation, was commanded to go up to Jerusalem; these disciples, by a spirit of prophecy, only foretold the difficulties and dangers that would attend him in his journey; and so through kindness and human affections they dissuaded him from undertaking it. We must distinguish between the prediction of trouble, and the counsel of safety: the prediction of trouble; so they said through the Spirit, that it should be dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem. The counsel of safety proceeded from their private love and affection to him; whereby they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem. Learn from hence, 1. That divine precept, and not providence, is to rule out our way of duty. Learn, 2. That no discouragements or hinderances whatsoever will justify our neglect of a commanded duty: whatever difficulties or discouragements lay in the way of the apostle's duty, he overcame them all with an heroic and truly christian resolution,

saying, ver. 13. "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem; for the name of Jesus."

5 And when we had accomplished those days we departed, and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship: and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, (which was one of the seven,) and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Observe here, 1. That nothing could divert the apostle from his intended journey to Jerusalem: the report of suffering was no discouragement to him, nor could the persuasive entreaties of his friends prevail with him: seeing, therefore, he was resolved to go on, they all of them, with their wives and children, to testify their great respect and affection to him, accompany him out of the city; and he and they kneeling down on the shore, pray together, and take their farewell of each other. The loving communion of saints, and prayer, are the marks of Christ's true disciples. Observe, 2. The apostle's next remove towards Jerusalem, was from Tyre to Cesarea, where he lodged with Philip the evangelist; that is, one of them who were sent forth as itinerary preachers, here and there to dispense the gospel, and to confirm the churches; and one of the seven; that is, one of the seven deacons, Acts vi. Here note, That this Philip in whose house St. Paul now lodged, was before driven out of his house by Paul's persecution. See Acts viii. 1, &c. "There was a great persecution against the church, and they were all scattered abroad, and Philip went down to Samaria." This Philip who was driven out of his house by Paul when a persecutor, gladly received him into his house, being now Paul a convert; and this without any upbraiding, yea, without the least mention of what he had formerly been and done. It is an ill office to take in the filth which God has covered, or to reproach men with, or for their sins which God has pardoned: it argues some degree of envy at the grace of God, to upbraid men with the sins committed before conversion. Former miscarriages and injuries should be forgiven and forgotten upon true repentance, and we should receive them into our embraces, whom Christ has taken into his bosom; "Paul went into the house of Philip the evangelist."

10 And, as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And, when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

Observe here, 1. That during the apostle's stay at Cesarea in Philip's house, a certain prophet named Agabus comes thither, and prophesieth of St. Paul's bonds at Jerusalem: Where note, That though Agabus was a prophet, yet, by what appeareth to him in scripture, he was always a prophet of evil things and bad tidings: he foretold the famine before, Acts xi. and Paul's bonds now. Such messengers of God as give warnings of judgments to come, should and ought to be accepted, as well as they that bring us hopes of mercy and deliverance; that message may be true, which yet is displeasing. Observe, 2. Agabus useth a sign, after the manner of the old prophets, who often prophesied by symbols, and significant expressions, that they might the better imprint their productions on the hearts of men. Thus Isaiah went naked and barefoot, to show what the people of Israel should meet with under the king of Assyria. Isa. xx. "And Ezekiel was to pack up his stuff, and remove, to signify the people's removal into captivity." Ezek. xii. It pleased God to teach his people by visible signs, as well as by word of mouth: that what was received by both senses, seeing and hearing, might make the deeper impression upon their minds. In like manner here, Agabus uses a sign, he takes St. Paul's girdle, and binds his own hands and feet with it, signifying, that after that manner, the Jews at Jerusalem would bind the apostle, and deliver him to the Gentiles; first to the Roman governor of Judea, and afterwards to Nero the Roman Emperor. From whence we may remark, the great goodness and condescension of God, in giving the apostle so many warnings of his bonds: the Holy Ghost first made it known to him, Acts xx. *That bonds and afflictions did abide him.* The disciples at Tyre prophesied the same, Act xxi. v. 4. and here Agabus, by a sensible sign made it known to him; and all this, that he might thoroughly be prepared for a suffering condition. God doth not love to take his children unprovided: St. Paul therefore was not surprised, but had warning upon warning of his present danger. If a sudden and unexpected flood of miseries and calamities break in upon us, for afflictions seldom go single, it is not because we want warning, but because we are not so wise as to take warning. When we are well, and at ease, we will not think of death and the cross; and therefore if we be surprised and unprovided, we may thank our own security: our apostle here being forewarned, was fore-armed.

12 And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, what mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

Observe here, 1. The entire affection of the disciples to the holy apostles, "both we and they of the place besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem." Learn, that the lives and liberties of those who are eminent instruments of God's glory, are very dear and precious to the faithful servants of God. Who can blame either St. Paul's companions or the disciples here, for desiring and endeavouring the preservation of so precious an instrument as the apostle was? and yet it is not improbable but satan might have an hand in this matter, and endeavour by the apostle's friends' persuasion to weaken his resolution; for the devil oft endeavoureth to take us off from our duty by the entreaties of our friends, who mean well in what they say. Thus when St. Peter lovingly advised our Saviour, against his sufferings, "be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee;" Mat. xvi. *Get thee behind me, satan*, says Christ; it was Peter's tongue, but satan tuned it: who would have thought that Christ's disciples should have been satan's instruments? We must not measure our friends' counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word: we must be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God. Thus we find the apostle here: "he would not be persuaded," but expostulates with them: "what mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?" Observe, 2. St. Paul's entire affection to God, and his firm resolution for his duty: "He would not be persuaded." But did the apostles do well in this, to withstand all the importunities, and reject the unanimous advice of all his friends? How doth this carriage agree with that character of heavenly wisdom, Jam. iii. 17. *That it is easy to be entreated?* I answer, to the practice of our duty, it is praiseworthy to be easy to be entreated, but not from our duty. St. Paul knew his duty, and understood the will of God, and therefore his friends might sooner break his heart than break his purpose. Learn hence, that no persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of dangers, should ever be able to turn us out of the way of our duty. When Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, our Saviour rebuked him with the same indignation as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry. Observe, 3. How the apostle lovingly and gently rebukes their fond and inordinate sorrow for his departure: "what mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?" As if he had said, "what mean these passionate tears and entreaties? Alas! whether you think it so or not, they are but so many snares and temptations of satan, to turn my feet out of the way of obedience; you do as much as in you lies to break my heart; but by the grace of God nothing shall break me off from my purpose, nor weaken my courage and resolution for God." When a saint is once satisfied in the call and command of God to any duty, he fears neither impending nor approaching dangers in the way of duty. Observe, 4. The apostle's quieting and calming arguments; with which he labors to charm their unruly passions: "I am ready both to be bound,

and to die for Christ." *I am ready*, 1. That is, God hath fitted me for suffering work; flesh and blood is overruled in me by the spirit of God; I am prepared for whatever God pleaseth, be it a prison, be it a scaffold, be it life, be it death, I am provided for both: liberty is dear, and life is dear, but Christ is dearer than either; therefore what mean you to work against the design of God, who hath fitted and prepared my heart for suffering service? *I am ready*, 2. That is, my will and resolution stand in a full bent, my heart is fixed, my friends, my heart is fixed; do not therefore disorder and discompose my spirits, by casting much temptations and stumbling blocks in my way; for I am come to a point, nothing shall divert me from this noble enterprise for God, *I am ready*, 3. That is fully determined to comply with the call and command of God, whatever befalls me; I am not solicitous about that; my Captain that leads me on, I am sure, will bring me off safe, either dead or alive: therefore all your tears and entreaties are but cast away upon me, ye had better be quiet, and cheerfully resign me up to the will of God; for I am ready both to be bound and to die. From whence learn, that it is a blessed and excellent frame of spirit, when the servants of God are prepared and ready for the hardest services, and sharpest sufferings to which the Lord may at any time call them: "I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Observe, 5. The disciples' discretion; "When he would not be persuaded, they ceased;" that is, they gave over their importunities, and urged him no farther beyond his own inclinations and resolutions. It is the disposition of humble spirits to submit to those that are wiser than themselves, and not to be too stiff and peremptory in their own opinions and conceits; a lesson which most men have great need to learn. Observe, 6. The pious ground of this their discretion, namely, acquiescency in the divine will: *the will of the Lord be done*. They refer the event to God's determination, and submit, all to his sovereign pleasure. Thence learn, that it is the duty and desire, and ought to be the care and endeavour of all the children of God, to be willing to submit themselves and theirs to the dispensation of God's providence, in whatever befalls either them or theirs. For this we have Christ's example, Mat. xxvi. 36. "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The example of David, 2. Sam. xv. 26. "Here am I, let him do what seemeth good in his sight." The example of Eli, 1. Sam. i. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do whatsoever he pleaseth." Such is his justice and righteousness, that he can do his children no wrong; and such is his tender mercy and loving kindness, that he will do them no harm. The absolute sovereignty of God over us, and the sight of God in all his providential dispensations towards us, influences at once our judgments, our wills and our affections, our expressions and actions, that we neither dare to think, speak, or act any thing in contradiction to, or opposition against the wisdom and will of God: that which is oft against our will, is not always against our interest; but if we belong to God, all afflictions upon us are federal dispensations and covenant blessings to us, and either are good, or shall work for good; therefore it is both our duty and interest to submit to the wisdom of providence, and say with these disciples, *the will of the Lord be done*.

* 15 And after those days we took

up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 ¶ And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James: and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord,—

The apostle having holily resolved, that come life, or come death, he would be obedient to the call of God by his Spirit, and that nothing should divert him from his intended journey to Jerusalem, sets forward from Cesarea to Jerusalem, accompanied with certain disciples of Cesarea, who brought him to the house of one Mnason, an old disciple, who had long ago received the faith, and now lived at Jerusalem, in whose house the apostle lodged. Here note, what a badge of honor is put upon Mnason, even that of being an old disciple; to be an old man is an honor, but to be an old disciple is a double honor; it is a resemblance of him who is the Ancient of Days: where antiquity and piety, where agedness and holiness do concur, it renders a person as like the divine Majesty as can be expected on this side glory. To be an old disciple is a greater honor than to be a king or emperor. Observe next, the apostle being come to Jerusalem, is kindly received of the church there, he enters the house of St. James the bishop of Jerusalem, where the elders that were present congratulate his arrival, and he relates to them what great things God had wrought by his ministry, and they all gave praise to God for the great and glorious success of the gospel. Learn hence, that all christians in general, but the ministers of Christ in special, ought to make a particular declaration of the great and marvellous works which the Lord hath wrought for them, and by them. Thus did St. Paul here; he was very particular, no doubt, in relating the mighty works of God in the conversion of the Gentiles by his ministry from time to time, and from place to place: and all this, not to extol himself, but to exalt God for receiving the Gentiles into the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

—And said unto him, thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

(No. 36.)

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together; for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do, therefore, this that we say to thee: we have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly and keepest the law:

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded, that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

We had St. Paul's report to the church at Jerusalem, of the success which God had given him in his ministry amongst the Gentiles; this is related in the foregoing paragraph of the chapter; in these verses before us, we have the church's reply to the apostle's relation. *They glorified God*; First, for the great success given to the word of his grace amongst the Gentiles: and withal they acquaint him with the like success, which the preaching of the gospel had amongst the Jews; "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are which do believe;" the original runs, "how many tens of thousands do believe;" which intimates the great and wonderful success of the gospel: well might our Saviour compare it to a grain of mustard-seed, seeing it had spread itself far and near in so short a time. If we consider the smallness of its beginning, the despicableness of the instruments, the shortness of the time, the obstinacy and prejudices of the Jews against the gospel, and yet remark the vast number of thousands and ten thousands of the Jews that did already believe, embrace and entertain it; we need not wonder that St. Paul, 1. Tim. iii. 16, reckons it as one of the great mysteries of godliness, that Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world: that is, so many thousands both Jews and Gentiles were brought to own him, and submit to him as Lord and Saviour. Observe, next, the advice given by the church at Jerusalem to St. Paul, concerning the Jews which did believe in that place. It seems the Jews, though they had received the gospel, yet

thought that the ceremonial law must still be observed; therefore in condescension to their weakness, and to prevent their taking offence, they advise the apostle, not as a thing necessary in itself, but as an expediency in reference to their weakness, to conform himself to some of the Jewish ceremonies and purifications; for though they were not then needful, yet were they not unlawful; they might then be used, when the use of them would any ways conduce to the gaining and bringing over the Jews to a love of christianity. The synagogue was not hastily to be cast out of the church like the heathenish superstitions; but to die by degrees, and be decently interred. Hence note, that the law of Moses, as to its moral part, Christ continued as his law: the ceremonial part, as to the use of types and ceremonies signifying him that was to come, this was abrogated at Christ's coming; and the political part ceased when the Jewish polity was dissolved; but the abrogation of the whole was not fully made known at the first, but by degrees; and the exercise of it long tolerated to the Jews. Observe, lastly, the particular advice which they gave the apostle, to go into the temple, and perform the legal ceremony of purification; "we have four men which have a vow; them take and purify thyself, that all may know that thou walkest orderly, and keepest the law:" that is, "seeing we have four men here which have a Nazarite's vow upon them, the time of which vow is now expired, and they are to shave themselves ceremoniously in the temple; go thou with them, and perform the legal ceremony of purification there, that the people may know, that the report of thee is not true; but that thou, being a Jew, dost thyself keep the law." Here we may observe the truth of what St. Paul elsewhere declared, that "to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; yea, became all things to all men, that he might gain some." A noble pattern for the ministers of the gospel to write after, in yielding, so far as we may without sin or scandal, to the weakness of others, in order to the furtherance of the great ends of our ministry among our people; *to the Jews I became as a Jew.*

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And, when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place; and further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the Temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

Observe here, 1. That at the instance and importunities of his friends, St. Paul is persuaded to purify himself in the temple, partly to gain upon the affections of the believing Jews, who were still zealous for the law; and partly to confute the false aspersions of them that reported him to be against all ceremonial observances. If any had grudged that, after the coming of the gospel, so much cost should be bestowed on the law, and say, with murmuring Judas, *to what purpose was this waste?* The law might truly answer with our Saviour, and say, "he did it for my burial, and for the more solemn interment of me." Observe, 2. How blind was the zeal, and how furious the rage of the unbelieving Jews against the apostle! They seek, and because they could not find, they take an occasion to vent their malice upon him; accordingly, they put the whole city of Jerusalem into an uproar, upon a pretence, that he had brought Trophimus, a Gentile, into the temple, to profane and pollute it; and in their blind rage, they dragged the apostle out of the temple, as a profaner of it. Well might the apostle say, he was in *deaths often*, 2 Cor. xi. 23. He was now in danger to be pulled in pieces by this tumult; and of being made a sacrifice to the fury of the rabble: but God who never wants ways and means for the seasonable succour and relief of his servants, in an unexpected manner, and by unthought of means, rescued the apostle from the jaws of death and danger, as the next verses inform us.

31 ¶ And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar;

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them. And, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done?

34 And some cried one thing, and some another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers, for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, away with him.

Note here, 1. How the great and gracious God provideth seasonable rescues for his persecuted and perplexed saints and servants, when they went about to kill Paul, God raises him up as a deliverer. Note, 2. The unexpected instruments of the apostle's deliverance, and that was an heathen governor: the Romans never durst trust such vast multitudes at Jewish festivals, without a strong garrison to be a check upon them; accordingly the governor, having tidings of the tumult, brings down a band of soldiers to see the peace kept, he rescues the injured apostle out of their hands, commands him to be bound with two chains, as Agabus had foretold, and the soldiers bear him up in their arms from the violence of the people. Hence we learn, 1. That a bad government, even an heathen government, is better than anarchy. Under a tyrannical government, many may be uneasy, but under popular rage none can be long at rest. Learn, 2. That heathens are oftentimes the protectors of christians against the blind rage of those that profess to worship the same God. St. Paul and these unbelieving Jews worship the same God, and yet the heathen soldiers were fain by force to carry and guard the apostle from the fury of the bloody unbelieving Jews. Thus God raiseth up what instruments he pleases to subserve his own gracious ends and designs in the preservation of his people. The barbarous heathen soldiers protect St. Paul, and keep him from being torn in pieces by the Jews, who worshipped the same God with him.

37 And, as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, may I speak unto thee? who said, canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art thou not that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And, when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people: and, when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Observe, 1. The justice which the chief captain, though an heathen soldier, doth St. Paul: he demands what he had done before he punishes him: an heathen would hear the cause before he condemns the person; a piece of justice

which the law of nature requires and obliges to. Observe, 2. The unjust suspicion which the chief captain had of St. Paul's being a very bad man. *Art thou not that Egyptian which madest an uproar, and leddest out four thousand men that were murderers?* Here St. Paul, without cause is suspected for a rebel, a seducer and a murderer, by the chief captain. It is not in the power of the most unspotted innocence to protect from jealousies and suspicion, from censure and calumny, from slander and false accusation. The peaceable apostle is suspected for a turbulent incendiary; *art thou not the Egyptian that madest an uproar?* Observe, 3. The just and necessary apology which St. Paul makes for himself, *I am a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city.* Where note, 1. He describes his original; I am a Jew, not that wicked Egyptian, which you suspected me to be; but a Jew of a religious and noble extraction. Learn thence, that to be descended from religious and noble ancestors is a desirable privilege, and singular prerogative. St. Paul was a Jew descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy patriarchs. Note, 2. He describes the country where he was born; he was born in Cilicia, a rich and fruitful country in Asia. Learn thence, That to be born in a rich and fruitful country (if godly and religious) is a very considerable favor and privilege; it was not blind chance and fortune, but a wise and merciful providence of God which appointed both the place of our birth, and determineth the bounds of our habitation. What mercy is it that we were born, not in Spain, not in Turkey, not in a land of darkness, but in a valley of vision! If the Spaniards have the golden mines, we have the golden treasure of the scriptures, *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold,* Ps. xix. Note, 3. He describes not only his country, but his native city, and the dignity of it: *he was born in Tarsus a citizen of no mean city,* it being the metropolis or chief city of all Cilicia; in this famous city was the apostle born. Learn thence, That to be born in a noble, free, and famous city, especially if religious, is a desirable favor and privilege. St. Paul was born in the noble city of Tarsus; but how could he then say as he did, Acts xxii. that he was a Roman? Answer, So he was: but not by birth, but by immunity and privilege. Tarsus was invested with the Roman privileges, and made free of Rome by M. Antonius: thus Paul was free born, and declared that they ought not to scourge a Roman citizen. Note, lastly, That though the forementioned privileges are considerable privileges, namely, to be descended from noble ancestors, to be born in a famous country, and in a free city, passages of divine providence not to be overlooked or disregarded, but very highly valued, and thankfully acknowledged; yet must it be remembered, that all these are but outward and temporal privileges common to the worst as well as the best of men; such privileges as a man may enjoy, and yet be under the wrath of God, and the guilt of eternal damnation. Let us labor to be noble minded, as well as nobly descended: by regeneration born from above, otherwise we are low born, mean born, be our parents never so high. Thus the chapter concludes with an account of the apostle's eminent preservation in a time of imminent danger; but when likely to have been torn to pieces by the riotous rabble, God stirs up the chief captain, an heathen, belonging to the bloody trade of war, to rescue oppressed innocence: and the guard of soldiers, who had no manner of affection for Paul, God sets as a life guard about his person, they bear him up in their arms,

give him liberty to speak for himself; and his apology, or defensative plea, we have recorded in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we have the apostle craving leave of the chief captain to speak unto the people, who, without any just cause, had made a violent assault upon him, and attempted to take away his life. Liberty of speech being granted him, he stands upon the stairs, near the gate of the castle, in which he was a prisoner, makes a sign to the people to hold their peace, and when they gave audience, in the Hebrew tongue he thus bespeaks them.

MEN, and brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make now unto you.*

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence; and he saith,)

3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the highpriest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Here begins the apostle's apology, or defensative plea, which he makes for himself before the people at Jerusalem, who, in the foregoing chapter, had so injuriously treated him: in which apologetical narration, we have these particulars observable. First observe, with what lenity and mildness he bespeaks his cruel and pestilent persecutors, the people of the Jews: he accosts them with titles of respect and honor; *men, brethren, and fathers*; not with opprobrious invectives; he doth not render evil for evil, or railing for reviling; he had not so learned Christ, he knew how to suffer reproach for the gospel; but to persecute his persecutors with hard names and characters of reproach, was a piece of zeal which St. Paul and the holy sufferers of those times were little acquainted with. Observe, 2. How the apostle insinuates himself into his auditors, that so he might gain

their attention to what was spoken; *men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye, I pray, my defence which I make unto you.* There is a lawful and pious insinuation for gaining the attention of our auditors, which the ministers of Christ may and ought to make use of, as the workman that would drive his nail, dips it in oil. We gain our auditors' attention by our courteous and loving compellations: *men, brethren, and fathers, hearken.* Observe, 3. The apology or plea itself, in which he sets before them, 1. His extraction, *I am a Jew, born in Tarsus*: 2. His education, *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel*: 3. His profession, *he was zealous towards God*: that is, he was one of that sect among the Jews which were called Zealots, and was very strict and exact in the observation of the law, a bitter enemy to christianity, and a bloody persecutor of all that owned themselves the disciples of Jesus, as the high priest very well knows, says he, "from whom I received a commission, that if I found any of this way, whether men or women, I should bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Here note, that Damascus was five or six days' journey from Jerusalem; yet Paul when a persecutor, sticks not at it; but spurs on through fire and water to glut his malice and revenge on the poor members of Jesus Christ. Learn thence, that persecutors will spare neither purse nor pains, they will stick and stop at nothing, though never so toilsome and hazardous, so they may but satisfy their revenge upon the poor disciples of Jesus Christ: "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women."

6 And it came to pass, that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Our apostle having related what he was before his conversion, in the foregoing verses, in these and the following verses he declares the manner of his conversion; namely, that when he was travelling to Damascus to pursue his persecuting design, a great light shined round about him, upon which he fell to the ground, and heard these words articulately spoken to him: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Where observe, that Christ takes the opposition made against his gospel, and the persecution cast upon him against his members, as done unto himself, it being against his friends, his cause and interest: as the blow is unto the head, redounds unto the members, so the slings and injuries offered to the members, are resented by the head:

Christ said not thus, (when upon earth) unto his murderers, *Why bind ye me? Why buffet ye me? Why scourge ye me, and crucify me?* But now when his members suffered, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Lord, thou art more tender of thy body mystical than thou wast of thy body natural; more sensible of thy members' sufferings, than of thine own. Observe next, How ready the apostle was to understand and know, and how desirous to execute and to do the will of God, *Who art thou Lord? and what wilt thou have me to do?* We may sooner find fire without heat, than a true convert without operative grace. Observe farther, Christ's answer to Paul's inquiry, *Who art thou, Lord?* says Paul: *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest*, saith Christ. Where note, That contemned, though not contemptible name, *Jesus of Nazareth*, is owned by Christ from heaven. Mark, he said not, *I am Jesus the Son of God*, *I am Jesus the heir of the world*, and Lord of all: but *I am Jesus of Nazareth*; he gloried in that reproach which his enemies cast upon him, *Jesus of Nazareth*; he owned his name from heaven, to teach his members not to be ashamed of it when reproached by it here on earth. Observe lastly, The witnesses of Paul's conversion, *The men that were with him, who saw the light, but heard not the voice*. It is very probable that he had a great number of officers with him, to bring both men and women that professed christianity bound to Jerusalem. These saw the light shining, and heard a confused noise like thunder, but they heard not the articulate sound, much less the efficacious voice of Christ, which spake so convincingly to his soul. Lord, how many are there who come under the preaching of the gospel, that, with Paul's companions, hear only a confused noise, and empty sound? they do not hear the efficacious voice of Christ, speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, and so remain shut up under the power of unbelief.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there.

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest

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know his will, and see that just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Here observe, 1. That although Christ converted Paul himself, yet Ananias as his minister must instruct him; by Christ is grace infused; but by his ministers increased. Such an honor doth Christ put upon the ministers of the gospel, that he makes use of their endeavours (ordinarily) both for the production and augmentation of grace in the hearts of his people. Oh the necessity and usefulness of a standing ministry! It is a singular favor to have the mind of God made known to us by men like unto ourselves: and behold the honor which God puts upon his ministry, in using them as conduit-pipes for conveying the water of life unto us, which is not ordinarily communicated immediately from himself, nor immediately received by us! Observe, 2. The title given by Ananias to Saul, *Brother Saul*. They were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory: as the scripture speaks of a brotherhood betwixt Christ and believers, *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, *Love the brotherhood*; that is the whole fraternity and society of christians, who are *Sanguine Christi conglutinati*: Cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love: Observe, 3. Ananias acquaints Saul with the special favors which God intended for him: *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee*, or taken thee by the hand, as the word signifies, that thou shouldest *know his will*, and see that *just One*, (so he calls the Blessed Jesus) to convince them of their sin in putting him to death: *And be a witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard*. The work of the ministers of the gospel is now to witness for, hereafter to witness against; now they witness of God and his truth, and persuade sinners to believe it; hereafter they will witness against sinners for not believing and obeying the truth of God. Lord, what a sad consideration is this, that the ministers of Christ must be brought in as witnesses against the souls of their neighbours and friends, and be forced to testify to their faces for their condemnation! Ah, Lord, with what an heart must a poor minister study, when he considereth, that every sermon that he preaches must be brought in for a witness against many, if not most of his hearers? Doubtless this sad reflection makes every faithful minister of Christ study hard, pray hard, intreat hard, be earnest and instant in season, and out of season, that they may not be condemners of their people's souls. Observe, 4. The advice which Ananias gave to this new convert to take upon him the badge of christianity, to wit baptism. *Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins*: Here note, That sacraments are not empty, insignificant signs; God by his grace and blessing renders his own ordinances effectual for those great ends for which his wisdom has appointed them;

be baptized and wash away thy sins: as water cleanseth the body, so the blood of Christ, signified by water, washes away the guilt of the soul. Where true faith is, together with the profession of it by baptism, there is salvation promised, Mark xvi. 6. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee.

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

St. Paul having thus declared to the Jews his wonderful manner of conversion, proceeds next to acquaint them how desirous he was to have preached to the Jews rather than to the Gentiles, if the will of God had seen fit; but it proved otherwise; for, as he was praying in the temple, he had a vision, in which he was commanded to hasten out of the city: because his former zeal in opposing the gospel would hinder his present preaching of it from being successful: against this he humbly argued, that his former zeal against christianity might, he hoped, be an argument to persuade the Jews, his countrymen, to embrace christianity. But this argument did not prevail for his staying at Jerusalem; but he was commanded to depart from thence to preach the gospel to the despised gentiles, who had not such strong exceptions against him, but, would with more readiness embrace his doctrine. Learn hence, 1. That carnal reasonings are very apt to rise in the hearts of God's own servants, and cause them to object something against their obedience to the divine commands; here the apostle objects, that according to his reason, he saw greater probability of doing good by his ministry among the Jews, than he could hope for among the Gentiles, who would be afraid of him, as Ananias was; but Christ repeats his command, *Depart and get thee hence, for I will send thee to the gentiles.* And now the apostle doth no longer dispute but dispatch. This teaches us, 2. To lay by all our carnal reasonings and vain pretences, when once the call and command of God is clear, and no longer cavil, but comply; no longer object, but instantly obey. We may safely follow God blindfold when once we have assurance that he goes before us, and obey every command without hesitation or limitation.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 ¶ And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Observe here, 1. With what patience the Jews heard the apostle's discourse, until he made mention of the Gentiles, and that he was appointed to preach to them: upon which they brake forth into fury and passion, and expressed their fury by throwing dust into the air, and casting off their clothes, as if they would presently stone him, whom they looked upon as the worst of villains, and unworthy to live:

Where we may remark at once, both what a vile opinion the Jews had of the Gentiles, whom they called and accounted dogs; and what an high esteem they had of themselves, and a proud conceit of their own deservings, as if the favors of heaven belonged to none but themselves who yet trampled upon them, when they were tendered to them. Observe, 2. What a vile esteem those wicked Jews had of the holy and innocent apostle, who desired above all things to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to them, and longed most affectionately for the conversion and salvation of them: they account him the greatest villain upon earth, and unworthy to live upon it: but the good man had learnt (and let all the faithful ministers of Christ learn it after him) to take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in necessities and distresses for Christ's sake: "Aw y with such a fellow from the earth, it is not meet that he should live." Observe, 3. The pious prudence and innocent policy which the apostle uses for his own preservation; when they were about to bind him to a post, in order to the scourging of him, the apostle declares himself a free citizen of Rome, by being born in one of the cities which the Roman emperor had made free; accordingly St. Paul pleads for himself the privilege of a Roman citizen, who neither ought to be bound nor beaten. Though we may not render evil for evil, yet we may right ourselves by all lawful means. Christ allows as much of the serpent as the dove, in his servants, provided the subtilty of the one doth not destroy the simplicity of the other: the head of the serpent, and the heart of the dove, do best together; for as policy without piety is too subtle to be good, so piety without policy is too simple to be safe. Observe, 4. How the chief captain fearing he had done more than he could answer, because it was death for any one in authority to violate the Roman privileges; therefore more out of fear than love, or more out of love to himself than the apostle, he looses St. Paul's bonds. Thence note, That when at any time the persecutors of the saints do desist from their bloody purposes, it is not out of love to them, but love to themselves. Observe lastly The saints' deliverances from affliction and persecution, whilst on this side heaven, are not total or final, but momentary and partial. The apostle was delivered from his chains, not from his confinement: though unbound, not set at liberty: next day we find him before the great council, or sanhedrim, and fresh bonds and afflictions abide him. Little rest is to be expected by the members, and less rest by the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ in this world. Blessed be God for the believing hopes of an eternal rest; where the fury of the persecutor, the injuries of the oppressor, shall cease for ever; where no sin shall affect us, no sorrow afflict us, no danger affright us; but we shall be perfectly like unto God, as well in purity as immortality. In the mean time, may we the ministers of God, who are set for the defence of the gospel, bear the burden and heat of the day, with patience and courage, resolution and constancy; may we gird up the loins of our minds, not accounting either our labors or our lives dear unto us, so we may finish our course with joy, and fulfil the ministry which we have received of the Lord, glorying in our reproaches for well doing; yea, though we be accounted the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things: for when the chief shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.—Amen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the foregoing chapter we find the apostle in prison, but having leave given him to make his defence; which accordingly he did, but little to the satisfaction of the enraged multitude. In this chapter we find him before the sanhedrim, or great council at Jerusalem, professing his own innocency; but instead of setting him at liberty, the cursed Jews conspire his destruction, but the providence of God wonderfully interposes for his deliverance, as the chapter before us fully informs us.

AND Paul earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the highpriest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law.

Here we have observable the apostle's sober and ingenuous profession and protestation, Ananias' insolent and injurious injunction, St. Paul's zealous answer and contestation. Observe, 1. The apostle's sober and ingenuous profession and protestation, ver. 2. *I have lived in all good conscience unto this day*; that is during his continuance in the Jewish religion, and since his conversion to the christian religion. he had walked uprightly, and according to his knowledge, and the light of his conscience. But had Paul a good conscience, when he persecuted the christians? Answer, He went according to his conscience when he persecuted; he verily thought he did God service in so doing, and it was not any selfish end or sinister design he propounded to himself, but zeal for his religion provoked him to persecution, Phil. iii. 6. *Concerning zeal persecuting the church*; it is certainly a man's duty to follow his conscience; but then, it is as much his duty to inform his conscience, as it is to follow it; *I have lived in all good conscience until this day*. Here note, The apostle sets forth his good conscience these four ways: 1. From the goodness of his conversation; *I have lived*: A good conversation is the best evidence of a good conscience. God doth not measure men's sincerity by the tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions, and the general course and tenor of their conversations. Every man's conscience is as his life is. 2. From the generality of his care and obedience; *I have lived in all good conscience*; if it be not a conscience all good, it is no good conscience at all. Herod had some good conscience,

he did many things; but the apostle went farther, he lived not in some, but in *all good conscience*, 3. The apostle sets forth the goodness of his conscience from the integrity of it towards God; *I have lived in all good conscience before God*. Many a man's conscience passeth for a good conscience before men, and perhaps before himself, which yet are not good before God the judge of conscience. 4. From his continuance and constancy, *Until this day; I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day*: It is not sufficient to begin a good life, and to have a good conscience; but we must keep it too, and that all our days, even to our last day. Happy man! that can truly say at his dying day, *I have lived in all good conscience until this day*. Observe, 2. As the apostle's solemn protestation, so the highpriest's injurious injunction: *Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth*. Here note, What is the reward and portion of a good conscience from the world; to be smitten, either on the mouth, or with the mouth; either with the fist, or with the tongue. There is nothing so encourages men of wicked consciences, as the profession and practice of a good conscience doth: but better ten blows on the face, than one on the heart; better a thousand blows for a good conscience, than one from it. Observe, 3. St. Paul's zealous answer and contestation, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall*. Where note, 1. That although the apostle did not smite again as he was smitten, though he did not smite Ananias on the cheek, as he smote him on the mouth; yet he gives him a check and sharp reproof for his violence and injustice. Thence learn, That christian patience, though it binds a man's hands, yet it doth not always bind his tongue; though it lays a law upon a man to forbear violence, yet it lays not a law upon him to enjoin him to silence. St. Paul, though he did not strike, yet he durst speak; though he held his hands, yet he did not hold his peace: though religion pinions a man's arms from striking, yet it doth not seal up a man's lips from speaking; but we may declare both our own innocency, and others' injustice. Note, 2. St. Paul doth not say, *God shall judge thee, or God shall plague thee*; but *God shall smite thee*: denoting, That as there is always equity, so sometimes a retaliation in the executions of divine justice, or a recompensing like for like: God sometimes returns smiting for smiting, so that the sinner is forced to cry out, *As I have done so God hath requited me*. God punishes sometimes in the same kind, sometimes in the same manner, sometimes in the same place; that sinners are forced to cry out, *Righteous art thou, O Lord!* and just are thy judgments.

4 And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's highpriest?

Observe here, That Ananias the highpriest having commanded the apostle, unheard and uncondemned, to be smitten, the apostle denounces the just judgment of God upon him for the same; yet not in a way of imprecation, but prediction; rather foretelling what would come, than wishing or desiring that it should come; not in a way of revenge, or recompensing evil for evil; but in a way of ministerial reproof, which the standers by called reviling, *Revilest thou God's highpriest?* 1. Thence learn, That profane sinners look upon the faithful reproofs, when the ministers of God give them for their lewdness, to be no better than revilings; they think we revile them, if we do but re-

buke them; whereas, though we chasten sinners with the rod of reproof, we dare not sting them with the scorpion of reproach.

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the highpriest: For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Several interpretations are given by expositors of these words, *I wist not brethren, that he was the highpriest*: 1. Some think that St. Paul did not really know the highpriest, having been gone so long from Jerusalem; and the highpriest being made yearly. Others say, 2. That there being a great throng about him, the apostle could not distinctly hear who it was that spoke to him. Some understand it of absolute denial, that any such office as that of the highpriest ought then to be in being. As if the apostle had said, "I do not own any man to be a lawful highpriest now, that function being abolished and dissannulled at the coming of the Messias." Again, 4. Others understand the words, as if the apostle denied him to be the lawful highpriest, one of God's appointing, he being one of man's making, having purchased the place with money; for the power and covetousness of the Romans put a new highpriest every year to officiate; accordingly St. Paul knowing this man to be none of the posterity of Aaron, but brought in by sordid gain, might justly disown him to be the highpriest. Lastly, there are who affirm, that the apostle did certainly see and know the highpriest; and that his meaning is; "That having received such unjust usage in the court as to be openly smitten in the time of hearing, he did not know, that is, he did not consider who it was that spake to him, and therefore spoke hastily and unadvisedly." The scripture will not bear us out to use ill words to magistrates, should we be, as St. Paul there was, ill used by them; yet are magistrates no more to be flattered than they are to be reproached: the greatest may be reprov'd, and with a gracious severity told of their faults; and St. Paul did no more. It is no sin to tell the judgment of God, which will certainly come upon injurious and unjust oppressors.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Observe here, The innocent policy which the apostle uses for his own preservation: he perceiving that the council before whom he stood, were not all of a piece, but patched up of pharisees, and sadducees, he publicly professes himself a pharisee by education, and of that persuasion now in point of the resurrection.—Thus at once he cast in a bone of contention between the sadducees who denied the resurrection, and the pharisees who owned it; and obliged the pharisees, at least as to that opinion, to take his part, and so by pious prudence he turned their opposition against him upon one another; that by setting them at variance he might

the better escape. Learn hence, That an innocent and prudent policy may warrantably be made use of by the members and ministers of Jesus Christ, without any blemish to their holy profession; in order to our preservation from the heads of persecutors, a serpentine subtlety may be made use of, together with a dove-like innocency. Thus did St Paul here, when he perceived that one part were sadducees, and the other pharisees, he cried out, &c."

7 ¶ And, when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the pharisees and the sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry; And the scribes *that were* of the pharisees' part, arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

Observe here, 1. How sad a state, and how bad a condition was the Jewish church now in, when in the sanhedrim, or great council, men had power and authority, who believed no life but this; and what hypocrites were the pharisees, who could thus incorporate and embody with damnable heretics, the sadducees; and yet at the same time hated and persecuted christians. The sadducees were so far from believing that there was any spirit, that they blasphemously maintained, that God himself was not spiritual, but only a corporeal Being. When men sin with obstinacy against supernatural light, God justly draws from them even natural light, and suffers them to fall from one degree of error to another. Observe, 2. How partiality will change men's judgments, according to the interest of a party or faction. The pharisees were bitter enemies to the apostle; but because he owned himself of their sect, they instantly take part with him, and cry, *We find no fault with him*. The feuds about religion are commonly the sharpest feuds; men are more fond of the notions of their brains, than they are of the issue of their bodies: *Odia religiosorum sunt acerbissima*: "Religious hates are hottest." Observe, 3. How the dissensions of God's adversaries oftentimes become the deliverance of God's servants. Thus here the pharisees and sadducees quarrel about the resurrection: the pharisees justify St. Paul, and tell them that oppose him, "They are in danger of fighting against God." Thus God, when he pleaseth, can find or make patrons of his people, and raise up friends from amongst his very enemies, to defend his cause.

10 And, when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from
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among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

St. Paul was now in the midst of difficulty and danger; but observe how seasonably God steps in for his succour and deliverance: First, he stirs up that heathen tribune, the chief captain Lysias, who was present at the trial, to see his prisoner have fair play; the Lord stirs up this man to rescue the apostle from the hands of violence, by which he was in danger of being pulled in pieces, and he is returned safe into the castle again. O how do God's encouragements evermore accompany his commands! His faithful servants, when they suffer for him, shall certainly be delivered by him, either in trouble or out of trouble. Secondly, God comforts the suffering apostle with his own presence, and with the gracious manifestations of his special favor, "The Lord stood by him, and said, be of good cheer, Paul." Where note, That if the Lord stand by, and be graciously present with his servants, in a suffering hour, it is no matter how many and how mighty they be that do withstand them, and appear against them. No doubt these words, *be of good cheer Paul*, turned the apostle's prison into a palace, yea into a paradise, and enabled him to bid a bold defiance to all the devilish designs of the Jews in Jerusalem against him; having got such good security for his safety, even from God himself, in the faith of which our apostle holily triumphs, saying "If God be for us, who can be against us!" Rom. viii. 31. That is none can be against us, either safely or successfully. The presence of God with his suffering servants outweighs all their discouragements.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews, banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And there were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now, therefore, ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that ye bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

Observe here, 1. A barbarous and bloody plot, a cursed
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combination and conspiracy against the life of the innocent and useful apostle: no sooner was it day-light, but the wicked Jews bind themselves by an oath, never to eat or drink more, until they eat the apostle's flesh, and drink his blood. "Thus the wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." Psalm xxxvii. 12. Observe, 2. The numbers which were engaged in this conspiracy, more than forty; they all agreed as one man. Lord, how numerous, how unanimous, how resolute and outrageous are the enemies of thy holy religion, to carry on their accursed contrivances for the extirpation of it! Thus was it here, these enemies were numerous, *more than forty*. The devil's designs never miscarry for want of fit instruments; he has a party ever ready to oppose the gospel in every place. And as they were unanimous, as well as numerous, they combined together in one cursed bond: here was unity, but not an unity in the truth, but a conspiracy against it: here was agreement and friendship, but it was like that of Herod and Pilate against Christ, and not for him: and they were resolute and outrageous, *They bound themselves under a curse*, under a bloody vow, to pursue their purpose of murdering the apostle. It has been the old policy of the enemies of the church to oblige and bind themselves by oaths and excommunications, by leagues and associations, to carry on their wicked and bloody designs against the church: "They were more than forty, which made this conspiracy." Observe, 3. The quality of the persons which were engaged in this bloody purpose; they were the sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, and a life after death. And they apply themselves to the highpriest, and the sanhedrim or great council, not doubting of his and their readiness to join with them. O what a low ebb was the Jewish religion now at! What an highpriest and priesthood was there that must head a confederacy of murdering sadducees! How great was the degeneracy of the Jewish church, when their chief priests were thus ready to comply with, and contribute their best assistance to such a cruel crew of cut throats and bloody assassins! But they had almost filled up the measure of their sins, and their final destruction was near approaching. Observe lastly, What craft and cruelty, what fraud and force, are here found combined together in the church's enemies. The council must court the captain, that he bring down his prisoner, "as though they would enquire something more perfectly concerning him." Thus was the plot against the apostle's life laid craftily as well as cruelly; under a pretence of having the prisoner re-examined, they contrive to have him brought down from the castle, and in his way to the council, they combined together for his destruction. Lord, abate the power of the church's enemies, since their malice cannot be abated.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the pri-

soner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is it that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

Note here, 1 That no conspiracies are or can be kept secret from God, who can both detect them, and defeat them at his pleasure. Note 2 The remarkable providence of God in bringing this conspiracy to the knowledge of St. Paul's sister's son: he was perhaps by, when the conspirators were contriving the mischief, and overheard them. It is happy for the innocent, that the malicious cannot keep their own counsel. God oftentimes causeth the tongues of his people's enemies to fall upon themselves, and they discover the wicked purposes of their hearts, which none but themselves were privy to. Note, 3. How the hearts of all men are in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth them as he pleaseth. This is evident from the chief captain's great humanity towards St. Paul, and his courteous humility towards his sister's son, taking the youth by the hand, and as readily giving him both audience and dispatch; such a sovereignty and dominion has God over the hearts of men, that he can instantly incline them as he pleaseth, and make very enemies become benefactors at his pleasure.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See *thou* tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

23 ¶ And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him *safe* unto Felix the governor.

Observe here, 1. How wonderfully God overruled the heart of the chief captain in that he took care both of St. Paul and the young man also; he bids the young man depart; for had it been known that he had discovered the conspiracy, they had conspired against his life; and had not the chief captain conveyed away the apostle, his enemies who had been disappointed in this, would have made further attempts against his life. Thus wonderfully doth the good providence of God work for his servants' preservation. Observe, 2. What a strong guard does God raise and set round the apostle for his defence and safety, even a guard of heathen soldiers, to secure him from the Jewish rage; two hundred soldiers, threescore and ten horsemen, and spearmen two hundred. What a royal life-guard was here raised for the apostle's safe conduct to Cesarea! None of these soldiers intended him any good; but God made use of them as effectually, as if they had had the greatest good-will for him. God can make bad persons show kindness to his good servants, and do his will by them, who know nothing of his mind and will. When God has work to do, he will find instruments to do it by. And though we see them not, yet are they never the farther off.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner;

26 Claudius Lysias, unto the most excellent governor Felix, *sendeth greeting*;

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And, when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council;

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me *how* that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee, what they had against him—Farewel.

The chief captain, Lysias, having sent Paul under a strong guard to Cesarea by night, where Felix the Roman governor resided, he writes a letter to acquaint Felix with the accusation laid to the prisoner's charge. In which letter, observe, 1. The title given to the Roman governor, *Most excellent*; Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix, *sendeth greeting*: Titles of civil honor and respect given to persons in place and power are agreeable to the mind and will of God. There is an honor which belongs to men, with respect to their external degree and place, when none is due to them with respect to their internal qualifications.

He that is very honorable as to this place, may not deserve any honor as to his worth; yet ought he to be honored so far as his place requireth—Observe, 2. How God overruled the heart and pen of this Captain Lysias, to do the apostle right, in representing his case fairly and indifferently: That he found nothing brought against him that was punishable, either with death or bonds, by the Roman law. Observe, 3. How triflingly he speaks of the great things in question concerning our blessed Redeemer's death and resurrection, as also of the whole gospel: he calls them, undervaluingly, *Questions of their law*. As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the manifold wisdom of God is accounted and esteemed folly by the ignorant and blind world. Yet observe, 4. How God overruled his very slighting of these controversies in dispute, for the apostle's advantage; he being by that means preserved from the rage of the Jews; *when this man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed by them, I came with an army and rescued him*. Behold how God accomplishes his own design for the preservation of his servants, by the hands of those from whom destruction could rather have been expected. Thus here, God made use of an heathen captain to rescue and defend the apostle from the enraged Jews, who sends him under a strong guard with a friendly letter in favor of him to Felix the governor of Cesarea, where he gives notice to his accusers to implead him face to face. Blessed be God that our times are in his hands, not in our enemies' hands, nor yet in our own; until we have finished the work, which God designed us, neither men nor devils can take us off.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle;

33 Who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was? And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

The apostle being brought before Felix the Roman governor, a though he was an heathen, yet he showed the apostle far more favor than his own countrymen the Jews: For observe, 1. His affability to St Paul in asking him of his country. 2 His justice, he would not judge him till he had his accusers face to face; *I will hear thee when thine accusers are come*. If it be enough to accuse, who can be innocent? And if it be sufficient to deny, who would be found guilty? Magistrates must know a cause, before they give

sentence or judgment about it; otherwise, though they pronounce a right sentence, it is not in judgment, but by accident. Magistrates must be stars, as well as ministers; they must do nothing blindfold, or blindly. Observe, 3. His great favor towards the apostles, in committing him a prisoner, not to the common gaol, but to Herod's palace: A fair prison, if a place of confinement may be so called. The sanhedrim at Jerusalem, though of his own country, and of his own religion, yet were not so kind to him as Felix the heathen governor.—Thus the chapter concludes with an account of the apostle's wonderful deliverance from the Jews at Jerusalem, who conspired his destruction; together with the instrumental means and manner of it. In the next chapter we find him brought to Cesarea, tried before Felix, making a defence for himself, and so reasoning that Felix trembled: Behold a prisoner at liberty, and his judge in bonds.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the beginning of this chapter we find St. Paul brought to his trial before Felix the Roman governor; a famous trial, at which the plaintiff was Ananias the highpriest, and several members of the sanhedrim; the defendant, St. Paul; the judge, Felix; the emperor's attorney-general, Tertullus; and the indictment drawn up against the prisoner, heresy and sedition: From which imputation the apostle clears himself; and in the end of the chapter makes a declaration of his faith, and gives an account of the holiness and innocency of his life.

AND after five days, Ananias the highpriest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

Observe here, How Ananias the highpriest, with the elders or heads of the Jewish council at Jerusalem, travel from thence to Cesarea, a great many miles, to inform the government against St. Paul; *after five days Ananias descended, &c.* The devil's drudges stick at no pains, spare for no cost, in doing his drudgery. A persecuting spirit claps wings to a person, it makes him swift in his motion, and zealous in his application and endeavours. Observe, 2. How the highpriest carrieth with him one of their most eminent and eloquent advocates, to plead the innocent apostle. Satan never miscarries in any of his enterprizes and wicked designs, for want of fit tools to carry them on. He hath his Tertullus, an eloquent orator, ready, who could tune his tongue any way for a large fee. *Ananias descended with a certain orator named Tertullus, &c.*

2 And, when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quiet-

ness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence.

3 We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

Observe here, St. Paul the prisoner being called forth, Tertullus the orator began to show his art by a flattering insinuation, which mightily prevails with men of mean corrupt minds. There is no cause so foul and bad, but some will be found to plead it; yes, to justify and defend it. And if so, judges had need be wise, as the angels of God, discerning between truth and falsehood. Observe farther, How Tertullus seeks to gain the judge's favor by flattery and falsehood: to win judges by flattery, hath ever, by false accusers, been taken for the surest way of success; but after all, flattery is a very provoking and wrath procuring sin: and it is hard to say, which is most dangerous, to receive flattery, or to give it. When men give much glory to man, it is hard for man to give that glory back again to God. It is hell and death to flatter sinners, or suffer ourselves to be flattered by them. Observe lastly, That bad government is better than no government; tyranny itself is better than anarchy. The Jews were not now their own masters, but tributaries to the Romans. Yet Tertullus acknowledges, "Many worthy deeds were done unto their nation by the prudence of the Roman governor: Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix."

5 For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law:

7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands.

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying, that these things were so.

Tertullus having prepared the judge, presently falls upon the matter, and charges St. Paul with being a pestilent fellow, a seditious person, a disturber of the nation, a profaner of the temple, a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. And adds, That out of more zeal to the Jewish religion, they had themselves before now dispatched him out of the way, but that he was violently rescued out of their hands by Lysias the chief captain, and brought thither to be tried. Concluding, That these things which he had spoken, were the sense of all those that came down with him as witnesses. Ver. 9. "The Jews also assented, and said that these things were so." Here note, 1. What an heavy load of reproaches and false accusations, our innocent apostle labored under; he is accounted, and called, a walking-pestilence. Thus the holy and faithful servants of God are esteemed by the world, the plague and bane of the place and nation where they live; although it is really for their sakes that God stays off plagues and judgments from falling into the world: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow." It is not the greatest holiness towards God, nor righteousness towards men, that can sufficiently shield and defend a saint from censure and slander, from calumny and false accusation. Note, 2. Besides the general charge, that the apostle was the very pest and plague of mankind; we have a three-fold accusation brought against him, That he was a mover of sedition, a profaner of the temple, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Lord, how should thy faithful ministers and ambassadors prepare themselves for, and comfort themselves under the most hellish reproaches, when we find the great apostle, whom St. Chrysostom honors with this character, "That the earth never bare a better man since it bare our Redeemer;" yet thus mis-called and accounted a pest, a plague, the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things! O why should such worthless worms as we murmur, when we meet with much less reproaches! Lord, help us, in imitation of thy example, for the joy that is set before us, to despise the shame, as well as to endure the cross. The best men that ever the world had, have fallen under the lashes of envenomed tongues. What foul aspersions hath malice cast upon innocency itself? Our blessed Saviour, in the clearest act of innocency, his casting out of devils, suffered the most horrid imputation, even of "casting out devils through Beelzebub the prince of devils," Mat. ix. 34. Now the servant must not expect to be above his Master; if Christ thus suffered, needs must christianity, needs must christians, needs must ministers and ambassadors,

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are but yet twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the

(No. 37.)

temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Our apostle, being accused of three notorious crimes, namely, *sedition, heresy and profanation* of the temple, answers distinctly to every one of them. Where observe, 1. How undaunted innocency is in a good person, and in a good cause; St. Paul was so far from being daunted by the greatness of his enemies, or by the vehemency of their accusation, that he tells the governor, he did *with all cheerfulness* undertake his defence. Observe, 2. How the apostle answers distinctly to the particulars of his accusation. And, first, as to the crime of sedition, charged upon his person. Secondly, As to the crime of heresy, charged upon his religion. As to the former, the crime of sedition, that is a very infamous charge: what schism is in matters ecclesiastical, that is sedition in matters temporal and civil. As the one violates the peace of the church, so doth the other the peace of the commonwealth. Sedition is committed three ways: by the head, by the tongue, and by the hand. A seditious head plots and contrives mischief, a seditious tongue vents it, and a seditious hand executes it. None of these ways, was the apostle guilty of sedition: he never employed his head to contrive, nor his tongue to utter, nor his hand to practise any thing that tended that way; yet he is charged with it: "We have found this fellow a mover of sedition." Learn thence, It is no new stratagem to represent the faithful servants of God, as enemies to states and kingdoms, as disturbers of the peace, as troublers of Israel, as trumpeters of rebellion, as movers of sedition, on purpose to bring them into hatred with princes, that they may fall under the sword of the magistrates as malefactors, and be looked upon as persons unworthy to live. But how does St. Paul free himself from the charge and imputation of sedition? Thus, 1. By demonstrating the improbability of it; how unlikely it was, that he who came up to the temple to worship God, and to bring alms to the poor, and was in Jerusalem but a very few days, and did not so much as dispute either in the temple, or in the synagogues, should yet stir up the people to sedition. 2. He puts his adversaries upon proof of their articles, ver. 13. "Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me." From the apostle's practice in clearing his own innocency, we learn, That it is a piece of justice which every man owes to himself, to vindicate and clear his reputation from all guilt falsely imputed to him, and especially from that of sedition.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets:

Here the apostle answers the second charge brought against him; namely, the charge of heresy, and being the ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Where note, That although the apostle would not, out of his great modesty, take upon himself to be one of the heads or chiefs among them,

a ring-leader, as they styled him; yet, as to the owning of that way, notwithstanding all the imputations they had cast upon it, he doth it with the greatest freedom and courage, in the presence of his judge and accusers: "This I confess, that after the way which ye call heresy, so worship I, &c." Here observe, 1. The false imputation which christianity suffered under, in its first appearance; "After the way which they call heresy." It is no new thing to nickname the worshippers of the true God, to call them heretics, their way of worship, heresy. Observe, 2. The way taken by St. Paul to remove this false imputation; namely by an appeal to scripture and antiquity: "So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets." Where note, How he appeals to scripture as the ground and rule of his faith, the law and the prophets, and then he appeals to the best and purest antiquity for the object of his worship: "So worship I the God of my fathers." Observe, 3. The freedom and courage of the apostle in owning his religion, notwithstanding these false imputations even in the presence of his greatest enemies, and when they were in hopes to destroy him; *This I confess unto thee*. The apostle abhorred that mean and base spirited principle, which makes it lawful for men to deny their religion, when it brings them into danger: No, he valued his above, and preferred it before his personal safety. God Almighty inspire us with the same courage and holy resolution, that when our adversaries of the church of Rome pronounce us heretics, and call our religion heresy, we may answer them as our apostle answered their forefathers, the subtle pharisees, "After the way which you call heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets."

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

Our apostle hath made a free and open profession of his religion in the foregoing verse, "After the way called heresy do I worship the God of my fathers;" here, at the 15th verse, he asserts the doctrine of the resurrection, which was a principal article both of the jewish and the christian religion; "I have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." And having made a declaration of his faith, ver. 14, 15, he next gives an account of his life, at ver. 16. "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Observe here, What is the principle and guide of a good man's actions, and that is conscience. The word and law of God is the rule of our actions, but conscience is the immediate guide and director of them. Observe, 2. The extent of a good man's pious practice, "To keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man." To exercise a faithful care in performing the duties of both tables, is both an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession. Observe, 3. The apostle's constancy and perseverance in this course,

"To have always a conscience void of offence." We must not make conscience of our duty by fits, and starts, but in the whole course and tenor of our lives and actions. Religion should be a constant frame and temper of mind. Observe, 4. The apostle's earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, "Herein do I exercise myself." The original word is of an intense signification, and denotes the apostle's applying his mind in good earnest, to be thoroughly instructed in all the parts and points of his duty, and his being very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. Observe, 5. What was the apostle's great motive and encouragement to do all this; namely the belief of the resurrection, and the future state of rewards and punishments; consequent upon it: because "I hope for a resurrection both of the just and unjust," therefore "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence." If we believe the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment to come, we shall be very careful to discharge a good conscience now, in order to the rendering a good account of ourselves then. Happy man, who, when he goes into another world, carries with him neither a conscience clear of all guilt, either by innocency or repentance! For verily, at the hour of death, to be free from stings and upbraidings, from the terrors and tortures, from the confusion and amazement of a guilty conscience, is a happiness so desirable, that it is well worth the care and best endeavours of our whole life. May the apostle's exercise be our daily practice, namely, "to keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward all men."

17 Now, after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings:

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council.

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them. Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.

The apostle had vindicated himself from the charge and imputation of sedition and heresy before, he comes now to clear himself of the third charge, namely, the profanation of the temple; in order whereunto, he declares that he had not been a long time at Jerusalem before this journey, and that he now came to bring alms to the poor Jews that were converted to christianity: he acknowledges that at this time he went indeed into the temple, yet not to profane it, but to perform those rites in it, which the law of the Jews required of such as had the vow of the Nazarites upon them. Thus the apostle cleared himself of all that was objected against him, and made it evidently appear to the face of his

enemies, that all the accusations brought against him were false and calumnious. Learn thence, That generally the accusations laid by the malicious to the charge of the innocent, are nothing but empty noise and clamor. Having thus vindicated himself to their faces, he next makes an appeal to the consciences of his accusers, whether there was any thing of moment charged upon him more than this, That he professed and believed the resurrection of the dead. Thus bravely did the apostle plead his own cause here, or rather the Spirit of God that spake in him, though satan had got the high-priest Ananias, and his eloquent orator Tertullus to implead and impeach St. Paul: yet behold with what a flood of truth and eloquence doth the apostle vindicate his own innocence. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit*, "Great is the truth, and will finally prevail."

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way; he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintances to minister or come unto him.

The sense of this is: "When Felix understood and discerned how things went, he would not pass any sentence in the case at present: but put them off, saying, 'When I have got a more perfect knowledge of this way of christianity,'" and when I have spoken with Lysias, and understand the truth concerning the tumult, I will then determine the difference between you: In the mean time, the captain of the guard shall have the prisoner in custody, to gratify the Jews." Where observe, both the equity and clemency of Felix the judge: His equity, in that he would not pronounce sentence, before he had thoroughly and fully understood the matter of fact: His clemency, in suffering the apostle to be prisoner at large, and allowing his friends and acquaintance liberty to come and visit him. Behold the former rigor towards the apostle mercifully relaxed: he is no more confined to a close dungeon, but goes abroad with a chain and a keeper, and none of his friends are forbidden either to visit him or relieve him. Thus God, in an unexpected hour, casts such outward comforts to his suffering saints and servants, as he sees will do them most good: yea, and can cause his and their enemies to become contributors thereunto.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

This chapter now concludes with the apostle's famous

sermon before Felix his judge, in which we have considered, the preacher, the hearer, the text or subject preached upon, and the successful effect of a sermon. Observe, 1. The preacher, St. Paul, *As Paul reasoned*: The apostle was now in bonds, yet had liberty to preach, and he preached with liberty, with great boldness and freedom of speech, though under great disadvantages; his person imprisoned, his reputation blotted and defamed, loaded with calumnies and odious imputations; yet under all these disadvantages the apostle preaches. Observe, 2. His hearers, Felix and his wife Drusilla; Felix, a bad man, guilty of bribery, &c. Drusilla, a vile woman, forsook her own husband, and lived in adultery with Felix, as Josephus says: Here was a pair of hopeful hearers: yet St. Paul boggles not to preach to them, as bad as they were, hoping to make them better. Learn thence, That the gospel must be preached by us, when we are lawfully called therunto, whatever the persons be that make up the auditory; we know not what persons, or in what hour God may call. Observe, 3. The text or subject matter preached upon, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come: where the wisdom of a preacher appears by the suitableness of the subject: the apostle chose a very proper subject for them both. Felix was guilty of bribery, or at least was ready to commit it: for the next verse tells us, that he hoped to have money given him by Paul, to release him, therefore to him he preaches of righteousness. Drusilla was guilty of incontinency and adultery, to her he preaches of temperance, and to both of a judgment to come: Happy were it, if great offenders had such wise admonishers near them; but too often they meet with flattering parasites, instead of faithful preachers. Observe, 4. The success or effect of the sermon, *Felix trembled*: He trembled, but not believed: he trembled at the guilt of sin, and at the apprehensions of the wrath of God due unto sin, but his trembling did not arise from a holy dread and reverence of the Majesty of God speaking to him in and by his word: The word of God can make the proudest and stoutest sinner in the world to quake and tremble. Observe, lastly, How Felix's trembling fit or sick quail of conscience soon went over: he dismisses the preacher for that time, and tells him he will call for him at a more convenient season. But we never read of any such opportunity taken afterwards for that purpose: so dangerous is it to stop our ear at the present call and command of God; if to-day we will not, to-morrow, God may say, you shall not hear my voice.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him; wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 ¶ But after two years Poreius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Observe here, what small success the apostle's preaching had, it found and left Felix a bad man; covetousness and bribery were his sins before, and they are so still; "He hoped that money should be given him of Paul." That is, he expected a bribe for setting the apostle at liberty, contrary to

the law both of God and man. To this covetousness he added cruelty; for though he had nothing to charge Paul with, yet to gratify the Jews, he left Paul bound, minding the pleasing of men more than the displeasing of God. An hypocrite can become all things to all men, that he may gain by all; but behold the hand of God upon Felix: he that had so unjustly kept Paul bound for two years, and cruelly left him bound at last, to please and gratify the Jews, is sent a prisoner in bonds himself to Rome, to answer before Nero, for his misdemeanors in the managing of his government. A just reward for him who regards the pleasing of men more than the displeasure of God.

CHAPTER XXV.

St. Paul's trial before the Roman governor Felix, was recorded at large in the foregoing chapter. In this we find him brought upon his trial before Festus, who succeeded Felix in the administration of the government. And although Festus could find the apostle guilty of no misdemeanor, yet he had neither the courage nor honesty to set him at liberty, but sends him bound from Cesarea to Rome, as St. Luke relates in this and the following chapters.

NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest, and the chief of the Jews, informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, That Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5 Let them, therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

St. Luke here informs us, that Festus being come to the government, and going up to Jerusalem, the high-priest and rulers of the Jews quickly began to inform him against Paul, and besought him that he would send for him to Jerusalem, resolving to lay some villains by the way to kill him as he came; but the divine providence so over-ruled the matter, that Festus would not consent to it, but ordered his accusers to come to Cesarea, and implead him there. Here note, 1. How restless is the rage, and unwearied the malice and enmity, which the persecutors of the truth have against the professors and preachers of it. The high-priest, and chief of the Sanhedrim or ecclesiastical court, continued their

murderous designs against the innocent apostle; and are sorry they could not get an heathen governor as cruel as themselves, to join with them. Heathens have sometimes blushed at the mention of those crimes, which the professors of religion have committed without either shame or remorse. Note, 2. How deplorably corrupt and degenerate the Jewish church at this time was! Lord, what priests and church-governors were here, who call it a favor to have an opportunity granted them to murder an innocent man in cool blood, contrary to the law of nature and of nations! But behold the justice of God upon them: they were now given up to a reprobate sense, and are hurried headlong by a diabolical spirit, a little before their final destruction; "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets, and stonest them that were sent unto thee." Note, 3. What an overruling providence was here seen, in that Festus, by no flatteries nor persuasions, would be prevailed with to remove the apostle from Cesarea to Jerusalem: This broke the high-priest's measures, who designed to have killed him by the way. No, said Festus, the prisoner shall not come to you, but you shall go to him." This was a marvellous providence for the apostle's preservation. Oh how easy is it for the most wise God to baffle and blast the most cunning contrivances of the devil, to befoul the enemies of his church and people, by making the counsels of the wicked to be of no effect! God looks and laughs at all the plots of wicked men against the righteous: Frustration and disappointment attend all their designs, and perdition and destruction do awe their persons; Psal. ii. 6. "He that sitteth in Heaven laughs them to scorn, the Lord has them in derision."

6 And, when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea: and the next day, sitting in the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And, when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove;

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

Observe here, 1. The equity and justice of Festus, an Heathen judge, in his proceedings at St. Paul's trial: he will have the high-priest and elders that accused him speak to his face; he will have the prisoner brought forth, and he will have the matter examined by, and before himself. When the malicious bring the innocent upon their trial, God will provide a judge for their turn. Observe, 2. The indictment or charge which the Jews brought in against the apostle, That he had offended against the law, profaned the temple, and raised sedition against the Roman government. Here we find the devil at his old trade: Namely, stirring up the rage and malice of the world against the saints of God, under pretence of their being enemies to the state, and sub-

verters of civil government. Observe, 3. That to be loaded with calumnies and reproaches, has been the common lot, and constant portion of the faithful friends and servants of Christ, from the first beginning of christianity, *the Jews laid many and grievous things against Paul, which they could not prove.* Reproach has been the reward of religion and righteousness; but St. Paul easily wipes off the several reproaches cast upon him, affirming himself to have been always a religious observer of the law, that he went into the temple upon a religious account, that he had never taught nor practised any rebellion against Cæsar. The servants of Christ are happy in their own innocence, and their adversaries render themselves odious by belying them, and laying that to their charge which every one can disprove.

9 But Festus willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judge of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them, I appeal unto Cæsar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

Observe here, how Festus being willing to gratify the Jews, asks St. Paul, if he would go to Jerusalem, and be tried there, in the Jewish court about those matters? The apostle replied, that he was his prisoner, and that he was his proper judge under the Roman emperor, and not the Jews; and that being a Roman, he might claim the privilege of a Roman, which accordingly he did by appealing unto Cæsar. Festus hearing that, not only admitted his appeal, but was glad of it to be rid of him without peril on the one hand, or ill will on the other. Here we may remark, 1. That carnal politicians do not so much consider what is just and righteous in its own nature, as what is of use and advantage to themselves, be it right or wrong. The apostle had cleared himself from all slanderous accusations; and yet, Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, would not set him at liberty. It is too often the practice of corrupt judges, that they may please the people, to deliver up truth to be injuriously crucified; considering more their own interest, than the prisoner's innocence. Note, 2. How the apostle appeals from Jerusalem to Rome, from his own countrymen to Heathens; from the Highpriest to the emperor Nero; expecting to find more justice at the hands of infidels, than from the Jewish sanhedrim: and to this the (No. 37.)

apostle was in some sort divinely admonished by Christ himself, to make his appeal to Rome, Acts xxiii. 11 *Be of good cheer, Paul, thou shalt bear witness to me at Rome.* Doubtless, this was a mighty support and strong consolation to him, to know that he appealed and desired to go to Rome, where God had appointed to have him go.

13 And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth:

18 Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar.

Observe here, 1. How God will not be wanting to his servants in their greatest straits and sufferings, but will providentially dispose of all matters in order to their deliverance, when it may most conduce to his own glory and their good. Thus here, king Agrippa comes to congratulate Festus;

Festus declares the cause of God's oppressed servant to the king, and God makes use of both Festus and Agrippa to screen the apostle from the violence of his enemies. *In the mount the Lord will be seen*, his people's extremities are the seasons of his succour. Observe, 2. How the very light of nature in and among the Heathens condemns it as an act of manifest and notorious injustice in a judge to pass sentence upon a person, unheard and unallowed to make his defence. This baseness was below the Roman gallantry whilst Pagans: Festus demands the accusers and the accused to appear face to face; and yet such a diabolical spirit of malice had so blinded the Jews, that contrary to the law of nature, and the law of all nations, they would have had St. Paul here condemned without knowing the cause, or hearing his defence. Observe, 3. What base and vile, what low and undervaluing thoughts and apprehensions have carnal men of the high and holy things of God. Festus here calls the religion and worship, which was of God's own institution, most profanely and contemptuously by the name of superstition; *They had certain questions against him of their own superstition*; and how slightly doth he also speak of our glorified Redeemer, styling him *one Jesus*! But no wonder that the dunghill-cocks of the world know not the worth of the pearl of price.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men, which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me both at Jerusalem and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.—

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it semeth to be unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

Observe here, 1. King Agrippa's curiosity to see and hear St. Paul: he was born and bred up amongst the Jews, and probably understood something of the Christian religion, and possibly had heard much of Paul, and therefore desired to see him, as Herod desired to see Christ, and to hear John the Baptist, only to gratify his curiosity, not to be advantaged by his ministry. Observe, 2. How contemptuously the Holy Ghost speaks of all the pomp, retinue, and state, which Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice appeared in, at the time and place of hearing; he calls it *fancy*, so the original word signifies, intimating, that all the pomp, gaiety, and glory of the world, is nothing but fancy, a dream and a shadow, having no real existence, but a being in imagination only. Observe, 3. That truth and innocency shine forth the more splendidly by the greater opposition that is raised against them. The more malicious the Jews were in accusing Paul, the more did his innocency appear; and the more was he acquitted and discharged by his judges. Thus we see the providence of God wrought all matters for St. Paul's justification, and for the Jews' reprehension: Festus had nothing to write to Cæsar, no crime to inform him of against the apostle. Thence learn, that although God sometimes permits his servants to be laden with slanders and reproaches, yet he will find a time to clear their innocence, and cause their very judges, if not their accusers, to proclaim them guiltless. *I find*, saith Festus, *that he hath committed nothing worthy of death*. It is no small mercy to have our innocency vindicated, for God to clear up our righteousness as the light, and our just dealings as the noon day, and to free our reputation from those blemishes which the uncharitable suspicions, or rash censures of men have cast upon us. There is no spot so unbeautiful, as that upon our credit, saving only a spot upon our consciences. God made the apostle's enemies here do him right, and his name was clothed with honour in the estimation of his very adversaries.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter brings St. Paul to his third trial, namely, before King Agrippa; in which we have the apostle's apology or defensive plea, which he makes for himself against those blind Jews, which did so maliciously persecute him: in which plea he declares, 1. His manner of life before his conversion, which was very pharisaical. 2. The manner of his conversion, which was miraculous and wonderful. 3. His manner of life after his conversion, which was religious and remarkable: before his conversion, he persecuted the gospel, which others preached; after his conversion, he preached the gospel, which he himself had persecuted; and the great charge brought against him was this, that of a great opposer, he was become a great professor. But the particulars of his defence are before us in the following chapter.

THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself: then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews;

3 Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews. Wherefore, I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Observe here, 1. The person whom the apostle makes his defence before, Agrippa, Agrippa a king, of whom he begs the favor patiently to hear him: it is a great favor for great men so much as to hear an innocent good man plead for himself: Agrippa, who, by reason of his birth and breeding among the Jews, was acquainted with the scriptures, the law and the prophets. Observe, 2. How the providence of God wonderfully procures St. Paul a liberty to speak for himself: hereby he had an opportunity at once, to make known his case, and to publish the gospel. But note, farther, that as the providence of God procured him liberty, so the good spirit of God gave him ability to speak so efficaciously and effectually, with such evidences and demonstration, that he not only took the ears, but captivated the consciences of the whole court, and almost persuaded the king himself to turn christian.

4 My manner of life, from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews,

5 Which knew me from the beginning (if they would testify) that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a pharisee.

Here the apostle begins his defence, with a relation of the innocency and strictness of his life before his conversion; he did and could appeal to all that knew him, concerning the unblameableness of his conversation. Thence note, that an innocent and blameless life, from our youth upwards, is a singular support and encouragement to us in a suffering hour, especially when we are called forth to suffer for religion and righteousness' sake. Observe farther, the instance which the apostle gives of his strictness in religion, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a pharisee." Of all the sects among the Jews, there was none that took up such an extraordinary strict way of religion as the pharisees; of this sect was St. Paul, before converted to christianity, and in this he rested for salvation. Thence learn, 1. That an extraordinary strict way taken up in religion, is thought by many a sure and sufficient foundation for their eternal salvation. Learn, 2. That many may rest upon a strict way of religion, which yet cometh not up to, but is oft-times besides, the appointment of the word of God:

the pharisees, for their unusual and supererogating way of exactness, concluded that they should certainly go to heaven, if any did; when, alas! many things which they practised with extraordinary zeal and strictness, were never required by God at their hands.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes instantly serving *God* day and night hope to come: for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Our apostle had vindicated his life before, his doctrine now: he tells Agrippa, that for believing, expecting, and preaching the doctrine of the resurrection, he was questioned of the Jews: this he calls the *hope of the promise made of God unto the Fathers*: Others understood it of the promise of the Messias, which was made unto the Fathers, and was generally depended upon by the most pious among the twelve tribes scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth; and in the faith and expectation whereof, they fervently served God night and day. Learn thence, 1. That the pious and godly among the Jews, lived in hopes of the Messiah's appearing, of a glorious resurrection by him, and of an eternal life and salvation with him. 2. That their hope of this promised mercy, did cause them to serve God instantly day and night. Hope is the great exorter of industry and endeavour; expectation puts it upon action; hope of obtaining, is the motive to every undertaking; the christian's hope, or thing hoped for, is great and excellent in his esteem, namely, eternal life: and where the esteem is high, the endeavour will be strong. That christian who has a well grounded belief and hope of a life to come, will serve God with an unwearied diligence and industry; if by any means he may attain the fruition and enjoyment of it, "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come."

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

As if the apostle had said, "The great point in controversy between me and you is this, whether the dead in general shall rise? and whether Christ in particular be risen from the dead? Now, why should either seem incredible to you? Is it too hard for God, who made the world, and upholds the world, and gives life to all living; is it too hard or difficult for him to raise the dead? If not, why should it be thought incredible or impossible?" Learn hence, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, is neither incredible nor impossible, neither against right reason nor true faith.

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and, when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme: and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Here the apostle frank'y declares, that he was once as sharp and bitter an enemy to Christ, and to all that believed in him, as any one whatever; and thought himself bound in conscience to persecute all that owned him; and, with threatenings and tortures compelled them to deny Christ; and, being exceedingly fierce, he forced them to fly to heathen cities to escape his fury. Where note, 1. That we ought to be upon very good and sure grounds, before we oppose and persecute any. 2. That some persecute others, and at the same time think they do well in so doing; *I verily thought*, says the apostle, *that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus*. He spake as if his conscience would have troubled him, unless he had troubled others, for that which was indeed their conscience. Note, 3. That Paul, being a blasphemer himself, compelled the professors of the gospel to blaspheme. This he probably did two ways, First by his example, they imitated him in blaspheming, or speaking evil of the ways of Christ. Or, secondly, by his cruelty; vexing them so in the profession of Christ, that some who were unsettled, probably fell away, and blasphemed the name of Christ, which they had professed. *He compelled them to blaspheme*: there is a compelling power and constraining force in example, especially in the example of persons in power and authority. Men sin with a kind of authority: Paul's blasphemous example compelled others to blaspheme.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests.

13 At mid-day, Oh king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

15 And I said, who art thou, Lord?

And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.

Our apostle having declared his manner of life before conversion, proceeds next to declare the extraordinary manner of his conversion: he tells Agrippa, that as he went with a persecuting purpose towards Damascus, at mid-day, a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shined round about him, and when they were all fallen prostrate on the earth, he heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Here note, 1. How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the execution of their bloody designs and purposes; Paul, as he thought, had swept and cleansed Jerusalem of saints before; after which he resolves to ransack Damascus, and undertakes a long journey, of five or six days, in order to that end: the worst journey that ever he intended, but the best that ever he undertook; a journey most maliciously purposed by him, but most mercifully disposed by God; and accordingly, he is met with in the way: Christ appears to him, a sudden beam of light shines round about him, and a voice is heard by him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" that is, *Me in my members*. Such as persecute saints for their sanctity, persecute Christ himself, and he can no more endure to see them wronged than himself; as the honor of the head redounds to the members, so the sorrows of the members are resented by the head: Christ said not thus to his murderers on earth, "Why bind ye me? Why buffet ye me? Why scourge ye and crucify me?" But here when his members suffer, he cries out from heaven, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Lord, thou art more tender of thy body mystical, than thou wert of thy body natural; more sensible of thy members' sufferings than of thine own.

16 But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance, among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

St. Paul had given King Agrippa an account of his miraculous conversion in the former verses; in these he declares to him his extraordinary commission to preach the gospel; that Christ, who appeared to him from heaven, chose him to be a preacher, as well as a professor of the gospel; assuring him, that he would stand by him, and deliver him from the persecutions both of the Jews and Gentiles, to whom he

should send him, and would bless his endeavours, to the opening the eyes of their understanding, and to the turning of them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; that they might receive, by faith in Christ, remission of sins, and a portion of the heavenly inheritance among such as are regenerated by his Holy Spirit. Here note, 1. The honor which God is pleased to put upon the ministry of the word, his own ordinance: The apostle, who was only the instrument, is said to open the eyes of the blind, and turn sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; all which is properly and principally the work of the Spirit of Christ; yet he is pleased to put this honor upon his instruments the ministers, by whom he worketh all this, and for which reason they are called co-workers, or workers together with Christ. Note, 2. The apostle's mission, *I send thee*. Great is the dignity of gospel-ministers, they are God's messengers; their commission is sealed by the whole Trinity, and intimates both their dignity and duty: to intimate their holiness, they are called men of God; for their vigilancy, watchmen; for their courage, they are called soldiers; for their painfulness, harvest laborers; for their care of the flock, shepherds; for their wisdom, overseers; for their industry, husbandmen; for their patience, fishermen; for their tenderness, nurses; for their affectionateness, fathers and mothers: for their faithfulness, stewards. A very high and honorable calling; the Son of God despised it not. Note, 3. St. Paul's commission in the several branches of it. 1. *To open their eyes*, that is, to enlighten their understandings, that they may know God and their duty to him: In order to which there is required, 1. Ability in the preachers: how can they open the eyes of others who are blind and ignorant themselves? Ought not they who undertake to be guides and leaders, very well to know the way themselves? 2. Perspicuity in the sermon: what hope can there be of opening men's understandings, when the matter delivered is closed up from them? It was St. Paul's aim to speak words easy to be understood, and it should be ours; it is the same thing to preach in an unknown tongue, as in an unknown style, above the reach of our hearers. Painted glass is more costly, but the plainer glass is the clearer and more useful. But we must take care, that though we come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. The second part of St. Paul's commission, was to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; in order to which, he was turned from these himself. He has little reason to expect, that God will honor his ministry for the conversion of others from sin and satan, who is under the dominion of both himself. The minister's life is the people's looking glass, by which they usually dress themselves. Note, 4. The happy fruit of St. Paul's mission and commission both. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.—Whosoever true repentance is wrought by the ministry of the word, there is forgiveness attained, and a title to the inheritance of heaven attained with it. Note lastly, a threefold metaphorical description of the sinful state of nature before conversion, and the like of a state of grace after conversion. The state of nature is a state of blindness, *To open their eyes*; A state of darkness, *To turn them from darkness to light*; A state of slavery, *And from the power of satan unto God*. The state of grace after conversion is set forth by sight, light and liberty. All this is

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Christ's work originally, but his ministers' work instrumentally; "I have sent thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God."

19 Whereupon, Oh king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say shall come:

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Observe here, 1. How obedient the apostle was to the call of Christ: having had so glorious a vision, he did not, he durst not rebel against the light of it; but immediately went forth and preached, first at Damascus, then at Jerusalem, then throughout all Judea, and at last among the Gentiles, the doctrine of repentance, and the necessity of good works. Observe, 2 The ill requital which the good man met with for his diligence and faithfulness in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel; for this he had like to have been killed by the Jews in the temple; *Evangelium predicare est furorem mundi in se derizare*; "To preach the gospel is the ready way to bring the wrath and fury of the world upon ourselves." Observe, 3. With what thankfulness the apostle owns and acknowledges the merciful providence of God in preserving him both from the fraud and force of his enemies, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." And how did the sense of divine goodness upon his soul, provoke him to go on with his work, declaring no other thing concerning Christ, but what Moses and the prophets did of old foretel of him: namely, That he should be put to death, and should be the first that should rise again by his own power, and be the author of our resurrection. Note here, That the sufferings of Christ were taught by Moses, in all the commands given about sacrifices: and not by Moses only, but by the prophets also, particularly the prophet Isaiah, chap. lii. the evangelical prophet, and prophetic evangelist, who wrote as clearly of Christ's coming, as if he had then been come: From whence the apostle argues how black the wickedness of the Jews was, who went

about to kill him, for preaching the same doctrine which Moses and the prophets had taught before him.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded, that none of these things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in a corner.

Hitherto Festus had heard the apostle with great patience, but now he interrupts him, and tells him he talks like a man that was crazed. Carnal minds pass very uncharitable censures upon spiritual persons and spiritual things. Christ's kindred said, *he was beside himself*. Mark iii 21. Festus here judged Paul to be mad, thinking that he had over-studied himself, by meddling with matters too high for his capacity, and too deep for his understanding, he had brought himself into a deep melancholy; *Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning hath made thee mad*. But observe with what meekness and due terms of respect the apostle replied to this reviling governor, *I am not mad, most noble Festus*. Here observe, 1. The title of honor given to Festus, not so much to his person, for that was unworthy, as to his office, which was truly honorable, *most noble Festus*. Titles of respect and honor given to persons in place and power, are agreeable to the mind of God, and countenanced by christianity. Observe, 2. What an happy victory and conquest the apostle had over his own passions! he waves the reflections Festus had made upon him, and had learned of his Master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. It is a happy attainment for a man to be master of himself under a provocation, to be regulated by right reason, and not hurried by blind passion.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

The apostle, knowing that Agrippa was educated among the Jews, tells him that he could not but hear of the life, doctrine, miracles, death and resurrection of Christ; all which were done openly, and not in corners; and he could not but believe the prophets, and what they had foretold concerning the Messiah; and if the power of worldly interest did not overcome him, his life and practice would be answerable to his faith and belief. Thence learn, that a right belief of the holy scriptures is of great efficacy and force to confirm a person's life to the practice of real and universal holiness.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian.

29 And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Observe here, 1. What an efficacy St. Paul's doctrine had upon Agrippa, though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed. Learn thence, that there is certainly that in religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the consciences of ungodly men. Observe, 2. How sad it is, when persons have enjoyed the scriptures, the preaching of the word, and all means of salvation, and yet are but almost christians, and shall never enjoy the least salvation; they are within sight of heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God. Observe, 3. That such as will be christians indeed, must not only be almost but altogether christians; *I would that thou and all that hear me, says the apostle, were altogether such as I am, except these bonds*. Where note, the extraordinary charity and christian compassion of St. Paul: he wished them his graces, not his chains; he did not wish them his bonds and imprisonments, but he wished them the same liberty and enlargement by Jesus Christ, which he enjoyed; he would keep his sorrows and outward troubles to himself, but wishes they were acquainted with his inward consolations and comforts. A good man wishes others as well as he wishes himself; and if at any time he wishes that which is penally evil to the worst of his enemies, he doth it with an eye to their spiritual and eternal good: a good man dares not wish ill to those that have actually done ill to him; but wishes, prays, and endeavours the best good for them.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them;

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, this man doth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

Observe here, how Agrippa, Festus, and the whole company, acquit the innocent apostle in their judgments and consciences, yea, with their tongues declare that he deserved neither death nor bonds; yet at the same time that they acquit him, they discharged him not, but he is left in his enemies' hands, and at last put to death by the Gentiles. But how may it be said, was God's promise fulfilled then, ver. 16, 17, of this chapter, "I have appeared unto thee, to make thee a minister and a witness, and will deliver thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee." How did God deliver him from the Gentiles, when he was at last delivered into their hands, and put to death by the Gentiles? Answer, As long as the wisdom of God saw it fit and convenient, for the purpose of his glory, and as a real mercy conducing to the people's good; as long as it was a

true and beneficial deliverance, so long God wrought deliverance for him; nay, rather than fail, in a miraculous manner, no chains could bind him, nor iron gates, nor prison walls confine him: but when he had finished his course, run his race, fought the good fight of faith, and done the work which God set him about, it would not then have been a deliverance, but a real detriment to have been kept longer from his reward; now might the apostle say, Give me my robes and my crown. God now made his word good to the apostle, to deliver him from the people and the Gentiles, by making death his deliverer and deliverance. Thus faithful is God in his promises to his people. He will deliver them in six troubles, and in seven: in every danger, in every difficulty; but when death is the best deliverance, they shall have it as a covenant-mercy and blessing; for all things are ours, if we be Christ's, whether life or death, 1 Cor. chap. iii. 22.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter gives us an account of St. Paul's voyage from Cesarea to Rome: the providence of God so disposed, that the apostle was not sent by land, lest the Jews should lie lurking in the way to take away his life: but by sea, which though it proved a very dangerous voyage, by reason of tempestuous winds and storms, yet the divine care watched over him, preserved him, and all that were with him, for his sake. A full relation, both of the danger and deliverance, we have recorded in the chapter now before us.

AND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica being with us.

3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

The time being now come for the fulfilling of God's purpose and determinate counsel concerning Paul, recorded Acts xxiii. 11. "Be of good cheer, Paul, as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also at Rome!" Pursuant to this purpose of God, Festus the Roman governor delivers the apostle and his associates, Luke, Timothy, and Aristarchus, to Julius, in order to their sending, with

several other prisoners, who probably were great malefactors, to the city and court of Rome, where all appeals made to the Roman emperor were heard and determined before him. Now here we have observable, 1. The person whom the apostle was delivered to, Julius, a very civil person to the apostle, who suffered him to see and receive the civilities of his friends. Thus God raises up his people friends in the midst of their sufferings, and when persecutors send his saints to prison he will provide keepers for their turn. Julius, an Heathen soldier, was kinder to him than his own countrymen the Jews. Observe, 2. The villainous company of malefactors and prisoners, that the innocent apostle was packed with: *they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to Julius*. Saints and sinners, good and bad, innocent and uncent, share together in the same outward miseries; but though they be thus jumbled together in this world (where all things come alike to all) yet the righteous judge will make a difference between them in the other world, according to their works. Observe, 3. Though the apostle was thus yoked with malefactors and criminals in the ship, yet God favored him with some companions which were according to his heart's desire, namely, his dear associates, St. Luke, Timothy, and Aristarchus. It is a great comfort to the afflicted to have good companions in their afflictions, *Optimum solatium est sodalium*: but above all, it was the happiness of the apostle, that he enjoyed the presence of God with him in so comfortable a manner, in and under all his sufferings, according to his promise, chap. xviii. 10. *I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee*. The gracious special presence of God with his children and people, is a sure and sufficient support unto them in and under all the difficulties and trials which his wisdom sees fit to exercise, and try them with. Observe, 4. What an additional favor it was from God, that St. Paul found friends in Sidon, such saints as he could comfortably converse with, and receive refreshments from, even needful accommodations for his tedious voyage. Learn hence, that God's care of, his compassion towards, and provision for, his children and people, is universal and perpetual, at all times and in all places.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over-against Salmone;

8 And hardly passing it, came unto

a place which is called, The Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*,

10 And said unto them, *Sirs*, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

An account is here given of the very hazardous voyage which the apostle had from Cesarea towards Rome. He sails from Cesarea to Cyprus: from Cyprus to Cilicia; from Cilicia to Crete: and having been long at sea, and the summer wearing away, and the great fast being past; that is, the anniversary fast of expiation, which was on the tenth day of September; after which the sea growing tempestuous, the ancients left off sailing until March, because of the shortness of the days: St. Paul, foreseeing the danger of the season, and being also inspired by the spirit of God, admonished them of the great hazard of the voyage, both to the ship and also to the lives of those that were in it, and advised them to venture no further till the sea was calmer; but the owner and governor of the ship (who was supposed to be better skilled in his own art) advising otherwise, the captain of the guard prefers his judgment before Paul's, and so sets forward, but with great hazard and great loss, as the event declared. From the whole we gather, that the fittest seasons ought to be observed and taken for every enterprise both sacred and secular: winter journeys by land, or voyages by sea, are unsafe, as well as uncomfortable. A season is beautiful for all things, and has a lustre upon it above all other parts of time. This winter voyage, about our October, was very hazardous and unseasonable; for the winds were hoisterous and contrary, the days were short, the light little, the night long, the clouds thick, the weather dark, the storms raging; therefore, the apostle advised to winter in the fair havens, knowing the season for sailing was now past.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west.

13 And when the south-west wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained

their purpose, loosing *thence* they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island Which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat.

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quick-sands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship:

19 And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands, the tackling of the ship.

The farther difficulties and dangers which the apostle met with, in this winter voyage, are here described and declared, and the properest lessons of instruction which can, I think, be gathered from them, will be by way of allusion: thus, 1. The ship in which he sailed is an emblem of the church, in her militant state here on earth; she is afflicted, tossed with tempests, and in danger of being shipwrecked every moment; many tempestuous Euroclydons arise suddenly, and threaten her fatally; but her wise pilot sits at the helm, steers her with a fixed eye and steady hand between rocks and shelves, undergirding her by his everlasting arms of power and love which are underneath her; and when, in our apprehensions, she is brought to a bopeless and helpless state, without the light of sun or stars to comfort her; then doth the Lord enlighten her darkness, and at midnight there shall be light. Again, 2. This voyage neglected in the summer, and undertaken in the winter season, to the peril of the passengers, and loss of the ship, lively represents unto us both the folly and danger of persons who suffer the spring of youth and the summer of ripe-age to slip and slide away from them; and when the winter of old age comes upon them, then they think of launching forth towards the fair haven of eternal happiness, and not before. Set we forth never so soon, the winds will be contrary, the weather tempestuous, the rocks many, the difficulties great: and yet, Lord! how is our precious time spent and spilt? When age comes upon us, we complain we want time, whereas we foolishly waste it; how are miserable souls that set out late for heaven (when they can serve sin no longer) benighted, bewildered, shipwrecked, eternally and irrecoverably lost! Behold, now only is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But, after a long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.

24 Saying, fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Cesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

Observe here, 1. The hopeless, helpless, comfortless, state which St. Paul, and those in the ship with him, were now reduced to; neither sun nor stars appeared, and the weather proved very tempestuous; and when they utterly despaired of life, then God gives Paul, and he the rest, a comfortable assurance, that nothing should be lost, but the vessel only. Oh how does God delight to deliver those that are forsaken of their hopes; what a present help is he to the helpless? He reserves his holy hand for a dead lift; our extremities are the seasons of his succour. Observe, 2. The great and special favor with which God indulged the holy apostle, even to send an angel to him to comfort him: *the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, said, fear not.* Oh what an encouragement is it to us, to enter upon, and be faithful in the service of God, when he causes his holy angels, upon all occasions to serve us? When visible dangers are before us, God has invisible servants round about us, both to succour and secure us. Lord, help me in sincerity to say, *thine I am, and thee I serve*; let me be found faithful in all the instances of my duty to thee, and then shall I find (as the apostle here) that safely evermore accompanies duty. Observe, 3. How God was pleased, for St. Paul's sake, to save all that were with him in the ship; sinners are spared and saved for the saints' sake, whom yet they hate and seek to destroy. The wicked are oft-times delivered from temporal destruction, for the sake of the godly who live among them, and intercede with God for them; there were two hundred, threescore and

(No. 38.)

sixteen persons, all heathens, except three or four, saved for St. Paul's sake, who, no doubt, begged their lives of God. Lord, what fools and madmen are the wicked, who seek the destruction of those for whose sake it is that they are not themselves destroyed? The breaches which wicked men make by sinning, they make up by praying. Observe, 4. How steady and steadfast the apostle was in the faith and belief of God's promise and providence, for his own and the company's preservation. *I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.* We honor God exceedingly, when we depend upon his promise, rely upon his power, believe his word, though what he says be very improbable, and unlikely to come to pass.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country:

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms; and, when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then, fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And, as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color, as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship.

31 Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

A farther account is here given, both of the apostle's imminent danger and extraordinary deliverance: for fourteen days together the ship was continually tossed in the sea; at last the mariners cast four anchors out of the ship, and by the help of a boat intended to make their escape, leaving the passengers to shift for themselves: St. Paul perceiving this, told the centurion and the soldiers, that although Almighty God had promised to preserve them, yet they must not expect it without using due means for their own preservation, which was to stay the mariners in the ship: whose help and diligence, direction and care, would be especially needful to them on such an occasion. Hereupon the soldiers, to prevent the mariners' design, cut the ropes of the boat, and let it fall into the sea. Learn hence, That the end and the means are always joined together in the purpose and decree of God. The same God that ordained the end, ordained the means in order to that end: therefore, as

to trust to means, is to neglect God : so to neglect the means is to tempt God. As here, that God who decreed that they should not perish with the ship, decreed that the skilful seamen should abide in the ship. Almighty God likes not to be tied to means himself; but it is his pleasure to tie us : sometimes, to show his sovereignty, he is pleased to work without means ; sometimes, to show his omnipotency, he works against means : the fire shall not burn, the water shall not drown, the iron shall swim, the sun shall stand still, nay, go several degrees backward : the First Cause can suspend the power and operation of second causes, when he pleases. But as the care of the end belongs to God, so the care of the means belongs to us, and must be used when they may, and where they can be used. Accordingly here, the mariners, in order to their own and others preservation, stay in the ship, lighten the ship, undergird her, cast out their anchors, hoist up the main-sail, loose the rudder-bands, and do every thing in order to their preservation which was needful. The purpose of God to prolong our lives, must not lessen our care for the preservation of our lives : when God has ordained and appointed means, we cannot expect to find safety in the neglect or contempt of that means.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, this day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat : for this is for your health ; for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And, when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all ; and, when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meal.

37 And we were in all in the ship, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

Observe here, 1. What honor God put upon the holy apostle : although he was a poor prisoner in chains, yet God made him the only counsellor and comforter unto all that were in the ship. First he adviseth them to eat, because that through consternation of mind, and horror of death, they had made no set meal for fourteen days ; not that they subsisted miraculously without any nourishment at all ; but eat so little that it was in a manner continual fasting. Next he becomes the chaplain of the ship : *he gave thanks to God in presence of them all* ; that is, he deired God's blessing upon what they eat, and praiseth him for it ; thanks should be returned when benefits are received from the hand of man, much more from the hand of God : what shall we think of those that sit down to a full table as a beast to his forage, without taking any notice of the bountiful hand that

feeds them ! St. Paul having thus refreshed himself, and by his example and words encouraged all the rest to do the like ; an account is taken of the exact number of persons which were in the ship, and it was found to be two hundred threescore and sixteen souls ; probably this was done at the motion of St. Paul, that so, after their deliverance, it might appear how exactly his prediction, mentioned ver. 22, *that there shall be no loss of any man's life, nor an hair fall from the head of any*, was verified and fulfilled. Whatever God speaks by the mouth of his holy servants, be it by way of prediction or denunciation, shall certainly be accomplished and come to pass : God is honored in his truth, when his promises are fulfilled towards his people ; and threatenings inflicted on his enemies.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land : but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoisted up the main-sail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape.

43 But the centurion willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first into the sea, and get to land ;

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Here observe, 1. How willingly men in distress are to part with all things for the preservation of life : these sea-faring men are here found three times lightening their ship of her lading and burthen : first the merchandise was cast overboard, ver. 18, next all the ship's furniture was heaved over, ver. 19, and now ver. 38, goes over the very wheat which

they had provided for their daily bread ; future provision is cast away, to save life at present : life is the most precious treasure, the most excellent thing in nature ; a man will part with all the comforts and supports of life, rather than with life itself. Observe, 2. What a wonderful work of God was here upon the heart of these poor Pagans, thus to venture their lives, by parting with their food which they had to live upon, barely upon St. Paul's word, that they should want wheat no more in the ship. Such an influence has God upon the hearts and minds of men, when he pleases to make use of it. Observe, 3. How God's delivering power is most gloriously manifested in the most deplorable extremities of his people. Now, when the ship was fallen into a place where two seas met, when she ran aground and was broken with the violence of the waves, this extremity was God's opportunity ; and this strait was the season of his succour. Observe, 4. What horrid and cruel ingratitude was found with these wretched soldiers toward the apostle ; they design to take away his life, who had taken such care of them, and for whose sake all their lives were preserved ! It is no new thing for an unkind world to return evil for good, and hatred for good will ; but to do good, and to suffer evil, is the christian's exercise at present. *They consulted to kill the prisoners (of whom the apostle was the chief) lest any of them should swim out and escape.* Observe, 5. How God put into the centurion's heart to defeat that barbarity and bloody counsel, and to save the apostle, for whose sake the centurion and all in the ship were saved. Many are the wicked devices in the heart of man ; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Observe, 6. How God performed his promise to the apostle to a very title : they were all saved, not a man drowned, no, not any one of the bloody soldiers who gave counsel to kill Paul. Oh how good is God to the unthankful and unholy ! his tender mercies are over all his works ; and how well do sinners fare sometimes for the saints' sake ! Thus, after a long and dangerous voyage, the providence of God, brought St. Paul, with the rest of the passengers, at last, safe to shore. Oh how punctual is God to what he promises ! What he foretels, he will fulfil. He had foretold by Paul, that they should suffer shipwreck, and at last he cast upon a certain island ; and accordingly, here they escaped to an island, called Melita ; where, what signal instances of humanity they received from the hands of barbarous heathens, the following chapter fully informs us.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness : for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly : but, after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

After a long and dangerous voyage, recorded in the foregoing chapter, the providence of God brought St. Paul, and the rest of the prisoners, to an island called Melita, where they were all courteously received by the islanders ; who, finding them wet and cold, made them a fire to warm and refresh them ; when, behold a viper that was in the wood, feeling the heat of the fire, leaped out upon St. Paul, and fastened on his hand ; which the islanders seeing, instantly concluded, that the apostle was some notorious malefactor, whom divine vengeance followed : but the apostle (according to our Saviour's promise, Mark xvi. 18. "If ye touch any deadly thing, it shall not hurt you,") shaking off the venomous beast into the fire, without harm, the people presently changed their opinion, and took him for a god, that was come to them in the shape of a man. Here note, 1. How it pleased God by a new miracle, to confirm the apostle's authority, and thereby to prepare the hearts of those barbarous people for the receiving of the gospel. God will honor his gospel, and the faithful dispensers of it, wherever they go, by preparing the hearts of the people to receive and entertain it. Note, 2. That great and manifold dangers and distresses may, and oftentimes do, befall gracious persons. No sooner is one affliction passed over and gone from them, but presently another comes on with a fresh assault. Thus here, St. Paul had no sooner escaped the shipwreck, and gets to shore, but a viper fastens upon his hand : *many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Observe, 3. That the very light of nature suggests even to the most barbarous heathens, that wickedness shall not go unpunished : "no doubt this man is a murderer, whom vengeance suffereth not to live." Note, 4. That natural agents cannot act or exert their natural powers, without the concurrence and concurrence of supernatural providence : this viper according to its nature, did not, and could not, sting the apostle, being restrained by the overruling providence and power of God. Note, 5. That the humanity of these barbarous heathens towards those that suffered shipwreck, may justly condemn the inhumanity of them that are called christians, towards those which are shipwrecked : how do some that live near the sea coast rejoice at a wreck at sea, in hopes of enriching themselves with the spoils of others ? The barbarous were humane here, but the humane are now barbarous. Note, 6. How prone and ready men are to draw sinful inferences from sorrowful premises ; to conclude, that such a man, or such a people are wicked because they are wretched.

ed; great sinners, because great sufferers. This was the barbarous logic of these islanders: it had been well that it had been confined to that island; "When the barbarians saw the venomous beast on the apostle's hand, they said, No doubt this man is a murderer." Note, 7. How mutable is the mind of man, and how inconstant are men in their esteem and opinions of men; the apostle had no sooner shook off the viper into the fire, but the barbarians change their opinions into another extreme; he whom they accounted a murderer before, they called a god now: *they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* They are light and lavish in their applauding, as before they were rash and severe in censuring. Thus, upon changes of providence, many change their opinions of men, sometimes for the better, but commonly for the worse. Lord, help me to esteem myself only by the esteem which I have with thee. Let me never be lifted up with the applaudings, nor cast down by the despisings of men; neither praise nor reproach are much to be accounted of, whilst we are innocent, and make thee our friend. *Quest.* But why did not St. Paul, that shook off the viper from his hand, shake off the chain from his arm, and set himself at liberty? *Ans.* St. Paul was not the author, but a minister or instrument in this miracle; it was not St. Paul himself, but God by him, that wrought this miracle, Acts xix. 12. "God wrought special miracles at the hand of Paul." Now, when the deliverance of the apostle from his bonds made most for the glory of God, he was delivered; but, when his bonds would more advance the gospel, God kept him in bonds.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius: who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So, when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came and were healed.

10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

Observe here, How God goes on still to honor the person and ministry of St. Paul, in the eyes and hearts of this barbarous people, by enabling him further to work miracles in this island: first, on Publius, the governor's father, and then on others that were diseased in the island. Here note, 1. How great the civility of the governor of the island was towards St. Paul, entertaining him and all the company with him, even more than two hundred persons, at his own charge. And, 2. How well the governor was rewarded for his hospitable charity: his father lying sick of a fever and bloody flux, is miraculously recovered by God. As there is no duty more certainly rewarded in another world than that of charity;

so is it frequently rewarded in this world: Publius was paid well by his father's recovery, for what he did for St. Paul and his company. Note, 3. The means which the apostle used for recovering the sick person, prayer and imposition of hands, ver. 8. "Paul prayed, and laid his hands on him; and healed him;" now hereby the apostle showed that he could do nothing of himself; accordingly he applies by prayer to that God who killeth and maketh alive, and the Lord heard him. St. Paul had honored God, and now God honors him: how grieved was the holy apostle when God's honor was sacrilegiously given to him? I doubt not but it grieved the good man more, when they called him a god, than when they accounted him a murderer: here, therefore, he returns the honor to God by prayer, ascribing all to him; and God honors him by making him the instrument of the miraculous cure. Note, 4. How the infinitely wise God made all things work together for his own glory; that the apostle should suffer shipwreck: that he should be cast upon an island; that he should be cast upon a barbarous island, where the name of God was not known; that a viper should fasten upon him, and not hurt him; that the governor of the island's father, and other inhabitants of the island, should at this time be sick, and miraculously cured by St. Paul: all these tended towards the promoting of God's glory, by opening an effectual door for the conversion of many souls; for, during the three months that the apostle stayed there, he planted a christian church in the island which became famous for its steadfastness in the truth. Note, 5. The proof and evidence which the islanders gave of the truth of their conversion by the apostle's ministry among them; namely, that those new converts loaded St. Paul's ship with necessities for their voyage when he went away from them: this was a real fruit of their effectual faith, as also their honoring him with many honors. The best evidence of sincere faith, is an holy fruitfulness in good works, in works of piety towards God, and works of charity towards man: "they honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary."

11 And after three months, we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium; and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli;

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome;

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii-forum and the Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul, at the command of God, though shipwrecked before, yet puts forth to sea again. A clear call from God will carry on a christian cheerfully to grapple with all imaginable difficulties and dangers, without either dispute or delay. Thus did the apostle here; he enters a ship of Alexandria, sails from Malta to Syracuse in Sicily, from thence to Rhegium in Italy, from thence to Puteoli; where they found some christians, with whom they abode seven days. Here note, How wonderfully the christian religion was spread abroad in the Italian country: yea, in and about Rome, before St. Paul's coming thither. From Puteoli the apostle passes to Rome, the chief city in Italy, the empress of the world, the seat of the Roman emperor: behold how God bears witness to, and puts honor upon, his suffering servant; he passes to Rome, more like a conqueror than a prisoner: he is met upon the road by many eminent persons, as conquerors used to be, to congratulate their great victories; even by christians, who are called *brethren*, ver. 15. who are not ashamed of St. Paul's chain, but left their houses, and came forth to meet him, some fifty miles, others thirty: some one day's journey, others two; to congratulate his coming, and pay their respect unto him: for which favor, the apostle *thanks God, and took courage*: That is, he owned it as an encouragement sent from God unto him, and was greatly refreshed by their company. But how came christians so early to be found at Rome? Who converted them? St. Paul had never been there till now, and we read not of St. Peter's or any of the apostles having been there thus early: yet St. Paul finds many christians at and about Rome? *Answer*, These brethren are thought to be converted by such as were present at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, Acts ii. 10. where it is expressly said, That there were *strangers of Rome then present*, when those mighty miracles were wrought there; and we may suppose that they, becoming true converts at that time, did propagate the gospel in and about Rome, according to their ability; and the blessing of God so accompanied and succeeded their endeavours, that the apostle now found some saints even in Nero's house. Thus mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people; or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me,

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would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

Now is the great apostle landed and lodged a prisoner at Rome, according to the divine prediction, chap. xxlii. 11. "Be of good cheer, Paul; as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also at Rome. Yet observe, 1. The favor which God gave him in the sight of his enemies; he is not clapped up in the common gaol, but a sort of prisoner at large; he dwells by himself in his own hired house, with his keeper with him: this liberty was highly valued by the apostle, we may believe: not so much for his own comfort as for the benefit and advantage of the gospel; for by this means he had an opportunity of going abroad and preaching the word of God in every place, as the providence of God gave him opportunity. Observe, 2. St. Paul is no sooner come to Rome with desire and design, no doubt to preach the gospel there to his countrymen the Jews in the first place; but he sends for the Jews to come to him, states his case to them, lays the matter of fact before them, and endeavours to remove all prejudice from their minds, which they might have taken up against him, and so have missed of the benefit of his ministry. From whence learn, That it is the great duty of the ministers of the gospel, prudently to prevent, if possible, or presently to remove all prejudices, which may be taken up by their people against their persons, knowing that, if they have a prejudice against their persons, they will never relish their doctrine, nor be benefited by their ministry. Thus did the great apostle here endeavour to set himself right with his auditors the Jews, before he began to preach to them. Observe, 3. How the apostle was not ashamed of, but rather glories in the cause for which he suffered. *For the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain*: As if he had said, "For preaching that Messiah, who hath long been hoped and prayed for, I am come hither a prisoner; or for the sake of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, whom all true Israelites long expected and hoped for, who is now come in the flesh, to be their Redeemer, and in whom all the true Israel of God repose all their hope of salvation, and by whom they expect a joyful resurrection; *I am bound with this chain*." Here observe, 1. The hard usage which the blessed apostle meets with from the hands of a wicked world: a chain is clapped upon him as if he were some rogue or thief: Paul the lamb, was now a prisoner to Nero the lion. The best of men may, and oft do suffer under the notion of the most vile and wicked persons. Observe, 2. The true cause of St. Paul's sufferings, *For the hope of Israel I am bound*. That is, for the object of Israel's hope, or the Messiah which they so long expected, and so much hoped for. Observe, 3. The publication which St. Paul makes of his sufferings

here at Rome: he tells all the world, for whom, and in whose cause he now suffered. Thence learn, That sufferings for Christ and the gospel are no matter of shame, but glory: The apostle doth not blush to say, *For the hope of Israel I wear this chain*; the shame belonged to them that clapped on the chain, not to him that wore it. Observe, 4. The end why the apostle makes known his sufferings; namely, That all the Jews now at Rome might know the true cause wherefore he suffered. St. Paul's enemies had laid heavy things to his charge, which possibly might fly as far as Rome, now, although he little regarded what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to stand right in the thoughts of the Jews here at Rome; and therefore, as soon as he was come thither, he sends for them to acquaint them with the cause of his imprisonment. When good men are in a suffering condition, the devil is very industrious to defame them, and the world very ready to misrepresent them; therefore it is a duty which is owing to themselves, to vindicate their own innocency, and to set forth the cause of their sufferings, in a clear and true light. It is verily *for the hope of Israel, that I am bound with this chain*.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came; showed or spoke any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken; and some believed not.

Observe here, 1. The advantage which the apostle had to preach the gospel to these Jews at Rome: they assure him that they had entertained no prejudice against his person; for they had received no letters out of Judea concerning him; neither had any of their brethren that came from Judea spoken any evil of him: yea, they assure him, it was their desire to hear him preach, and to understand what he had to say for the christian religion (which they call a sect or heresy) that both Jews and Gentiles did generally oppose and speak against, and talk hardly of. Observe, 2. How readily the apostle complies with their request in preaching to them: time and place are appointed, and the people assembled: the great truth defended and proved was this, That Jesus of Nazareth was the true and promised Messiah, in whom all that desire to be saved, ought to believe; and

trust. This argument he confirmed by testimonies out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, continuing his discourse from morning until night: so unwearied was this faithful laborer in his Lord and Master's work. Observe, 3. The different success of the word preached, and the contrary effects which it had upon its hearers; *Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not*. As the same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay, so has the gospel different effects upon those it is preached to; there are some whom no sun will tan, no heat will warm, no influence will quicken: to some we are the savor of life unto life, to others the savor of death unto death: but, blessed be God, if we his ministers be found faithful, we shall be a sweet savor unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved.

25 And, when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

The obstinate infidelity and unreasonable unbelief which was found among the Jews under the apostle's preaching, was no doubt a great grief of heart unto him; but at their departure, he tells them that they would not be persuaded, that this unbelief of theirs was what the prophet Esaias had long before punctually foretold, that hearing they will not hear, and seeing they will not see; having contracted such a wilful hardness, blindness, and deafness, as will not suffer them to hearken to any counsel which may tend to their conversion and salvation. Here note, That though the present unbelief of the obstinate Jews, to whom the apostle now preached, was long before foretold by the prophets of God: yet the prophet's prediction was no cause of their unbelief; or that which laid them under an impossibility of believing: but the fault lay in their own obstinate wills; with respect to which, by the just judgment of God, they

were blinded and hardened. When sinners close their eyes wilfully, and say, they will not see, it is just with God to close their eyes judicially, and say they shall not see. *Deus non deserit nisi deserentem*; the Jews had forsaken God, and now God forsakes them; but the apostle tells them, that upon this refusal of theirs he was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and that they would hear it, and gladly receive it, ver. 29. "The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it." Where observe the epithet or title given to the gospel, *the salvation of God*: 1. It is styled *salvation*, because it makes a tender and universal offer of life and salvation unto lost sinners. 2. It is called *the salvation of God*, because it is a salvation of his providing and contriving, of his revealing and discovering: it is his by way of patefaction and discovery; his by way of tender and offer; his by way of power and efficacy: *the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles*.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Note here, 1. The special favor indulged St. Paul, now a prisoner at Rome, with so much freedom, and without any molestation to preach the gospel in his own hired house for two years together. Where observe, 1. Who preaches; St. Paul a prisoner, who scarcely had liberty to hear, rarely to preach. 2. Where he preached, even in proud, powerful, and imperious Rome, and in his own hired house there. 3. To whom he preached; *to all that came unto him*. He set open the doors of his house for all comers, excluding none from the gracious offers of salvation by a Redeemer, upon the condition of faith and obedience. 4. How long he continued his ministry at Rome: for two whole years at that time; he would neither be allured by flatteries, nor hectorred by threatenings to lay down his ministry, or desist from his preaching-work. 5. After what manner he preached; with all confidence, boldness, openness, and freedom, with such an un-

daunted courage, as neither love of life, nor fear of death, could overcome. 6. The subject matter of his preaching; *the kingdom of God, and things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*: not vain jangling or envious railings: but Jesus Christ and the way of salvation by him. Lastly, with what freedom he did all this; *no man forbidding him*; neither emperor, nor senate, nor magistrate, nor soldier, nor priest, nor people, though in an heathen city, devoted to idolatry, in the least hindering or forbidding him. Where note, That Rome, heathen of old, was far less cruel, and much more courteous to the preacher of the gospel, than Rome Antichristian since has been. Then an apostle might preach two years together, without molestation, in his own hired house, to all comers; but now a minister of God must there have no public or private place of meeting to worship God according to his word and will, without the danger of an inquisition. To conclude, see how impossible it was at that day to hinder the progress of the gospel; even as impossible as to hinder the sun from shining, or the wind from blowing. That God, who shut the mouths of the hungry lions that they hurt not Daniel, did open the mouth of the apostle, that neither Nero nor the Jews could stop it; yea, after this, *he was delivered from the mouth of the lion*, rescued out of Nero's hands. And God would have continued to deliver him, had not his death been more for the glory of God, and his own advantage, than his life, which at last was offered up as a sacrifice and a sweet smelling savour, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ. Thus St. Luke concludes his history of St. Paul's life, without giving us any particulars of his death. He leaves him at Rome, a prisoner under Nero, where, after two years confinement, the scriptures seem to hint, that he was set at liberty, and that he went about preaching the gospel, and confirming the churches for some years; but an attempt to trace this apostle farther, without scripture-light, may be the ready way to lose ourselves: Let us therefore conclude with prayer:

"That Almighty God, who, through the preaching of his blessed apostle St. Paul, did cause the light of the glorious gospel to shine throughout the world, would mercifully grant, that we, having his wonderful conversion and instructive example in our remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto him for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.

THE
EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE
R O M A N S.

This Epistle to the Romans has always been esteemed by the church of God one of the chiefest and most excellent portions of holy scripture: The reason why this epistle stands first is not because it was wrote first (the epistle to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Thessalonians, being writ before it;) but either because of the imperial dignity of the city, to wit, Rome, unto which it was directed; or else because of the sublimity of the matter, and the excellency of the doctrine contained in it, with respect to which some have called it, The marrow of divinity; The key of the New Testament; The christian church's confession of faith; and The most divine epistle of the most holy apostle.

The scope and design of which, is twofold; First, to show that neither the Gentiles by the law of nature, nor the Jews by the law of Moses, could ever attain to justification and salvation, but only by faith in Jesus Christ; for the sake of whose merits alone we are accounted righteous in the sight of God. Secondly, To show that faith is not separated from good works, but productive of them; being the parent and principle of obedience, without which, whosoever liveth, is accounted dead before GOD.

The subject matter of this epistle is twofold, partly doctrinal, and partly practical: In the doctrinal part, which makes up the first eleven chapters, the apostle treats of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law; of original corruption by the fall of Adam; of sanctification by the Spirit of Christ; of the calling of the Gentiles; that is, of the present rejection of the Jews, and the future recalling of them when the fulness of the Gentiles was come in.

In the applicatory or practical part of this epistle, which begins at chapter xii. we have many useful and excellent exhortations, both to general and particular duties respecting GOD, our neighbour, and ourselves; and several encouragements given us to the love and practice of universal holiness.

CHAPTER I.

In this first chapter our apostle (after salutation given) proceeds to his principal design and scope; namely, to assert and prove the grand doctrine of justification by faith; that is, by believing and obeying the gospel of Christ; and that no person, either Jew or Gentile, could possibly be justified by any works of their own.

As to the Gentiles, he shows in this chapter, that their works were so far from justifying them before God, that they were an abomination in his sight; that for rebelling against the light and law of nature, God delivered them up to their unnatural lusts, which exposed them to unutterable and inevitable condemnation (as the close of this chapter will inform us) and this as a just judgment and righteous punishment for their sins.

PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Observe here, The author and penman of this epistle described; 1. By his name, Paul: Before his conversion he was called Saul; then Saul the persecutor: After his conversion, he was Paul the professor, Paul the preacher, Paul the great doctor of the Gentiles. Oh wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God! which is able to turn Sauls into Pauls, persecutors into professors, faithless sinners into faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. He is described by his general office; a servant of Jesus Christ; an higher and more honorable title than that of emperor of the whole earth. *Servire Christo est regnare*: To serve Christ, especially in the quality of an ambassador, is a greater honor than to have the monarchs of the world to serve us, and bow the knee before us. Observe, 3. He is described by his particular office; called to be an apostle; that is, constituted and appointed by Christ to that holy function, without any merit or desert of his own. He did not assume the honor of an apostle till called; and when called, it was not any desert of his own, but the free and undeserved grace of God that called him. Observe, 4. That as he was called to, so he is said to be separated for the great work of preaching the gospel; separated unto the gospel of God; that is, set apart in the purpose and decree of God; separated from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. Immediately and extraordinarily called by Christ himself to this great work, Acts ix. 15. And immediately by the officers of the church, Acts xiii. 2, 3. &c. The work of dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel is to be undertaken by none but those who are solemnly separated and set apart for it, and regularly called to it: I would to God the herd of lay-preachers at this day would consider this. These usurpers of the sacred function can neither pray in faith for a blessing upon what they undertake, because they have no promise to bottom their faith upon, nor can the people expect to profit by what they hear from thence; for this would be to expect God's blessing out of God's way. Read with trembling what God says, Jer. xxiii. 32. "I sent them not, neither commanded them, therefore shall they not profit this people at all." Where mark, That the people's not profiting by these men, is not charged upon their false doc-

(No. 32)

trine, but upon their want of a call and commission: it is not said, that their doctrine is *unsound*, but they preach *un-sent*; therefore they shall not profit this people at all: these men contradict the command of God, the universal practice of the christian church; violate the rules of order and right reason, and expose a most awful and tremendous ordinance of God to contempt and scorn; yea, lay it open to the bold presumption of every ignorant and impudent pretender. Observe, 5. The glorious title given to the gospel, which St. Paul was called forth to preach; it is here styled the *gospel of God*, and elsewhere the *gospel of Christ*. It is the gospel of God, as he was the author and contriver of it; it is the gospel of Christ, as he is the subject matter and scope of it: as Jesus Christ was the sum of the law, so is he the substance of the gospel. Indeed, St. Paul sometimes calls it *his gospel*, Rom. ii. 16. because he was the dispenser and promulger of it; it was *depositum fidei sue commissum*; "A divine treasure committed to his care and trust." And, if the gospel preached be the gospel of God, let us entertain it in our judgments, retain it in our memories, embrace it in our affections, hide it in our hearts, confess it with our mouths, and practise it in our lives.

2 (Which he had promised before by his prophets in the holy scriptures)

That is, Which gospel God had promised before by his holy prophets speaking in the holy scriptures. Where note, 1. The antiquity of the gospel, how ancient that doctrine is, even as old as the old prophets themselves; nay, as old as Adam himself. The gospel, or glad tidings of a Saviour, was first preached to Adam by God himself, Gen. iii. 15. next to Abraham, Gen. xv. then it was predicted by all the prophets which have been since the world began. The gospel which we preach can by no means fall under the charge and imputation of novelty: it is no new or modern doctrine, but almost as old as the world itself: *Which gospel he had promised before by his holy prophets*. Behold then a great correspondence, a sweet agreement and harmony between the old and new Testament, between the prophets and apostles, though great difference in the manner and measure of the revelation. For, as one says, the old Testament is the *hiding of the new*; the new Testament is the *opening of the old*. The old Testament is the *new Testament veiled*: the new Testament is the *old revealed*. Note, 2. The venerable title given to the scriptures; they are called the *holy scriptures*: *Which he had promised before by his prophets speaking in the holy scriptures*. The scriptures are holy in several respects. 1. In regard of their author and inditers, the Holy Spirit of God. 2. In regard of the penman and writers of them, holy men of God. 3. In regard of the subject matter contained in them, the holy will of God. 4. In regard of them to make us holy both in heart and life. And, if the word of God be an holy word, then let it be treated by us with all holy deference and regard. Lord, what an impious liberty do some men take, in this wanton age, to furnish out a jest in scripture-attire, and in their jocular humor to make light and irrelevant applications of scripture-phrases and sentences! They lay their schemes of ridiculous mirth in the Bible, and play the buffoon with the most serious things in the world. These men bring forth scripture as the Philistines brought forth Samson, only to make them sport; but they shall ere long find

Almighty God in earnest, though they were in jest: He that has magnified his word above all his *name*, will not brook it, that any man should make it vile and contemptible, by rendering it the theme of his giddy mirth and profane drollery.

3 Concerning his son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh.

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

The apostle having told us in the foregoing verses, that he was particularly called to, and by God set apart for the preaching of the gospel; in the verses before us, he declares that Jesus Christ was the main subject of that gospel which he preached, and describes him by his twofold nature, by his human nature, ver. 3. by his divine nature, ver. 4. According to his human nature, he was *made of the seed of David*; that is, descended from David and one of his posterity by the mother's side, who was of that house and line according to the flesh; that is, the weakness, frailty, and morality of his human nature. Where observe, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ had a being, even an external existence, before his incarnation or manifestation in our flesh and nature. He was the son of God, before he was born the son of man; hence he is said to be *made of the seed of David*, intimating, that he was then *made* what he was not before. In regard of his divine nature, he was *begotten*, not *made*, but, in regard of his human nature, he was *made*, not *begotten*. Observe, 2. That Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, did in the fullness of time assume the true and perfect nature of man into a personal union with his God-head. The human nature was united to the divine nature miraculously and extraordinarily, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, Luke i. 34, 35, and also integrally and completely: that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect human soul and body, with all the faculties of the one and all the members of the other, that thereby he might heal the whole nature of that leprosy of sin, which had seized upon, and diffused its malignity into every member, and every faculty. Next, we have a demonstration of Christ's divine nature, ver. 4. *Declared to be the Son of God with power, &c.* As if our apostle had said, That our Lord Jesus Christ, though according to the frailty and weakness of human nature, he was of the seed of David; yet in respect of that divine power of the Holy Ghost, which manifested itself in him, especially in his resurrection from the dead, *He was declared to be the Son of God with power*; that is, mighty and powerfully demonstrated so to be. Learn hence, 1. That the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, by the Holy Ghost, is a powerful and convincing demonstration that he was the Son of God. Christ, *as man*, is nowhere said in scripture to be the Son of God, but with relation to the divine power of the Holy Ghost, by whom he had life communicated to him from the Father, both at his conception and at his resurrection. At his conception he was the Son of God, by being conceived by the Holy Ghost; but this was secret and invisible, known only

to the mother of our Lord: therefore at his resurrection, *by the Spirit of holiness*, that is by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost, God thought fit to give a visible demonstration to the whole world, that Jesus was his own Son, the true and promised Messiah; and consequently did thereby give testimony to the truth and divinity of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles. God did now publicly own his Son, in the face of the whole world; and freed him from all suspicion of being an impostor or deceiver; for it is not supposable, that God should put forth an almighty power to raise him from the grave, if he had by robbery assumed that glorious title of the Son of God; therefore saith the Father of him, in the morning of the resurrection, *Thou art my Son this day have I begotten thee*; that is, in the words of our apostle here, declared, and made thee conspicuously appear to "be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Yet observe, 2. That though Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God's Holy Spirit, yet he did certainly raise himself by his own power as God, according to his own prediction, John ii. 19. "Destroy ye this temple," of my body, "and in three days I will raise it up;" according to St. Peter's assertion, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Being put to death in the flesh," that is, in his human nature, "but quickened by the Spirit;" that is, by the power of his Godhead, or divine nature, quickening himself: for had he been only raised by the power of God, and not by his own power, how could his resurrection have been a declaration that he was the Son of God? What had more appeared in Christ's resurrection than in other men's? For they were raised by the power of God as well as he. But here lies the difference: Christ rose by a self-quickening principle, others are raised by a quickening principle derived from Christ; with respect to which he is called *the resurrection and the life*, John xi. 25, that is, the principle of quickening life, by which the dead saints are raised. Observe, 3. That the apostle doth not say, Christ was made or constituted the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, but declared so to be: *Multa tunc fieri dicuntur, quando facta esse manifestantur*, according to the phrase of scripture, "Things are then said to be, when they conspicuously appear." Nothing can be more evident, than that Christ was the Son of God before his resurrection; yea, before his incarnation, being the Father of eternity, Isa. ix. 6. But the glory of his divinity was much clouded, darkened, and eclipsed, by the frailty of his humanity, by the miseries of his life, and the ignominy of his death. But by his resurrection, God rolled away his reproach, and freed him from all the aspersions and accusations of his enemies, who charged him with blasphemy, for affirming that *he was the Son of God*: And thus our Jesus, in whom we trust, was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. St. Paul declares the person from whom he received authority to be an apostle, namely, Christ him-

self: *By whom we received apostleship*; that is, by Jesus Christ, mentioned in the foregoing verse; who called him immediately, and furnished him with authority and ability for a gospel-preacher, even then when he had been a furious and fiery persecutor. Observe, 2. He declares how free and undeserved a favor this was; he acknowledges he had *received grace* to be an apostle: intimating, that to be rightly called to be an apostle, or messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is a special act and instance of divine grace and favor; *By whom we have received grace and apostleship*. Observe, 3. What is the special office and duty of an apostle, and the great end and design of that honorable function, namely, to call all persons to believe and obey the gospel. Learn thence, that the great end of the ministry of the word, is to bring sinners to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, to persuade them to yield, not a professed subjection only, but a real obedience also to the gospel of Christ; *By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience in the faith among all nations*. Observe, 4. How the apostle puts the Romans in mind of their condition by nature, before the gospel was revealed to them, and received by them; they were then Pagans and heathenish idolaters, but now Christians, or the called of Jesus Christ, among whom (that is, among the Gentile nations) ye are also the called of Jesus Christ. Learn thence, That it is a necessary duty for ministers, and a profitable duty for the people, to put, and be often put in mind of what they were and are by nature; it is profitable, both to increase their humiliation, and also to excite their gratulation. "You Romans (as if the apostle had said) who are now the called of Jesus Christ, were once afar off, even amongst the vile and cursed Gentiles: let the remembrance of what you once were, keep you continually humble, and the knowledge of what now by grace you are, render you for ever thankful."

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints; Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ

Two things are here observable, 1. The general inscription of St. Paul's epistle; and, next, the particular salutations therein given. In the inscription, we have the persons described to whom the epistle is directed: And that, 1. By their place of abode and habitation; *To all that be at Rome*. Thence note, That Rome, though now a grove of idols, a nest of unclean birds, yet was once an habitation of holiness; a receptacle for the saints and dearly-beloved ones of God. Rome that is now a lewd and impudent strumpet, was once the chaste and holy spouse of Christ. Behold, the grace and favor of God is not confined to place or person! The Lord is with you while you are with him, and not longer. 2. They are described by their title; *Beloved of God, Saints, and Called*. Where note, the order of their titles: first, *Beloved of God*, then *Called* and *Sanctified*; intimating, that the love and grace, the favor and free good will of God, are the source and spring, the root and original causes of all blessings and benefits; namely, of vocation, sanctification, and remission, &c. *We love him because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 10. The love of God is the cause of our holiness, and our perseverance in holiness will be the preservation of his love. John xv. 10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love*. Question, But how could the apostle call the whole church at Rome saints, when doubtless there

were many hypocrites amongst them? Answer, 1. They were all saints by external communion and visible profession. They were called out of the world, that is, separated from the world, and consecrated to the service of Christ, and so lay under a necessary obligation to be true and real saints. 2. They were denominated saints from the better, and we would hope, from the greater part amongst them. Doubtless there were many, very many of them that answered their character, who were holy in the habitual frame of their hearts, and in the general course of their lives, and from them the whole received their denomination of saints, or holy. Observe, 2. After the inscription follows the apostle's salutation, *Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Where note, 1. The comprehensiveness of the salutation: Grace and peace comprehend all blessings, spiritual and temporal; grace implies and includes, both the spring and fountain of all divine favor, and likewise the several streams which flow from that fountain, all the effects and fruits of grace. And peace, according to the Hebrew manner of speaking, implies all good things for soul and body, for time and eternity. Note, 2. The persons from whom these blessings are derived, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ: From God as the sovereign and fountal cause, and from Christ as the mediator of all, without whom we have nothing to do with any of the divine favors; for both grace and peace come by Jesus Christ. And whereas Christ is called Lord, and here joined with the Father, and the same blessings are said to flow from Christ as from the Father; we learn, That Christ is really and undoubtedly God equal with the Father, and blessed for evermore. Quest. But why is the Holy Ghost here excluded, no mention at all being made of him?—Ans. He is not excluded, though he be not named, but necessarily implied in the forementioned gifts; because grace and peace are the fruits of the Spirit, they come from God the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and are wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Besides, in other salutations (though not in this) the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned, as 2 Cor. xiii. 13, 14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and communion of the Holy Ghost be with you."

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Observe here, 1. The great and wonderful success of the gospel; it had produced faith in the hearts, and obedience in the lives of the Romans, which had made them famous throughout the world: *Your faith*, says the apostle, *is spoken of throughout the whole world*; that is, through all the Roman empire, which at that time ruled over a great part of the known world. The entertaining of the gospel at Rome, made that place more celebrated and famous, than all the victories and triumphs of the Roman emperors; faith and holiness make a place and people more renowned than all outward prosperity and happiness. Observe, 2. That this their renowned faith was the ground, yea, the highest and chiefest ground of the apostle's rejoicing; *First, I thank my God, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*. Learn thence, That it is both the duty and the disposition of the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, to be highly thankful to God, above all things, for the powerful success

of the gospel, in bringing sinners to the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ. This is our rejoicing, nay, this will be our crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ: we value our lives only by their usefulness to the souls of our beloved people; we live as we see some of you stand fast in the Lord; we die as we see others stick fast in their sins.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayer;

10 Making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you.

Here we have observable, 1. The apostle's solemn protestation of his affectionate love unto, and great care and concern for, these Roman converts, whom he was now absent from, yea, whose faces he had never yet seen; *Without ceasing, says the apostle, I make mention of you always in my prayers.* Behold here, as in a glass, the face of every faithful minister of Christ; he continually bears his people upon his heart, whenever he goes in and out before the Lord: as Aaron bare the names of the children of Israel upon his breast plate; he pours out his very soul in fervent supplications for them, and can sooner be forgetful of himself, than unmindful of them: *Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.* Observe, 2. That because the apostle was yet a stranger to them, had never seen them, and it was impossible for them to know the outgoings of his heart toward them, he solemnly appeals to the heart-searching God, calls him to witness how affectionately he loved them, and how frequently he prayed for them; *God is my witness.* The words have the force, if not the form of an oath, and teach us, that it is unquestionably lawful in important affairs to swear, to appeal to God, and call him to be a witness of what we either say or do. We find St. Paul did it often, and our Saviour himself did not refuse to answer upon oath, when solemnly adjured. Observe, 3. How the apostle swears by God, not by the creatures, which is the swearing condemned by our Saviour and by St. James, Matt. v. and James v. Note farther, How St. Paul appeals to that God, *whom he served in or with his spirit*; that is, with the apostle's own spirit, with his heart unfeignedly. From whence we may remark, That no service can be performed acceptably to almighty God, except the heart and spirit of a christian be engaged in it. True, the body has its part and share in divine worship, as well as the soul; but the service of the body is never accepted by God, unless animated and quickened by an obedient soul. Oh christian, serve thy God with thy soul and spirit, as well as with thy tongue and knee! and then thy offering will be more acceptable to God, than the most adorned temples, the most pompous ceremonies, and most costly devotions whatever, with the want of these.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.

The apostle having declared, in the foregoing verses, how fervently he prayed for them, and how passionately he desired to come unto them; he now acquaints them with the reason of that desire; namely, For the furtherance of his own joy, and their establishment; "I long to see you, that you may be established, and I may be comforted." Learn hence, 1. That establishment in faith and holiness, is that which the holiest and best of christians do stand in need of. Learn, 2. That the presence of the ministers of Christ, with and among their people, as well as their preaching the doctrine of faith to them, is absolutely necessary, in order to their establishment; God has joined the duties of public preaching and private inspection together, and woe unto us, if by our non-residence, and not dwelling among our people, or, if living with them, we haughtily refuse, or slothfully neglect personally to converse with them, we deny them one special means for their edification and establishment. Observe, lastly, That the apostle desired to be personally present with the church and saints at Rome, for his own benefit, as well as for their advantage; *That I may be comforted.* Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ do certainly improve and benefit themselves, as well as edify and establish their people, by their conferring with them; as iron sharpeneth iron, and the rubbing of one hand warmeth another, so the meanest of Christ's members may contribute to the advantage of the greatest apostle; God's weak servants may strengthen thy strong shoulders; "Verily, I have sometimes gained more knowledge by an hour's conference with a private and experienced christian, than by half a day's study." Most certainly the ministers of God are great losers by being strangers to their people.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.

15 So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Here observe, How the apostle obviates an objection, and prevents a reflection upon himself: Some at Rome might be ready to say, If Paul had such a longing desire to see us as he expresses, why did he not come all this time, and preach here, as he has done at Corinth and Ephesus, and elsewhere? He truly told them, therefore, that it was not for want of inclination and will, but for want of opportunity; he had often intended it, and attempted it also, but was providentially hindered. From whence I gather, That the ministers of God cannot always dispose of themselves and of their labors according to their own inclinations and desires, but both their persons and ministry are directed and disposed of by the providence, and according to the pleasure of Almighty God. Observe, 2. The great modesty and condescending humility of our apostle, in telling the Romans, that though he desired and intended to take

this long journey to Rome, to preach the gospel to them, yet this was rather a debt than a gift: he doth not intimate to them, that his coming amongst them was an arbitrary favor, for which they should be indebted to him, but a bounden duty which he owed to them; "I am a debtor both to Jew and Greek, and ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Here note, that the debt spoken of is the preaching of the gospel: St. Paul contracted this debt, and laid himself under an obligation to pay it them, (as every minister doth now) at his first entering upon the work of the ministry; by virtue of his mission, it was his duty to preach the gospel to all, both to the learned Greeks and unlearned Barbarians. From whence learn, That to preach the gospel of Christ both far and near, with a laborious diligence, when regularly called thereunto, is a ministerial debt and duty. We are first indebted to God that sends us forth, we are also indebted to the people we are sent unto. But oh! how many people are there that would willingly forgive their ministers this debt! but we must tender payment at the time and place appointed, or we can never be discharged, whether the debt be accepted or not.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Observe here, 1. The glorious description which the apostle gives of the gospel; *It is the power of God unto salvation.* That is, the preaching of it is attended by, and accompanied with, an almighty power, which renders it effectual to salvation, if we do not bolt our ears and hearts against it. Learn, that the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, is the chosen instrument in God's hand which he uses and honors for the conveyance of spiritual life into the souls of men, though it be despised and ridiculed by the men of the world. The gospel is powerful; it is the power not of men or angels, but the power of God; not the essential but instrumental power of God; it works as an instrument, yet not a natural, but as a moral instrument in God's hands; freely, not arbitrarily. The word gives out to us, as God gives into that: the power of the gospel is not from the preachers of the gospel, therefore do not idolize them, but they are instruments in God's hand, their words are the vehicle, or organ, through which the vital power of the spirit is conveyed; therefore do not vilify and think meanly of them. Observe, 2. The solemn protestation and bold profession which the apostle makes of his not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ; *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.* Where note, 1. He doth not say, I am not afraid to preach the gospel; but *I am not ashamed*, because shame hinders our readiness more than fear: a man may be fit and ready to preach the gospel, and yet be afraid to undertake it; but he that is ashamed of the work, can never be fit for it. Note, 2. That when the apostle says, he is not ashamed of the gospel, more is intended than expressed: I am so far from being ashamed, that I account it my glory; as if the apostle had said, "Verily I esteem it the highest honor that God can confer upon me, to preach the gospel at Rome, though it should cost me my life." Oh how exceeding well doth a bold profession of the gospel become all the ministers and mem-

bers of Jesus Christ! Let all say with the apostle, we are not ashamed of the gospel: none of the ministers of Christ to preach it, none of the members of Christ to profess and practise it.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

Here the apostle produces an argument to prove that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation; "Because by it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith:" that is, the righteousness of the Mediator, called the righteousness of God, because it is of his providing, and of his approving and accepting, and for the sake of which God pardons our unrighteousness, and receives us graciously. This righteousness is by the gospel *revealed* to beget faith in men, even such a faith as goes from faith to faith; that is, groweth and increaseth from one degree and measure to another; and thus the apostle falls upon his main proposition, which is the scope and design of this epistle; namely, that there is no possible way for the justification of a sinner, either Jew or Gentile, but by faith in the Mediator. Learn hence, that the righteousness whereby we are justified in the sight of God, is discovered to us in the gospel, to be only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the appointed Mediator betwixt God and us; "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith:" the apostle proves this by a citation out of the prophet Habakkuk; *the just shall live by faith*: that is, as the pious Jews in the time of the Babylonian captivity did live and find comfort for their troubles, by faith and affiance in God; in the like manner the apostle shows, that he that is evangelically just or religious, shall live a life of grace on earth, and glory in heaven, by faith in Christ; that is, depending upon the merits and righteousness of the Mediator, in the way of holiness and strict obedience to his commands. Learn hence, that a justified man lives a more holy, useful, and excellent life than other men: his life is from God: his life is with God: yea, he lives the life of God himself. 2. That whatever life a justified man lives, (in a more excellent manner than other men) he lives that life by virtue of his faith, *the just shall live by faith.*

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Our apostle having asserted and laid down a general proposition, that the justification of a sinner is only to be expected by the righteousness of the Mediator in a way of faith: he now undertakes the proof and demonstration of it thus; distributes the whole world into Gentiles and Jews; the former seeking righteousness by the dim light of nature, or the law written in their hearts; the latter by the works of the law, that is, by their external conformity to what the law of Moses exacted and required of them. Now his present business is to prove distinctly and folly, that neither Gentile nor Jew could ever find what they thus sought; He begins here with the Gentiles, and shows that indeed they had inbred notions of a God imprinted in their minds

by nature, and also had the book of the creatures before their eyes, in which much, very much of God might be seen: yet these common notices of God, and of good and evil, they did not obey and put in practice, but rebelled against the light and dictates of their natural consciences: for which cause, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them. Here observe, 1. A dreadful manifestation of divine wrath: *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.* The wrath of God: that is, the indignation or vengeance of God: this the sinner shall feel who doth not fear it; for the fears of an incensed Deity are no bugbears, not the effects of ignorance and superstition, as the Atheists fancy. This wrath is said to be *revealed from heaven*; that is, discovered and made manifest by the God of heaven, partly by the light of nature, their own consciences giving them notice and warning of it; and partly by the examples of others, in the lashes of a divine severity on the back of sinners, by the hand of an incensed God; *thus the wrath of God was revealed to the Gentiles from heaven.* Observe, 2. The object or impulsive cause of his revealed and inflicted wrath; namely, *all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* Ungodliness compriseth all sins against God, or neglect of the duties of the first table: unrighteousness comprehends all sins against our neighbour, or the breaches of the second table. Note here, that the abstract is put for the concrete, the sins for the sinners that commit them; the wrath of God is revealed against all *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; that is, against all *ungodly and unrighteous persons*; the meaning is, that God will certainly punish these sins upon the persons of the sinners. Observe, 3. The special aggravation of these their sins, or that which made them so very provoking to Almighty God: namely, *that they held the truth in unrighteousness*; that is, their natural convictions were kept down under the dominion and power of their corruptions. Lust in their wills and affections was too hard for the light of their understandings; they entertained the light of truth in their minds, but did not suffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives; thus making that a prisoner which would have made them free. Learn, 1. That it is a very great aggravation of sin, for men to offend against the light of their own minds, and to rebel against the convictions of their own consciences: 2. That the wrath of God is dreadfully incensed against all those that live in any course of sin, rebelling against the dictates and convictions of their own enlightened consciences. Dread it then, as thou dreadest hell itself, to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light of thy own mind, to slight the whispers, to stifle the voice of thy own conscience; but reverence and obey its dictates as the commands of God.

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.

That is, much of the nature and properties of God may be known by the light of nature; his infinite power, wisdom and goodness, are manifest in the minds and the consciences of all men: *for God hath showed it unto them*, partly by imprinting these notions of himself upon the hearts of all men, and partly by the book of the creatures, in which his glorious attributes are written in large and legible characters. Learn hence, That all men have a natural knowledge of God, and

those great duties which result from the knowledge of him. 2. That the natural knowledge which men have of God, if they live contrary to it, is a sufficient evidence of their holding the truth of God in righteousness, and is a God provoking and wrath-procuring sin.

20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head; so that they are without excuse:

The apostle here proceeds in acquainting us with that knowledge of God which the heathens had by the light of nature, which was in their hearts, and augmented and increased by what of God they saw in the book of the creatures; namely, in the works of creation and providence: "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, &c." The sense, I conceive, is this, that the wise and wonderful frame of the world, which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause but God, is a sensible demonstration to all mankind, of an eternal and powerful Being, that was the author and contriver of it. The strokes of the Creator's hand are engraven in all parts of the universe, the heavens, the earth, and the capacious sea, with all things contained in them, are evident testimonies of the excellency of their original cause: and therefore such of the heathens of old as shut their eyes, and such of the atheists at this day as wink hard, and will not see the footsteps of a Deity in the works of creation and providence, are and will be, everlastingly left *without excuse*. Learn hence, 1. That much of the being and essential perfections of God may be known by the light of nature, if attended to; and much more may be understood by the book of the creatures, if attentively looked into. *The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation*; that is, the creation of the world is a plain demonstration to men of the being and power of God. Learn, 2. That all such persons will be left for ever without excuse before God, who either extinguish the light of nature, and smother the natural notices which they have of God, or do not improve them by a due consideration of the works of God. Without opening the eye of reason, the book of creation is of no more use to us than to the brute beasts: they see the creatures as well as we, but many of us consider the creatures, and see God in the creation no more than they: and this will leave us *without excuse*. Learn, 3. How endearing are our obligations to almighty God, for the favor and benefit of divine revelation; that together with the light of nature, we have the superadded light of scripture; the law to convince us of our sin, the gospel to discover a Saviour. The heathens had only those natural apostles, of sun, moon, and stars, to guide them to God, and instruct them in their duty to him; but we have the wisdom of the Father, the incarnate Son of God, and his inspired apostles and ministers to lead us into all truth and his Holy Spirit to excite and quicken us in our obedience to him. Therefore, eternally magnified be Omnipotent Love, for the light of Scripture, for the benefit of divine revelation. For though there be a natural theology, there is not a natural Christology; there is a natural divinity, but not a natural gospel, a knowledge of God by the light of nature, but no knowledge of Jesus the Mediator, with

out the light of scripture. All thanks, eternal thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts! Lord, how will all such as condemn it be left without excuse!

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have a large and black catalogue of the sins which the old heathens, or Gentiles were guilty of; some of which they voluntarily committed, and others they were judiciously delivered up unto (for God, without any impeachment of his holiness, often punishes sin with sin.) Their sins voluntarily committed, are here recited, and the first of them is their sinning against light and knowledge. They had some natural notices of God implanted and imprinted in their minds, and such an additional knowledge of his being and attributes, as might be gained by an attentive study in the book of the creatures: but they rebelled against this light, and thereby contracted an aggravated guilt. Learn thence, That to sin against light and knowledge, either in the omission of duty, or commission of sin, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness: as ignorance lesseneth, so knowledge aggravateth the malignity, of sin. The next sin charged upon them was, they did not glorify that God whom they had the knowledge of: that is, they did not conceive of him, and worship him as became his divine perfections and excellencies; they did not esteem so high of him as they ought, and pay that homage and honor to the Deity which they should. Learn thence, that the knowledge which we have of God and his attributes, if it do not engage us to honor, glorify, and worship him suitable to his adorable perfections, it is vain and useless in God's account, and will but expose us to a more dreadful condemnation. Another sin mentioned in this verse, which the heathens were guilty of, was the sin of *unthankfulness*. They glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful: that is, they had not a due sense of the favors and benefits of God conferred upon them; but, ascribing the blessings of heaven to chance and fortune, to fate and destiny, to the influence of the stars and planets, to their own prudence and providence, they paid their thanks to blind fortune, for a favor which the eye of providence had bestowed upon them: it is impossible that God should receive the tribute of thankfulness, if we do not see all our mercies flowing from him. Observe farther, the sad effect, fruit and consequence of the forementioned sins. The heathens which committed them, it is said, 1. *That they became vain in their imaginations*, that is, they had various opinions and vain conceptions of the Godhead. Some of them denied that there was a God, others doubted whether there was a God or no; some affirmed there was but one God, others owned a plurality, yea a multiplicity of gods. Some acknowledged God's being, but denied his providence; others owned his providence, but confined it, in its exercise to secondary causes. Thus vain in their imaginations, thus absorbed in their notions, and thus sottish in their reasonings, were the heathens concerning God, his nature and worship. Well might our apostle say, *they became vain in their imaginations*, And, 2. *That their foolish hearts were*

darkened: that is, for rebelling against the light received, their minds and understandings were more and more darkened; their natural reason obscured, because not improved. Lord, how dangerous is it not to improve our knowledge! how fatal to rebel against the light and convictions of our own minds! it provokes thee to deliver us up to the power of spiritual darkness on earth, and consign us over to eternal darkness in hell, where is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, as the punishment and portion of those that rebel against the light, and sin against knowledge.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools:

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

The next sin which the apostle charges upon the Gentiles, is the sin of idolatry. Such as *professed themselves to be the most wise* and knowing men among them, as their celebrated philosophers, poets, and orators, they debased and dishonored the all-glorious God, by framing vile images of men and beasts, of birds and creeping things, to represent him by. These idolaters changed the glory of the living, ever-living God, into the likeness of lifeless things; whereas the Lord is so infinitely glorious, that nothing can set forth his glory sufficiently: the most excellent creature cannot represent his super-excellent perfections: and accordingly, it is as real a debasing of the divine Majesty, to represent him by an angel, as by a worm or a fly. All attempted representations of God by any creature whatsoever, are idolatrous provocations.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves;

Observe here, 1. Another infamous sin charged upon the heathens; namely, the sin of uncleanness: yea, base unnatural uncleanness, and pollutions of the most odious kinds. Learn thence, that idolatry and uncleanness often go together. Solomon's uncleanness led him to idolatry, and his idolatry increased his uncleanness. The city of Rome at this day, which is a grove of idols, the chief city of idolatry is next to Sodom for uncleanness: witness their allowing of stews by public authority. Learn, 2. That all kinds and degrees of pollutions both natural and unnatural, are to be detested and abhorred, as *dishonoring the body*. Our bodies are Christ's members, the Holy Ghost's temples; let us therefore glorify God with our bodies on earth, which shall be subjects capable of glory with himself in heaven. Observe, 2. God's judicatory tradition of these idolatrous heathens to the sin of uncleanness. *Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness*. Almighty God often doth, and always righteously may punish sin with sin: God punished the idolatry of the heathens here, by delivering them up to *vile affections*, to uncleanness, and unnatural lusts. But how is this consistent with God's holiness and hatred of sin? Thus, God

neither infuses sin in their hearts, nor excites to sin in their lives, but leaves sinners to themselves, to act without restraint, according to the inclination of their own lusts and corruptions: and also gives them up to satan, that unclean spirit, who will not fail to provoke them to such uncleanness as he knows their inclinations stand ready to comply with. Lord keep back thy servants from sinning against the light of nature, against the light of scripture, lest we be judicially darkened, and given up to a *sottish and injudicious mind*, to hardness of heart, and the vilest of affections.

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature;

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient:

Here our apostle proceeds to give a particular and distinct account of the abominable idolatry and unnatural filthiness, which he had charged the heathens with in the foregoing verses. As to their idolatry, he had told us at the 23d verse, that they had made false and unworthy representations of the ever-blessed God: worshipping God in and by the creatures. In the 25th verse, they are charged with a false object of their worship, giving divine honor to a creature; *they changed the truth of God into a lie*; that is the true God into an idol, called a lie, because it deceives men as a lie doth, by seeming to be that which indeed it is not; it seems in the idolater's fancy, to have something of divinity in it, when, in reality, it is but wood or stone. Every image of God is a false and lying representation of God. Secondly, as to their uncleanness, he shows that they were so given up to the ravings of lust for sinning against the light of nature, that they forsook the order of nature, and were more brutish than the very brutes. Learn hence, that when men provoke God finally to forsake them, and judicially to give them up to their own hearts' lusts, they will not stick to commit such monstrous and unnatural uncleanness, as the very brute beasts abhor. Here men and women burnt in worse than beastly lusts towards those of their own sex. Lord, if we are not more vile than the vilest of thy creatures, we owe it all to thy sanctifying, or at least, to thy restraining grace. As by the grace of God we are what we are; so by his grace it is that we are not what we are not.

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Here the apostle sums up the sins which the heathens committed against the second table, or against their neighbour; not that every particular person was guilty of all these black crimes, but all were guilty of some, and some perhaps were guilty of all or most of them. Learn hence, that the heart of man doth naturally swarm and abound with strange and monstrous lusts and abominations. Lord! what a swarm is here! and yet there are multitudes more in the depths of the heart. Whatever abominations were found in the hearts and lives of heathens and Sodomites, and the most profligate wretches under heaven, are radically and seminally in our corrupt and degenerate natures, Matt. xv. 19. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c." What are our lusts, but so many toads spitting of venom and spawning of poison? Oh deplorable degradation! Learn, 2. How much sadder is the condition which unregenerate souls abide in, who remain in and under the power and dominion, the vassalage and slavery of these imperious lusts, which perpetually rage within them, and incessantly contest and scuffle for the throne. Learn, 3. To stand astonished at the heart-changing grace of God, which has delivered thee from so dismal a condition. Oh! fall down and kiss the feet of mercy, adore the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, which step in so seasonably to thy rescue. Lord! what black imaginations, what vile affections, what hellish desires, what monstrous abominations were lodged in my heart and nature, before regeneration wrought a change! Oh that ever the Holy Ghost should set his eyes upon any of the sinful offspring of apostate Adam; in whom were legions of unclean lusts, and whose nature was become the sink and seed-plot of all sin. Observe, lastly, two particular sins, which of all others seem most monstrous in these heathens. 1. They were *haters of God*, not of his essence, being, and goodness, but haters of his holiness, justice and providence. 2. They were *without natural affection*. This appeared by sacrificing their children to their idols; and exposing themselves and their dearest relations to ruin. No sooner did we fall out with God, but we fell out with ourselves and one another.

32 Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The apostle here closes the chapter with the blackest character that could be given of the Gentiles' sin, namely, that although by the light of nature, and the dictates of natural

conscience, they knew that their adulteries and unnatural lusts did deserve death, and expose them to the wrath of God, yet they not only committed those sins themselves, but took a real pleasure and delight in those that committed them. Now this was the top and height of their wickedness. It is a greater wickedness to approve and applaud sin, than it is to act and commit sin; to delight in sin, is worse than to do sin. A man may fall into sin by the policy of the tempter, and the prevalency of temptation, but by consideration may be brought to a sense of his folly, and repent of it: but when he is arrived to such a pitch of wickedness, that he not only approves and applauds, but takes pleasure and delight in the wickedness of others; this demonstrates such a strong affection to sin, as brings a man nearest to the devil in sinning. Learn hence, 1. That there is in God an avenging justice, engaging him to punish sin with the eternal death of the sinner. 2. That there is that evil and malignity in sin, which deserves the judgment and sentence of eternal death. 3. That this desert of sin, as also the vengeance of God upon the sinner, is sufficiently made known to all men; to some by the light of nature, to others by the superadded light of scripture. 4. That notwithstanding this discovery of sin's desert of divine wrath, yet multitudes of sinners every where do not only commit wickedness themselves, but delight in it, and in them that do it, which lays them under an aggravated guilt, and will both heighten and hasten their condemnation; "who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things, are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in them that do them."

CHAPTER II.

The apostle having in the first chapter discovered at large the rueful state of the Gentiles by nature, and their worse condition by reason of sin, in rebelling against the light and law of nature; in this second chapter, he comes to speak of the Jews, and lays them as low as he did the Gentiles, upon design to convince both of the utter impossibility of being justified before God by any righteousness of their own, but only by faith in Jesus Christ.

THEREFORE thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.

Lest the Jews should swell and be puffed up with pride, by hearing what the apostle said in the former chapter, of the detestable wickedness of the Gentiles, and the heavy displeasure of God against them for the same; St. Paul in this chapter pronounces the Jews to be guilty of the same sins of which he had accused the Gentiles, affirming, that the Jews had offended as much against the law of Moses, as the Gentiles had offended against the law of nature; and consequently, their censuring and judging others, when they did the same things themselves, would render them totally inexcusable at God's tribunal. "Therefore thou art inexcusable

sable, O man, that judgest another, and by doing the same things condemnest thyself." Learn hence, 1. That it is too usual and common a practice to condemn that sin in another which men practise themselves. 2. That when persons commit themselves the sins which they censure and condemn in others, they are totally inexcusable, and pronounce sentence against themselves.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

As if the apostle had said, we that are Jews know, by the light of the scripture, what the Gentiles knew imperfectly by the light of nature, that the just God judges uprightly, according to truth, and not according to appearance. It is equitable that he should, and certain that he will, deal with men according to his word, and reward every man according to his work. Think not then, O Jew! who judgest the Gentiles for doing such things against the law of Moses, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God, which they have so severely felt. Learn hence, that such is God's hatred against sin, and such is the impartiality of his justice towards sinners, that no offenders can expect escaping the judgment of God for presumptuous sinning. "Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" No affection, or nearness of relation, can blind God, or put out the eye of his justice. If Gentile or Jew sin together, they shall suffer together; for there is no respect of persons with God: God will judge men in truth and righteousness, and condemn every sinner, whatever his knowledge or profession be. Learn, 2. That no man's zeal in condemning sin in others, will justify or save him, if he lives in sin himself: "Think not, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God."

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself, wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Observe here, 1. The indulgent carriage of Almighty God towards poor sinners, discovered in the vast expence of the riches of his goodness and bounty upon them, and in the patient exercise of his forbearance and long-suffering towards them. Observe, 2. The gracious end and design of God in his expence of his goodness, and in the exercise of his patience and forbearance: namely, to lead sinners to repentance. The end of goodness is to oblige and engage persons to love and serve their benefactors; this is the most natural and constrained consequence that the mind of man can infer from God's bounty and sparing mercy: the good-

ness of God leadeth to repentance. Observe, 3. The unanswerable and undue returns, which sinners make to God for the exercise of so much goodness and forbearance towards them: "they despise the riches of his goodness and long-suffering." They despise it by being unthankful for it, by not improving it, and by misimproving or sinning against it: they melt the mercies of God into bullets, and shoot them at the breast of the Almighty. Observe, 4. The sad and fatal consequence of these undue returns made to God by sinners: hereby they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. As if the apostle had said, "the more patience God expends upon thee, if perverted and abused by thee, the greater wrath is treasured up for thee; which the longer it has been treasured up, will break forth the more fiercely and violently to consume thee." Observe 5. The description given by the apostle of the day of judgment; he calls it, "A revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The judgment of God is righteous now; but it is not always revealed and openly made manifest now: therefore a time shall come, when there shall be a revelation of his righteous judgment fully. From the whole note, 1. That the goodness of God is a natural and genuine motive to repentance. 2. That not to be persuaded by, is in God's account to despise his goodness. Note, 3. That this despising of goodness, by delaying our repentance, is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath; as sinners have treasures of sin, so God has treasures of wrath for sinners. Note, lastly, that the day of judgment will be a day of revelation, a day in which the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifested and magnified; then will all the divine attributes be conspicuously glorified: his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed: his exact justice terribly demonstrated; his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded; all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved; all the mysterious depths of divine counsels fully discovered, and the injured honor and glory of Almighty God visibly cleared and repaired, to the joyful satisfaction of all good men, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of the wicked and impenitent world: O how well might the apostle call this day, "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!"

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life;

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath:

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also the Gentile;

10 But glory, honor and peace, to every man that worketh good: to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

The apostle in the foregoing verse had given a description of the general day of judgment, which he called, "A revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Here he acquaints us with the impartiality and uprightness of God in the distribution of rewards and punishments in that day, according to the merits and deserts of men: "who will render to every one according to his deeds; that is, according to the kind and quality, and according to the measures and degrees of every man's works. Where note, he doth not say, God will render to every man a reward for his works, but according to his works? Works are *regula retributionis, non causa mercedis*: "Our works are the rule of God's proceedings, but not the cause of his rewards."—Having thus described the impartiality of the Judge, he next declares the universality of the persons that shall then be judged; namely, the righteous and the wicked, which shall both have their distinct rewards assigned them, according to the quality of their works. Observe, 1. The righteous persons described, and their reward declared; they are described by their *well-doing*, by their *continuance* in well-doing, by their *patient continuance* in well-doing: they are not weary in well-doing, they can undergo sufferings for the sake of well-doing, and they can patiently wait for the reward of well-doing till hereafter, whilst others snatch at their reward here: yet in the mean time they are seeking after, and securing of this their reward: *they seek for glory, honor, and immortality*; that is, they seek for a portion of glory and immortality in the world to come: they leave the world to the men of the world, and whilst they are scrambling for earth, they are making sure of heaven. Next, their persons being described, their reward is declared, *eternal life*; an eternity of glory and happiness in a future state, shall certainly be the reward of well doers, and of patient continuers in well-doing. Observe, 2. The wicked are here characterized, and their reward assigned: "They are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness;" that is, they contend with God, and resist the light of his revealed truth; they refuse the offers of his grace, and kick against his word, disobeying the gospel of truth, but obeying unrighteousness. God will pour forth upon such indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Lord, who knoweth the power of thine anger, or who can bear the weight of thy wrath! It broke the back of angels, how shall sinners stand under it? It is styled fire in the scripture, it is a consuming fire, and an unquenchable fire: it preys upon the sinner, but never devours him: it is unquenchable by any thing, but the blood of Christ. A mysterious fire, whose strange property it is always to torment, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. Observe, 3. With what equity, as well as impartiality, this distribution of God's indignation and wrath will be made: "upon every soul that doeth evil; but upon the Jew first, and then of the Gentile." The Jew first, that is, principally and especially; because the light and mercy which the Jews abused and sinned against, was far greater than that bestowed upon the Gentiles. Learn hence, That the light under which men sin, puts extraordinary aggravations upon their sins, answerable whereunto will be the degrees of their punishment. Then Gentiles will be condemned for disobeying the light of nature, the law of God written on their hearts; but much greater wrath is reserved for the Jews, unto whom were committed the oracles of God; but the greatest of all is reserved for Christians, who obey

not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, 2 Thes. i. 9, 10.

12 For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.

That is, as many as have sinned without the *written* law, which is the case of the Gentiles or heathens, shall also perish without *that* law, being judged and condemned by the law of *nature* written in their hearts; but as many as have sinned *in, or under* the law of Moses, which is the case of the Jews, shall be judged and condemned by *that* law. Observe here, 1. A truth plainly implied, and necessarily supposed; namely, that as some sinners perish, having the written word, and all external means of salvation; so others perish, having not the written word or law of God, and the outward and ordinary means of salvation: "as many as have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law." God, in the dispensations of his grace, acteth in a way of sovereignty, according to his own pleasure; yet in his penal dispensations, he proceeds according to the measures of strict justice, upon the previous demerits of sinners. Observe, 2. That all men shall not be proceeded against in the day of judgment after one and the same manner; but every man according to the demerit of his sin, according to the capacity and relation in which he stood in this life. The Gentiles which had only the law *et nature*, shall not be judged by the law of Moses; the Jews, which have both the law of *nature*, and the law of Moses, shall be judged by both: and consequently, christians, which have the law of *nature* unwritten, the Mosaic law written, and the Evangelical law, both written and preached, shall lie under greater guilt, and receive a more aggravating condemnation. Christ will exactly proportion every man's *hell* hereafter to his *sin* committed here; the greater light we have quenched, the greater darkness will be inflicted, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—

13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

That is, not the *bare hearers* of the law shall, upon that account be just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be *justified*; that is, accepted of God, as acting suitably to their holy profession. It is notoriously known, the Jews gloried in, and rested upon their outward privileges for salvation, because they were Abraham's seed, because they were circumcised, because they were employed in reading and hearing of the law; they concluded this sufficient to render them acceptable with God; therefore, says the apostle, not the *hearers*, but *doers* of the law shall be justified; that is, the persons whom God will accept and account righteous for the sake of Christ. Note here, that the doers of the law or word of God, are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in the account of God. Hearing is good, but, it must not be rested in; a great understanding may a man

have by much reading the word and law of God; but a *good understanding* only have they that do the word and will of God: *the praise and fruit of that endureth for ever.* Psal. cxi. 10.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.)

The sense is, that the Gentiles, which have not the law of Moses promulged, are yet not without a law ingrafted in their consciences; and although they have not a written law; yet are they a *law*, that is, a rule of living to themselves; doing those things which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness to it, and their natural reason either accusing or defending of them from it. Learn, 1. That there is a law of nature ingrafted and written by God in the hearts of men, whereby the common notions of good and evil are found with them. Learn, 2. That this law of nature serveth for the instigation and provocation of men to many good actions and duties towards God and man. 3. That to rebel against, and not walk in conformity unto this ingrafted law of nature, is a God-provoking and wrath-procurring sin. 4. That although many of the Gentiles gave themselves over to all manner of uncleanness, yet others "showed the works of the law written in their hearts:" they showed it two ways. 1. By their temperance, righteousness, and moral honesty: wherein (to our shame) they excelled many of us who are called christians. 2. In the efficacy of their conscience; which, as it cleared and comforted them for things well done, so it witnessed against them, yea judged and condemned them for doing evil: and these evidences of a law written on the heart, are every where to be found, wherever men are found: "the Gentiles having not a written law, are a law unto themselves, and show the work of the law written in their hearts."

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

As if the apostle had said, if any shall ask, when shall rewards and punishments be distributed to Jew or Gentile? The answer is, "in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel:" that is, as my gospel testifies, he will most certainly do. Here observe, 1. A fundamental doctrine asserted, that there will be a day of judgment, in which the secrets of all men's hearts shall be judged by Jesus Christ, as Mediator. All the thoughts, words, and works of men, that lived from the beginning of the world, or shall live to the end of the world, will then be produced in judgment; and if so, may we not infer, that the day of judgment must certainly and necessarily take up a vast space of time? For if all records and

registers now made shall then be opened and read, and all the witnesses for and against man, shall be then examined and heard, what a vast space of time then must that great day take up! Some divines are of opinion, that the day of judgment may last as long as the world hath lasted: this we may depend upon, that thing will not be huddled up, nor shuffled over in haste: but as sinners have taken their time for sinning, so God will take his time for judging. Observe, 2. The proof and confirmation of this doctrine of a future judgment. *According to my gospel*; that is, as certainly as I have foretold you of it in the doctrine which I have preached, so certainly shall all men, and the secrets of all men's hearts, be judged by Jesus Christ. But was it not a presumption in St. Paul, to call the gospel *his gospel*? *Answer*, he means that he was the publisher, not the author of it; it was God's in respect to authority, St. Paul's in respect of ministry: it was God's in respect of revelation; *his* only in respect of dispensation.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God:

18 And knowest *his* will, and approv'st the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them *which are* in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.

Here the apostle proceeds in his former argument; namely, to prove, that the Jews could no more rationally expect to be justified before God by the law of Moses, than the Gentiles by the law of nature; the apostle allows them all the privileges which they so much doated upon, boasted of, and gloried in; but withal assures them, that these, all these, yea, more than these, were insufficient to justify them before God: As if the people had said, "thou bearest thyself mightily upon this, that *thou art called a Jew*; that is, a professor of the true religion, and a worshipper of the true God: *thou retest in the law*: that is, either in the divineness and perfection of it, or in thy external obedience to it, and in the outward performances of it: *thou makest thy boast of God*, as a God in covenant with thee above all the nations of the earth: *and thou knowest his will*, having his word and law in thy hands, the oracles of God committed to thee, and the writings of Moses and the prophets alone found with thee, and approv'st things that are most excellent, being instructed out of the law; that is, thou thinkest that thou hast such a degree of knowledge of God's word and will, that thou canst clearly discern between sin and duty, and compare one duty with another, preferring that which is most excellent "And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness;" that is, thou hast a strong conceit that such are the measures of thy knowledge, that thou art able to be a guide to the blind Gentiles, who sit in darkness, and to be a *teacher of babes*,

that is, such as have little or no knowledge in the matters of religion, conceiting, "that thou hast the form and knowledge of the truth in the law;" that is, such a method and measure of divine knowledge, as may enable thee to instruct others, whether Gentiles or Jews, which never reached to thy attainments." These external privileges the presumptuous Jew rested upon, and thought them sufficient to salvation, though he lived loosely, and his practice gave his profession the lie. Hence learn, 1. That persons are exceeding prone to be proud of, and puffed up with, church-privileges, glorying in the letter of the law, whilst neither in heart nor life, they are conformed to the spirituality of the law. Learn, 2. That gifts, duties, and supposed graces, are the stay and staff which hypocrites rest upon, and repose their trust and confidence in: "thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law; that is, in the outward profession of the law, or in an external obedience to the law; the apostle speaks of this *thou resting in the law*, not barely by way of narration, but by way of reproof, telling us not only what they did, but how ill they did in so doing. The duties which Christ has appointed, are the trust and rest of the hypocrites; but Christ himself is the rest and trust of the upright; they desire to be ever acting graces, never trusting to them; to be much in duty, and yet much above duty; much in it in point of performance, much above it in regard of dependance.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written.

The apostle proceeds, to the end of this chapter, to convince the Jews, that they were equally in a sinful and wretched condition with the despised Gentiles, and therefore stood in need of Jesus Christ to justify them by his grace, as well as they: and because the Jews were so exceeding apt to dote upon, and rest in their external privileges, he did in the foregoing verses, recount and reckon up the several privileges which they enjoyed: "thou art called a Jew, thou makest thy boast of God," &c. But now in the verses before us, he takes occasion to aggravate their sins committed, from their high privileges and prerogatives enjoyed, because they sinned against light and knowledge, against the convictions of their own consciences, and contradicted the dictates of their minds, as the Gentiles did: but besides all that, rebelled against the precepts of the written word, which was all in their hands. The law of Moses was near in their mouths, but far from their reins; for thus the apostle

expostulates the case with them, *thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Thou that undertakest to be a teacher of, and a guide unto the ignorant and blind Gentiles, wilt thou not practise thine own instructions; but condemn thyself out of thine own mouth? "Wilt thou, O Jew! (as if the apostle had said) be guilty of theft, adultery, sacrilege, rapine and murder, sins which the very heathens condemn, and all this while, call yourselves the only people of God? Verily, *the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you Jews*, who pretend to be the favorites of heaven, whilst you do the works of hell."

Learn hence, 1. That it is much easier to instruct and teach others, than to be instructed and receive instruction ourselves. Learn, 2. That it is both sinful and shameful to teach others the right way and to go in the wrong ourselves. It is a double fault in a private person, when his actions run cross to his profession; but it is an inexcusable, if not an unpardonable fault in the teacher, when the crimes which he condemns in others, may be justly charged upon himself: *thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Learn, 3. That the name of God suffers much, very much; yea, by none so much as those who preach and press the duties of christianity upon others, but practise them not themselves. *The name of the Lord is blasphemed* by such preachers, the wicked profane world taking occasion from thence to wound the name of God with the poisoned arrows and darts of reproach. The sins of teachers are teaching sins. True sin, strictly speaking, cannot injure the name and glory of God: he is above the reach of any mischief that sin can do him: his essential glory is perfect, and can neither be increased nor diminished by the creatures: God can no more be hurt by our sins, than the sun can be hurt by throwing stones into the air, or the moon hurt by the barking of dogs. But his manifestive glory, or the present manifestations of his glory, these are clouded and eclipsed by sin; and therefore God will deal with knowing sinners, especially with such as undertake to be *teachers* of others, as with those that have *blasphemed his name, wounded his glory; trampled upon his honor*, and caused his holy ways to be evil spoken of by reason of their wicked and unholy lives. Lord, let all that administer unto thee in holy things consider that they have not only their own sins to account for, but also the sins of their people; if committed by their profligate example.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

It is sufficiently known what great stress the Jews laid

upon circumcision; they taught, that this alone was enough to procure the favor of God, and to free them from hell: "God having, as they said, promised Abraham, that if his children transgressed, he would remember the odor of the foreskins, and deliver them for the merit of circumcision." But all this was a false and vainglorious bustle. Our apostle, therefore, in the words before us, assures the Jews, that circumcision without holiness of conversation, would never free them from condemnation: that a circumcised Jew, who walks not in obedience to the law of God, is in as bad, or worse condition, than any uncircumcised heathens, yea, the *uncircumcision*, that is, the uncircumcised person that *keeps the law* shall be accepted of God, as well as if he had been circumcised; and be preferred by God before the circumcised Jews that transgress the law. The sum is, that the obedient Gentile shall condemn the disobedient Jew, and be sooner accepted by God, with whom there is no respect of persons, but, with respect to their qualifications: that no church-privileges, no external prerogatives, nor the highest profession of piety and holiness, without an humble, uniform and sincere obedience, will be any thing available to salvation. And as, then, an uncircumcised Gentile found better acceptance with God than many circumcised Jews; even so, an unbaptized heathen, at the great day, will not change place with many baptized christians. It is a sad, but a certain truth, that the case of the Pagan world will be much easier in the day of judgment, than others that live and die disobedient under the gospel of Jesus Christ. The heathens have abused but one talent, *the light of nature*: but we thousands, even as many thousands as we have slighted the tenders of offered grace. Lord, what a fearful aggravation doth it put upon our sin and misery, when we fall from the height of mercy into the depth of misery? We must certainly be accountable to thee at the great day, not only for all the light we had, but for all that we might have had in the gospel-day; and especially for that light we have sinned under, and rebelled against.

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is* that of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Here our apostle comes close and home to the self-confident Jews, and touches them in the most sensible part. It was the hardest saying that could sound in a Jewish ear, to affirm, that *circumcision which is outward in the flesh*, profiteth nothing: for they so gloried in it, that they accounted it equal to the keeping of all the commandments of God: now our apostle here takes away the very foundation of this their boasting and glorying, by a plain and true distinction. There is, saith he, *a Jew outwardly*, that only has the Judge of circumcision in his flesh. Now he is *not a Jew* in God's account, who is only so by outward circumcision: neither is that circumcision valuable or available, which is only *outward in the flesh*; but then there is a *Jew, who is one inwardly*; namely, by the purification of his heart from all

filthy lusts, evil affections, and sinful dispositions, and a *circumcision of the heart, and in the spirit*; that is, a circumcision wrought in us by the spirit of God, and not barely by the letter of the law: and the *praise of this is not of men*, who cannot discern the heart, *but of God*, who is the searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins. Learn hence, That although we are very prone to rest upon church-privileges and external performances, as evidences of divine favor, yet they are no testimonies nor signs of the truth of grace. What circumcision, sacrifices, and the temple were to the Jews of old, the same are baptism, the Lord's supper, and public assemblies to professing christians at this day. And as the Jews rested in these externals, without eyeing Christ in them, without desiring to drive holiness and sanctification from them: in like manner, multitudes of professors set up their rest in outward duties, and repose a fleshly carnal confidence in ordinances, without either desiring of, or endeavouring after, any lively communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the exercise of faith and love, without any regard to spiritual warmth in religious duties, and being by ordinances rendered more like to the God of the ordinances, which are the most desirable things, next to heaven itself. So that I shall conclude the chapter with the same application to christians now, as the apostle did to the Jews then: *circumcision saith the apostle, verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision: for he is not a Jew, &c.* In like manner, say I, "baptism verily profiteth, if we perform the conditions of that covenant, which we entered into by baptism; but if we do not, our baptism is no baptism: for he is not a christian, who is one outwardly; nor is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a christian, which is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in water only; and such shall have praise, if not of men, yet of God."

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle in this chapter proceeds in his grand design and purpose in writing this epistle; namely, to prove all persons, both Jews and Gentiles, to be under sin, and consequently under an impossibility of being justified by works, but only by faith in Christ Jesus. In the former part of the chapter, he answers the objections of the Jews against what he had asserted in the foregoing chapter, and the first objection runs thus;

WHAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The sense is this: but you of the Jews will object and say, "If outward circumcision avails nothing, but the inward circumcision is all in all; and if the uncircumcised person, keeping the law, is to be reckoned as circumcised, *what advantage then hath the Jew* above the Gentile, or what profit is there of the *circumcision* above *uncircumcision*?" He answers it, verse 2, saying, the advantage is *much every*

way: but chiefly because unto them were *committed the oracles of God*; that is, the holy scriptures contained in the Old Testament, the sacraments and seals of the covenant, the prophecies and promises of the Messiah, and the whole revelation of the word and will of God, were then found with them, and in their hands only. Hence learn, 1. Great is that people's privilege and mercy, who enjoy the word of God, the audible word in the holy scriptures, the visible word in the holy sacraments. This enlighteneth the eyes, rejoiceth the heart, quickeneth the soul. This is compared to gold for profit, to honey for sweetness, to milk for nourishing, to food for strengthening. O how many souls are blessing God eternally for the benefit and blessing of divine revelation! The Jews had this special favor, *to them were committed the Oracles of God*: that is, the writings of Moses and the prophets. But we Christians have a privilege beyond them, the doctrine of Jesus delivered to us by evangelists and apostles; not like the killing letter of the law, but a gospel, bringing life and immortality to light. Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul gives to the holy scriptures; he calls them *the oracles of God*. St. Stephen calls them, *the lively oracles*. Acts vii. 38. partly because delivered by a lively voice from God, partly because they should be to us as *oracles*: that is, consulted with upon all occasions, for resolving all doubts, determining all controversies. Had the church of Rome consulted these oracles more, and councils, &c. less, she had kept the doctrine of faith much freer from corruption than she has done. Observe, lastly, that the original word, here rendered *oracles*, is the same which profane wretches made use of for the dark and doubtful oracles of the devil: nevertheless, the Holy Ghost doth not disdain, nor decline, to make use of this word, as he also doth several others, though abused to heathenish superstition; which may serve to rectify their mistake, who scruple to make use of words, much more of some things which have been abused to superstition. Verily, there may be superstition in avoiding superstition; and though we cannot be too circumspect in our words and actions, yet we may be too nice and precise in both. Yet note, that though the same word, *Λογια*, signifies God's oracles and satan's, yet these oracles were not delivered in the same manner: satan delivered his oracles ambiguously and doubtfully, keeping his dark and blind votaries as much as might be in the dark; what he said might bear several constructions, that so, whatever the event or issue prove to be, he, the father of lies, might have the reputation of speaking truth: but God's oracles are plain and clear, free from ambiguity and darkness; the scriptures are not dark, though some places are difficult, and that proceeds from the sublimity of the matter, not from the intention of the writer.

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

4 God forbid: Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Here follows a second objection: some might say, "true, the Jews had the oracles of God, but some of them never believed them, nor gave any credit to the promise of the Messiah contained in them; therefore, they had no advantage by them." Be it so, saith the apostle: yet shall the unbelief of some make the faith or fidelity of God in his promises, of no effect to others? *God forbid!* that such a thought should enter into our hearts: but on the contrary, let God be acknowledged *true* and faithful to his word, though all men should prove *liars*. Learn thence, 1. That man's infidelity cannot shake the stability of God's word, whether we believe the fidelity of the promises, or assent to the veracity of God in his threatenings, or not; his *word standeth fast for ever*. The promise shall be fulfilled, the threatening executed: only with this difference, we cannot personally find the comfort of the promise without faith, but we shall experimentally feel the terror of the threatening, whether we believe it or no. Learn, 2. The wonderful condescending grace of God towards those who have any measures of true faith, though with great mixtures of unbelief. Oh how faithful is God to us (if in truth believers) in the midst of our unfaithfulness to him! the unbelief of men shall not make the fidelity or faith of God of no effect. Learn, 3. That as God is a God of truth, so all men are false and liars, compared with God: as God cannot lie, neither deceive, nor be deceived, so every man is fallible and false: that is, under a possibility of deceiving, and being deceived. *Let God be true, but every man a liar.* Learn, 4. That a good man under afflictions, is very careful to justify and clear God from dealing unjustly with him in any of his severest dispensations towards him. The apostle here quotes Psal. li, 4. *That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and clear when thou art judged.* As if David had said, "I know the men of the world, when they see me afflicted, will be ready to judge hardly of God for it; therefore, to stop their mouths, to clear the justice of God, that he may overcome, when he is judged for dealing rigorously with me, I do freely confess my sin unto him with all the aggravating circumstances of it, that all the world may justify him, how great soever my sufferings may be from him." A child of God, under the rod of God, desires nothing more than to justify him in all his severest dealings with, and dispensations towards him.

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* (I speak as a man.)

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

A third objection here followeth, namely, "that if the unrighteousness of men, that is, both of Jews and Gentiles, tends so visibly to commend, that is, to illustrate and recommend the righteousness of God, namely, his wisdom, grace, and favour, in appointing this way of justification by faith in Christ; how can it be right in God to punish them for this unrighteousness, which tends so highly, to illustrate the glory of his gospel-grace?" The apostle tells us, that in making this objection, *he spake as a man; that is, as natural*

and carnal men are ready to think and speak: but, says he, God forbid that we should entertain such a thought, as if God either were, or could be unrighteous; *for then how shall God judge the world, for their unrighteousness?* Learn hence, 1. That although the unrighteousness and wickedness of men be overruled by God, to subserve the purposes of his glory; yet is God just in punishing all unrighteousness and wickedness whatsoever. God is never intentionally, but is sometimes accidentally glorified by the sin of man. There never was such an hellish wickedness committed, as crucifying Christ; nothing, by which God ever reaped greater glory, than by the death of his Son: yet is the wrath of God come upon the Jews to the uttermost, and that most justly, for their committing of that wickedness. Learn, 2. That the righteous God neither doth, nor can do any iniquity or unrighteousness whatsoever; *is God unrighteous?* *How then shall God judge the world?* God is judge of all the world, and cannot but do right; because the universality of his power puts him above all possibility of error in the exercise of his power. The very reason why God cannot exercise his power beyond the limits of justice, is because his power is altogether unlimited; he can do whatsoever he will do; and whatsoever he will do, is for that reason just; *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

We must by no means understand these words as spoken by the apostle himself in his own name, as if he had told lies for upholding of the truth; and that the truth of God had abounded to the glory of God through his lies; but he speaks in the person of a profane objector. Thus some man (as if the apostle had said) may possibly plead for his sin: "the truth of God hath gained by my lie, the faithfulness of God is made more manifest by the unfaithfulness of men: therefore, why should I be judged and condemned as a sinner, when the glory of God will shine more bright upon the occasion of my sin? The free grace of God discovered in the gospel, will be manifested, say some, and magnified in the pardoning of our sin; let us, therefore, sin our fill, that the immeasurableness of divine goodness may appear, and the abundance of pardoning mercy may abound." The apostle rejects this doctrine and practice, of doing evil that good may come, with the greatest abhorrency and utmost detestation, affirming, that their damnation is just, who either fasten this doctrine upon the apostles, or affirm it themselves. Learn hence, That no person must venture to do the least of evils: no, not for the sake of the greatest good. True, Almighty God can bring good out of evil, by the same word of his power, by which he brought light out of darkness, and something out of nothing: but to do any thing really evil for obtaining the greatest good, is dangerous and damnable. Sin, or that which is sinful, ought not to be chosen, whatever we choose. Learn, 2; That nothing is more just and righteous than their damnation, who will adventure to do evil, that good may come: a good intention will

not excuse, never justify a bad action in the sight of God: he will condemn evil-doers, though they do evil, that good may come. Learn, 3. That the apostle pronounces their damnation just, who laid these slanders to the apostles' charge, as if their doctrine did allow of this damnable practice, to do evil that good might come, "their damnation is just, who thus slanderously report and affirm, that we say, let us do evil, that good may come." Whence note, that it is a just thing with God to damn those men that raise or spread abroad reports of his ministers' doctrine, as giving liberty to licentious practices: verily, the slander of a minister's regular doctrine is more than ordinary slander. The original word here rendered *slander*, signifies blasphemy; the word which God makes use of to set forth his own reproaches by. Behold God's resentment of his ministers' wrongs. The slander and contempt cast upon our office and doctrine, is esteemed blasphemy in God's account: "as we be slanderously reported or blasphemed; and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just."

9 What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Here the apostle starts another objection in the name of the Jews: some of them might say, "are we not better than the Gentiles? do we not excel them in outward privileges? Is not the knowledge of the law found with us, and the oracles of God committed to us?" True, says the apostle, the Jews are better than the Gentiles in respect of outward dispensations, but not in respect of inward qualifications. Jews and Gentiles are alike by natural corruption; alike under sin by actual transgression, and so stand in need both alike of justification by faith; and the gospel-righteousness is no less necessary for the one, than for the other. To prove what he had said, namely, that the whole race of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, were under sin, and void of all true righteousness and goodness, and consequently standing in need equally of justification by Christ; the apostle produces several texts out of the Old Testament, and particularly out of the xivth Psalm, which speaks fully of the original corruption, and universal depravation of all mankind, in the following words:

10 As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known;

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Observe here, how the apostle proves his assertion; namely, that both Jew and Gentile were under the guilt both of original and actual transgression, from the testimony of David, Psal. xiv. where the state of corrupt nature is described, and the natural condition of all men declared, till they are either restrained or renewed by the grace of God: *there is none righteous, no not one.* Which words are true in several respects: 1. There is none originally righteous, no not one; none righteous in their first plantation in the world, until they are transplanted into the body of Christ, wrought and fashioned by his Holy Spirit. 2. There is none efficiently righteous, no not one; none have a righteousness of their own making, but of God's. The righteousness of justification and sanctification both are from Christ, not from ourselves; we are his workmanship, not our own. 3. There is none meritoriously righteous, no not one; none that can deserve or demand any thing as a due debt at God's hand; but the most rigorous and holy saints are but unprofitable servants. 4. There is none perfectly and completely righteous, no not one; but inchoatively only; none righteous in a strict and legal sense, but in a gospel and qualified sense only; *he that doeth righteousness is righteous*, in the account of God; and, as such, shall be accepted and rewarded by him. Observe, 2. How the apostle proves the corruption of mankind in general, by an induction of particulars. He surveys him in all the principal faculties of his soul, and members of his body; his understanding, will, and affections; his eye, hand, tongue, and feet all corrupted and depraved; *their mouth is full of cursing*, and bitter speeches: *their heart an open sepulchre*, gaping after, and devouring the good name of their neighbours, and belching out filthy, ill-scented, and unsavory words against them. "They seek not God in any thing they do, and there is no fear of God, no respect of God before their eyes." The apostle shuts up all with this; because want of the fear of God before our eyes, is the fountain from which all other evils do proceed and flow. The fear of God is the bridle and curb that restrains from sin; where that is wanting, all iniquity abounds; where that is present and prevalent, it keeps the soul close to God, Jer. xxxii. 32. "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." We usually depart far, yea, run fast from those we fear; but the true fear of God will make us cleave close unto him, because love is intermixed with it, and renders it a delightful fear.

19 Now, we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Observe here, Lest the Jews should think to elude or evade the force of the foregoing testimonies concerning man's corruption and depravation, as not belonging to them, but to the Gentiles only; he tells them, that *what the law*, that is, the books of the Old Testament, do thus say, it says to those *that are under the law*; that is, to those that are subjects of it, and obliged by it; to such as are under the instruction and direction of it, as the Jews are known to be; and if so, then *every mouth must be stopped*; Jew and Gentile both must own themselves before God, obnoxious to his wrath, without being able to say any thing for themselves. Learn hence, that the holy law of God brings such plain evidence and conviction with it, that no man can have a word to speak against it: when God spreads before men the purity of his laws, and impiety of their own lives, every man must sit down silent, and lay his hand upon his mouth, not having one word to object why sentence should not be executed, because they have all transgressed.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Here we have St Paul's conclusion drawn from all the foregoing premises: "seeing all mankind, since the fall, are disabled, by their innate corruption, and actual transgression, to so fit the law, either natural or written; it must necessarily follow, that *by the works of the law can no flesh*, that is, no person, either Jew or Gentile, *be justified before God*; all the efficacy which the law has, being to discover sin, and condemn for sinning: *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. By the law we apprehend our malady, but by the gospel, we understand our remedy." Learn hence, That no son of Adam, since the breach of the law, can stand justified before God by his best obedience to the commands of the law: by being justified, understand that gracious act in God, whereby we are acquitted, and finally discharged from the guilt and punishment of all our sins. By the law here, and by the deeds of the law, we are to understand ceremonial and moral law both, especially the latter; for by the moral law, is the knowledge of sin: it is the moral law that forbids theft, adultery, &c. Besides, it is evident that the antithesis, or opposition, runs all along, not between ceremonial works and moral works, but between works in general, and faith: the law of works, and the law of faith are opposed to each other, ver. 27. But why *can no flesh*, that is, no person, *be justified by the deeds of the law*? Answ. 1. Because he is flesh, that is, depraved by original corruption, and obnoxious to the curse of the law, by actual transgression. Now, that which condemns, cannot justify: an after-obedience to the law, can never atone for a former disobedience. 2. Because the best obedience we can perform to the law, is imperfect. Now, he that mixes but one sin with a thousand good works, can never be justified by his works. He that would be justified by his works, must not have one bad work amongst all his works; for that one will lay him under the curse and condemnatory sentence of the law, Gal. iii. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them*. Nothing that is imperfect can be a ground of justification before God, because the design of God, is to exalt his justice, as well as his mercy, in the justification of a sinner. Again, 3. No flesh can be justified by

the works of the law, because all that we do, or can do, is a due debt which we owe to the law: we owe all possible obedience to the law as creatures; and by performing our obligations as creatures, we can never pay our debts as transgressors. But now, our surety, Christ Jesus, who has given satisfaction for our violation of the law, was under no obligation to the law, but what he voluntarily laid himself under upon our account. And if so, let us eternally bless God with the highest elevation of soul for the gospel-revelation, by sending his own Son to justify and save us, by working out a complete and everlasting righteousness for us: and let us plead with him incessantly for the grace of justifying faith, which is as necessary in its place as the death of Christ. One renders God reconcileable unto poor sinners, the other actually reconciled.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God, *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference;

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

Our apostle having proved negatively, that by the works of the law righteousness and justification is not to be had for any person, be he Jew or Gentile; he comes now to prove the affirmative part of his assertion; namely, that God hath manifested another way of justification in the gospel, to wit, by faith in Jesus Christ. "For saith he, now, that is, since the coming of Christ, since the dispensation of the gospel: *the righteousness of God*, that is, the righteousness which God appoints, approves, and accepts for a sinner's justification, *is without the law*, that is, without performing the works of the law, either natural, ceremonial, or moral; and is manifested to be the righteousness which is by faith in Christ; which all that believe and obey the gospel, shall be admitted to the participation of, both Jew and Gentile; *for there is no difference*; that is, no difference between Jew and Gentile, as to the way and means of their justification." And the reason assigned by the apostle, why there is, and can be, no other way of justification but this, we have in the next verse, namely, *because all have sinned*, the whole race of mankind, not one mere man excepted; and so will *fall short of* obtaining *the glory of God* and eternal life, if they seek it not in this way. Learn hence, 1. That there is no standing or appearing before God for any creature, in a creature's righteousness. There is much unrighteousness in our righteousness, and therefore we cannot stand justified before God in it. Besides, the wisdom of God has appointed another righteousness, or the righteousness of another, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to stand before him in: *but now the righteousness of God is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ*. Learn, 2. The necessity and excellency of faith; *the righteousness of God is unto all, and upon all that believe*: faith is the bond of union, the instrument of our justification, the spring of our consolation, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God*, Rom. v. 1.

Render we then unto faith the things which are faith's, as well as unto Christ the things that are Christ's. Learn, 3. That, in reference to, or in respect of, our justification before God, there is no difference among believers, ver. 22. *For there is no difference*; that is, no difference as to the way of justification, between Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free; but all, without the righteousness of faith in Christ, must die, and be damned to all eternity. There is now a difference amongst believers, with respect to the degrees of sanctification, and with respect to their measures of consolation, and will be hereafter, with respect to the degrees of glorification. Some saints have more grace and comfort on earth, and shall have higher degrees of glory in heaven, than others; but the justification of all believers is alike. There is the same sin in all, not for measure and degree, but in respect of guilt and obligation to punishment: there is the same price paid, by way of satisfaction to divine justice, for all; namely, the death of Christ: there is the same righteousness imputed to all, the same spirit of holiness imparted amongst all, and the same mansions of glory designed for all; *thus there is no difference*. And there is no difference amongst believers, in respect of truth of grace, but much in respect of strength of grace; no difference amongst them in respect of God's promises, but much difference with respect to their performances; no difference in respect of God's covenant, but much difference in respect of God's counsels, as also in respect of God's dispensations, no difference in respect of God's acceptance, but much in respect of their application; no difference as they are a body, in respect of their head, but much difference as they are members of that head. And if there be no difference amongst believers (as such) before God, why should there be so much difference amongst themselves, as there is oftentimes here in this world? You are all dear, truly dear to God; why should you not be so to one another? Why should not one church and one communion hold you now? Ere long, perhaps, one prison may, one heaven shall certainly hold you all.

24 Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God:

26 To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call *justification*, whereby they are judicially acquitted and discharged from the guilt and punishment of all their sins, and accounted righteous before God. Observe, 2. The efficient cause of our justification. *It is God that justifies*: who can forgive the crime, but the person against whom we have done the wrong? Observe, 3. The moving or impulsive cause, namely, the free grace of

God: *bring justified freely by his grace*. Observe, 4. The meritorious cause, the bloodshedding and death of Christ; *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. Observe, 5. The final cause; *to declare his righteousness*, not his clemency and mercy only, but his justice and righteousness, especially that attribute which disposes and inclines him to punish sin and sinners. Observe, 6. The instrumental cause of justification, faith; *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, &c.* Some of the papists, especially *Cajetan* and *à Lapide* do call faith *causa applicans* in our justification: verily, an unapplied Christ justifies none, saves none. Learn thence, 1. That in order to a sinner's being saved, he must be justified, that is, discharged of, absolved from, the guilt of all sin, upon the account of a complete satisfaction given to divine justice for sin. Learn, 2. That not all and every sinner, but only repenting and believing sinners are justified by God. Learn, 3. That when the Lord justifies a believing sinner he doth it freely; *being justified freely by his grace*. It is an act of mere grace; there is nothing in the creature that can merit or deserve it: then it would be debt, and not grace. Learn, 4. That God's free grace and Christ's full satisfaction were consistent, and both concurring in the believer's justification; we are justified freely by God's grace; yet, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: *him God having set forth to be a propitiation*. The word *propitiation* is an allusion to the mercy-seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was; this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight. When therefore the apostle saith, that God hath set forth Christ to be a mercy-seat to us *through faith in his blood*; we have reason to believe the blood of Christ, as our sin-offering, doth make an atonement for us, and renders God propitious to us. Learn, 5. That Almighty God, in the justification of a believing sinner, is not only gracious and merciful, but just and righteous, in the most exalted degree: *to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin*. Where note, that the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ, was to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin; but the apostle would have us take notice, that our justification is an act of justice as well as mercy, and that God, as he is a just God, cannot condemn the believer, since Christ has satisfied for his sins. O blessed be God! that pardon of sin is built upon that very attribute, the justice of God, which is so affrighting and dreadful to the offending sinner. This attribute, which seemed to be the main bar against remission, is now become the very ground and reason why God remits. Hence saith St. John, *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*: faithful with respect to his own promise, and just with respect to his Son's satisfaction. Who then can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, when justice itself doth justify them? Behold here the sweet harmony of the divine attributes in justifying and pardoning the believer! One attribute is not robbed to pay another; neither is one attribute raised upon the ruin of another; but justice and mercy both triumph. And well might the justice of God triumph, for never was it thus honored before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand at its bar, and such a sum as the Son's blood paid down at once, by way of satisfaction, to its due demands. O glorious and all-wise contrivance! whereby God made sufficient provision for the reparation of his honor, for the vindication of his holiness, and for the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness, and for the present consolation, and

eternal salvation of all repenting and believing sinners to the end of the world.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.

The apostle having laid down in the foregoing verses, the nature of justification exactly in the several and respective causes of it declares in this verse, what is the consequence of this doctrine, namely, the excluding of all self-confidence and boasting in ourselves, or in any works done by ourselves: *where is boasting then?* Learn thence, That man is naturally a very proud creature, prone to boast of, and glory in, any excellency, either real or supposed, belonging to himself. Learn, 2. That God has taken care to give a check to this insolent pride of man, and to cut off all occasion of boasting from him, 1 Cor. i. 29. *that no flesh should glory in his sight*. Whilst God intended to give man glory, he took a course to cut off all glorying from man. Learn, 3. That the course which the wisdom of God has taken to hide pride from man's eyes, and to cut off all occasion of boasting from him, is by denying him justification by his own works; and ordaining, that the meritorious cause of justification should not lie in himself, but in another. Grace must have all the glory; not the law of works, but the law of faith justifieth and saveth all believers.

28 Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30 Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Observe here, 1. The conclusion drawn by the apostle, from all that he had been discoursing of in the foregoing chapters: namely, that God's way of justification of a guilty sinner is not by works, done by him, but by faith in the Mediator, who hath satisfied the justice of God for him; *therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Learn thence, That justification from our past sins is by faith alone, without respect to any works of ours, done either before or since conversion. Observe, 2. How the apostle doth extend his proposition universally to all sorts of persons, Jews and Gentiles: that is, the whole race of mankind; affirming, that God will justify circumcised believers, and uncircumcised believers, one and the same way, even by the way of grace and faith: *it is one God which justifieth the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.* Where note, the argument is drawn from the unity or oneness of God, which is not to be understood so much of the unity of his essence and nature, as of his will and purpose; yet as God is one and the same unchangeable God in his nature, so is he as immutable in his will and purpose, having therefore determined and declared his way of justifying all sinners to be one and the same to all nations,

both Jew and Gentile, even by faith alone in his Son Christ Jesus; no other way is to be expected from that God who is unchangeable in his purpose. Learn thence, That God's way and method of justifying all sinners, Jews and Gentiles, great and small, is and ever will be the same, namely, by faith alone, without works. What false notions soever men may entertain in their minds about it, and when the pride of men has arraigned the wisdom of God never so much, the apostle's conclusion will remain like a rock unshaken, ver. 28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.

Observe here, the wise and holy caution which our apostle uses to take away the calumny and reproach cast upon him, by the adversaries of the doctrine of free justification by faith: as if this would render the law of God void and altogether useless: *do we then make void the law of God?* As if he had said, "There may be those that will say so, but untruly: for we establish the law: because we acknowledge, that without exact obedience and conformity to the law, both in our natures and in our lives, as a rule of living, there can be no salvation." Learn hence, That the doctrine of justification by faith alone, doth not overthrow but establish the law. Here note, That it is the moral, not ceremonial law, which the apostle speaks of. The ceremonial law is utterly abolished by the gospel; but the moral law is not abolished, but established by the gospel; or, if abolished, it is only as a covenant, not as a rule. Christ has relaxed the law in point of danger, but not in point of duty; for the law is holy, and just, and good, and is not disannulled, but established by the gospel: because by the gospel we obtain grace, in some measure, to fulfil the law, and yield a sincere obedience to it: which, for the sake of Christ's perfect and spotless obedience, shall find a gracious acceptance with God. Therefore, with the highest elevation of soul let us bless God for Jesus Christ, and for the gospel revelation, which has so fully discovered, and clearly revealed to us the only way of justification by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever.—Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, our apostle laid down a positive and peremptory conclusion, that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. In this chapter he undertakes to confirm the truth of that conclusion, by instancing in the patriarch Abraham, the father of the faithful, who did not find justification and acceptance with God by virtue of his circumcision in the flesh, or any other works of obedience performed by him to the law, but by virtue of his faith, which was imputed and accounted to him for righteousness: from which instance of Abraham's justification by faith, the apostle infers the justification of all believers with him. For who

doubts but that the children are justified after the same manner that their father was? This being the design and scope of the chapter, let us observe the force of the apostle's argument, verse the first.

WHAT shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory, but not before God.

As if the apostle had said, "what shall we say? Shall any one affirm, that Abraham our father found or obtained righteousness by, or according to the flesh; that is, by being circumcised in the flesh, or by any works of righteousness which he had done? surely no: for if Abraham were justified by circumcision, or any other works of his own, he hath whereof to glory: that is, ground of boasting in these works by which he was thus justified. But manifest it is, that he had not whereof to boast and glory before God; therefore he was not justified by circumcision, nor any works of his own." Learn hence, That no righteousness of our own, no services we can perform, are sufficient to procure our justification in the sight of God; for if we are justified by our works, it must be by works either before faith, or after faith. Not before faith; for the corruption of nature and man's impotent condition thereby, will give check to any such thought. Surely, unrighteousness cannot make us righteous, no more than impurity can make us clean. Nor do works after faith, justify; for then a believer is not justified upon his believing, but by his works after his believing; and faith is not the justifying grace, but only a preparation to those works which justify; which is contrary to the whole strain of the apostle throughout the epistle, who ascribes justification to faith in the blood of Christ without works. In short, no righteousness in man is perfect; therefore, no righteousness of man can be justifying: there is nothing that a man doth, but is defective, and consequently, has matter of condemnation in it: now, that which is condemning, cannot be justifying; that which falls short of the holiness of the law, can never free us from the condemnatory sentence and curse of the law. Now, all works after faith fall short of that perfection which the law requireth. Learn, 2. That the design of God, was to justify us in such a way as to strip us of our own. *Not of works, lest any man should boast*, says the apostle often. We are justified by faith, to exclude boasting, which would not have been excluded by the law of works.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the un-

godly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Observe here, 1. The account which the scripture gives of Abraham's justification; it was by faith alone: *he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness*: that is, he firmly believed the promise of God, that he would give him a son, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. And by means of his faith, he was reckoned or esteemed righteous before God, and not by means of his works. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument, to prove that Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works; had he works of perfect holiness, then in strict justice a reward might have been expected by him as a due debt, and not given him in a way of grace and favor. For to him that *worketh*, that is, with a design and intent to obtain justification by his works, is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt; he having performed all that was required in order to his being righteous before God. But to him that *worketh not*; that is, who worketh not to the intent and end forementioned: namely to procure justification by working, but seeks that in a way of believing; *his faith is counted for righteousness*. To him that *worketh not, but believeth*, &c. We must understand it absolutely; for he that believeth, worketh: but *secundum quid*, after a sort, he is said not to work; because he worketh not with a design to stand righteous before God by his works. Again, by him that *worketh not*, we are not to understand an idle, lazy believer that takes no care of the duties of obedience; no, an idle faith is an ineffectual faith, and can never be a saving faith; but the meaning is, he worketh not in a law sense, to the ends and intentions of the first covenant, to make up a righteousness to cover himself by his own working; being convinced of his utter inability to work out his own righteousness by the law, and seeing all his endeavours to obey the law, fall short of righteousness; he is therefore said in a law sense not to work, because he doth not work so as to answer the purpose and end of the law, which accepts of nothing short of perfect and complete obedience. And whereas it is here said, *that God justifieth the ungodly*; the meaning is, such as have been ungodly, not such as continue so. The apostle describes the temper and frame of their hearts and lives before justification, and not after it; as it found them, not as it leaves them. True, Christ justifies the ungodly, yet such as continue ungodly are not justified by him: we must bring credentials from our sanctification, to bear witness to the truth of our justification.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.

7 *Saying*, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Observe here, That to the example of Abraham, the apostle subjoins the testimony of David, Psal. xxxiii. who de-

scribes the blessedness of that man to whom God imputeth righteousness, to wit, the righteousness of the Mediator, without any works brought before God to be justified by, saying, "blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and iniquity not imputed." Sin, in respect of the offence, is remitted; in respect of the filth or turpitude of it, is covered; in respect of the punishment, not imputed. This heap of words, serves only to amplify and set forth the abundant grace of God in the act of pardoning sin. Learn hence, 1. That to pardon sin, is God's prerogative; he forgiveth iniquity, and covereth transgression. 2. That pardon of sin is a covering of sin: not such a covering of sin, as God cannot see it in a justified person, to chastise him for it; but so covered, as not to punish him with wrath and condemnation for it. Learn, 3. That God's act in pardoning and covering sin, is extensive and perfect, full and final: iniquity, transgression, and sin, is forgiven, covered, and not imputed. Learn, 4. That transcendent is the blessedness of those whose iniquity is pardoned, and their transgression covered. *Blessednesses*, says the original, belong to the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute transgression.

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Here the apostle moves the question, namely, whether the forementioned blessedness of pardon of sin, and justification by faith, belongs to the circumcised Jews only, or to the uncircumcised Gentiles also? which question carrieth with it the force of a strong affirmation, that seeing faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, many years before he was circumcised; therefore the uncircumcised Gentiles, as well as the circumcised Jews, shall by faith be made partakers of the same blessedness, unto which Abraham was entitled before he was circumcised. Learn hence, That God has appointed one and the same way and method for the justification and salvation of all persons, circumcised and uncircumcised, Jew and Gentile, honorable and ignoble; namely, justification by faith in the blood of his Son, without which no church-privileges, or spiritual prerogatives whatsoever, will intitle them to real blessedness. "Cometh this blessedness on the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?" Abraham believed unto righteousness before he was circumcised; therefore, the Gentiles by faith shall be accounted righteous, though they never be circumcised.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had* yet being circumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being yet uncircumcised.

Here the apostles declare the reason why, and the end for which Abraham was circumcised, seeing he was justified by faith in the promised Messiah, long before circumcision. He tells us, that Abraham received circumcision, *as a sign and seal of the covenant* made with him, and to his seed, Gen. xvii. and as an obligation that the righteousness of faith was the true way for a sinner to become righteous; which righteousness Abraham had obtained whilst he was uncircumcised, that so he might be the father in a spiritual sense, of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, who imitated him in his faith, and in the holiness and obedience of his life. Note here, 1. The person instituting the sacrament of circumcision: God, and not Abraham; *he received circumcision*; that is, by the appointment of God he was circumcised. Sacraments must be of divine institution, not of human invention. The church can make no sacraments; her duty is, with care and caution to administer them. There is a four-fold word requisite to a sacrament. A word of institution; a word of command; a word of promise; a word of blessing. The elements are cyphers: 'Tis the institution makes them figures. Divine institution is as necessary to a sacrament, as the royal inscription is to current money. Note, 2. The nature of sacraments in general, and of circumcision in particular. They are signs and seals; "he received the sign of circumcision: a seal of the righteousness by faith." The circumcision, 1. Was a sign and token of the covenant which God made with Abraham and the Jews. It was a commemorative sign of God's covenant with Abraham: A representative sign of Abraham's faith and obedience towards God: A demonstrative sign of original sin, and the depravity of human nature: a discriminating and distinguishing sign of the true church and people of God from all the rest of the world: an initiating sign, by which all strangers, that were received into the commonwealth of Israel, were admitted into the Jewish church: and lastly, It was a prefigurative sign of baptism, which, in the christian church, was to succeed in the room of circumcision. 2. Circumcision was not a sign only, but a seal also. *A seal of the righteousness by faith*; it was a seal, both on God's part, and on Abraham's also. A seal on God's part, to confirm all the promises made to Abraham and his seed. 3. A seal on his and their parts, to bind them to renounce the service of all other gods, and to oblige them to the observation of the whole law. Note lastly, the character and description here given of true believers; they are such as *walk in the steps of faithful Abraham*. They have not only Abraham to their father, but they walk in the footsteps of their father's faith. As Abraham readily obeyed the call of God, so do they: as Abraham left his idolatrous country and kindred, and though he had opportunity of returning, yet never returned more; so do the faithful sons and daughters of Abraham leave all known sins, and no temptations can prevail with them to return to the delightful practice of them. Did Abraham break through all impediments, difficulties, and discouragements whatsoever? So do and will all those that tread in the faith of their father Abraham, surmount all dif-

faculties, bid defiance to all dangers, that they may yield a ready, cheerful, and persevering obedience to the commands of the God of Abraham: few of the children of Abraham's flesh, but all the children of his faith, do thus walk in the steps of their renowned father.

13 For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

That is, the great promise which God made to Abraham, and his seed, that they should possess that rich and pleasant part of the world, the land of Canaan, under which also heaven itself was typically promised and comprehended, was not made upon condition of their performing perfect obedience to the law, but they were to obtain it by faith; that is, by trusting to, and depending upon the gracious promise of a faithful God. Note here, the argument couched for justification by faith without works, which is the apostle's grand scope, design and drift; it runs thus: "if the promise made to the father of the faithful was accomplished, not by legal obedience, but by the righteousness of faith; then it follows, that all his children are justified by faith, as Abraham their father was. But the promise of the earthly inheritance, and under it, of the heavenly one, was accomplished, not by the law, but by the righteousness of Abraham's faith: therefore, justification is not to be expected by the works of the law, but by faith alone."

14 For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect,

That is, if they which seem to be justified by the works of the law be heirs of this promised inheritance; then *faith*, that is, the way of justification by faith, prescribed by God, is to no purpose, for to what end should we by faith seek righteousness in another, if by our legal obedience we can find it in ourselves? Here then lies couched another argument, to confirm the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith: thus, that only justifies, unto which a gracious promise of justification is made; but no such promise is made to any man for his weak and imperfect keeping of the law, but for his believing there is; therefore, by the law there can be no justification, but by faith only.

15 Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

Here the apostle suggests another reason, why no justification can be executed by the law, because it condemns, rather than justifies. *The law worketh wrath*: that is, it discovers the wrath of God due to our transgression, and then pronounces condemnation upon the transgressor; for *were there no law*, either natural or revealed, *there would be no transgression*, and, consequently, no condemnation. Here observe, 1. the use of the law; it discovers sin, it convinces of sin, it condemns for sin, it denounces the wrath of God

due unto sin. And note, 2. The apostle's argument for the use of the law; he infers an utter impossibility of being justified by the law. That which condemns, cannot justify; but the law of God condemns the sinner for his transgression; therefore, it can never be the instrument and means of his justification.

16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that it *might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also, which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

The apostle here assigns a double cause, why the wisdom of God has appointed justification and salvation to be obtained in the way of faith: namely, 1. That it might be of free and undeserved grace and favor; for to be justified by faith, and by grace, are all one with the apostle. And, 2. *That the promise might be sure to all the seed*: that is, that God's promise might stand firm and sure to all the believing seed of Abraham, not only to all the children of the flesh, to whom the law was given, but to all the children of his faith, even Gentiles as well as Jews; he being the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles. Learn hence, that if our justification and salvation did depend upon our performing perfect obedience to the law, it would never be sure, but always uncertain, because of our impotency and weakness to keep and observe it. The apostle, chap. viii. 3. tells us, that the law is weak through the flesh; though the truth is, the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that; the law has the same authority for commanding that ever it had, but we have not the same ability for obeying. 'Tis our wickedness that is the sole cause of the law's weakness: had every man the same integrity, the law would have the same ability that ever it had, both to justify and save us.

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were:

Our apostle, in this and the following verses, enters upon a high commendation of Abraham's faith, magnifying and extolling the same, for and upon account of sundry excellencies which are found in it. And here, 1. He takes notice how Abraham's faith was strongly acted and exercised on the Almighty power of God: "he believed in God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which are not, as though they were;" that is, the Lord having promised to make Abraham the father of many nations, when he had no seed, nor was ever likely to have any; he believed the thing to be both credible and possible, because God had spoken it, how improbable soever. And although with respect to generation, he looked upon Sarah's body, and his own, as good as dead; for she was barren and past bearing, and he was an hundred years old, and past all hopes of having a child; yet he exercised his faith on the promise and power of God, *who quickeneth the dead*, that is, his own dead body

and Sarah's barren womb; and called those things which be not, that is, the Gentiles, which were not then a people, as if they were. Learn hence, that it is a noble act and exercise of faith, to believe God on his bare word, and to assent to truth, though never so improbable. As whatever God doth is good, because he doth it; so whatever God says is true, because he speaks it; and accordingly faith, which is an assent of the understanding to what God reveals, depends upon the veracity of God, for making good his own word, and fulfilling his own promise. Faith has a threefold excellency: it assents to the truths of God, though never so improbable: it puts men upon duties, though seemingly unreasonable (witness *Abraham's offering up Isaac*;) and it enables to sufferings, be they never so afflictive. But from believing plain contradictions and impossibilities, as the church of Rome would have us in the point of transubstantiation; faith desires there to be excused. Observe here, 2. That as Abraham's faith exceedingly honored God; so God highly honors Abraham's faith, making him like himself a father of many nations. As God is an universal Father, not of one, but of all nations, so was Abraham; as God is their spiritual father, not by carnal generation, so was Abraham: God made faithful Abraham like himself, a father, not of this or that nation only, but universally of all believers, among all nations, believing after his example. Thus Abraham's faith honors God, and God honors Abraham's faith, styling him the Father of the Faithful throughout all generations.

18 Who against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:

21 And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Here St. Paul farther expatiates in the commendation of Abraham's faith, telling us, *That against hope he believed in hope*; that is, he had a strong hope, a firm faith and trust in the promise and power of God; against all natural grounds of hope; namely, that he should certainly have a son, and a seed like the stars of heaven for multitude. He farther adds, *That he considered not the deadness of his own body, nor the barrenness of Sarah's womb: neither staggered at the promise through unbelief*; that is, he regarded not any difficulties which lay in the way of his faith, he admitted no doubts or questions touching the promise or power of God; but without all disputing, depended fully upon God for the performance of his own promise, and so gave God the glory of his omnipotency and faithfulness. Observe here, 1. What

was the ground of Abraham's faith; namely, the special promise, yea, the absolute promise of God, that he should have a son. Observe, 2. The height and measure of his faith: "he was strong in faith, and staggered not through unbelief;" he was *fully persuaded* of God's all-sufficiency; it is a metaphor taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Thus was it with Abraham, there was not any sail of his soul but what was filled with the wind of assurance. As a ship with full gale and strong sail is carried to the haven against winds and waves, so Abraham, by the strength of his faith, overcame all waves of doubts and difficulties beating upon his mind. Observe, 3. What were the fruit and issue, the end and event of Abraham's faith, it brought glory to God: *he was strong in faith, giving glory to God*. All faith glorifies God truly, but strong faith glorifies him abundantly: it gives him the glory of his power and faithfulness, goodness and truth. *Quest. 1.* But how could Abraham's body be said to be dead, when he had several children afterwards by Keturah? even six sons, forty years after Sarah's death.—*Ans.* Abraham's and Sarah's bodies received now a blessing, or new generative faculty from God, which rendered them capable of begetting and bearing children, when by nature they were not so. *Quest. 2.* Was Abraham's faith so strong as to exclude all doubting? Did not he distrust when he said, "shall a child be born to Abraham that is an hundred years old: and Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" Gen. xxi. *Ans.* These words are not words of doubting, but inquiring; they proceeded from a desire to be further informed how these things could be. But Abraham laughed, and Sarah also at the mention of a son. True, they did both laugh, but not both alike; Abraham's laughter proceeded from admiration and joy, but Sarah's from diffidence and distrust: and accordingly we find Sarah reprimanded, but not Abraham reprimanded, for laughing: "Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him:

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Our apostle having, in the former part of this chapter, declared the manner of our justification, from an instance of Abraham, which having at large pursued, lest we should think that was Abraham's personal privilege, and did not concern us, he applies in the verses before us Abraham's example unto us, assuring us, that as *Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, because he depended upon the almighty power of God in the promise, and also looked by faith to the Messiah promised, who was to come of his seed; so, says the apostle, was this written for our sakes as well as Abraham's, for our comfort and encouragement, to assure us that faith shall be imputed to us also for righteousness, if we firmly trust in God, through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where observe, the apostle's argument fully overthrows the Socinian doctrine, which teaches, that the godly, under the Old Testament, were not justified in this

same way with us under the New; whereas the apostle fully proves, that Abraham, and all the children of Abraham, who walk in the steps of him their father, are justified alike: and accordingly it was not thus written of him for his sake alone, that *his faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, but for the benefit of us also; to whom the like faith shall be imputed for justification, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead. Learn hence, that the doctrine of justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of the Mediator, is no new doctrine, but as old as Abraham. Some are much offended at this word *imputed*; but as the pious bishops, Downham and Davenant, on justification well observe, it is no less than ten times mentioned, either in the term or the signification of it, in this chapter: their arguments for, and answers to, Bellarmine's objections against the imputed righteousness of the Mediator, run thus: "if Christ's righteousness be not imputed, it is not accepted; if it be not accepted, it is not performed, and so there will be no redemption by Jesus Christ: without this, we should make Christ little, very little, in the justifying of sinners: and why is Christ called the Lord our Righteousness, and how are we said to be made the righteousness of God in him? And why is faith so infinitely pleasing to God, but because faith brings to God a righteousness which is highly pleasing to him, even that of the Mediator? for there is no standing before God for any creature in a creature-righteousness"—the popish objections run thus: objection, 1. If Christ's righteousness be imputed to us, then may we be reputed redeemers of the world, as well as he was. *Ans.* It may as well be said, the debt may be accounted the surety, because the surety's payment is accepted for the debt. Objection, 2. If Christ's righteousness be imputed to us as ours, then we ought to be accounted as righteous as himself. *Ans.* It may be as well argued and concluded, that the debtor is as rich a man as the surety, because the surety pays the debtor's debts. Objection, 3. If Christ's righteousness be properly imputed to us, then our unrighteousness was properly imputed to him, and he may be strictly and truly called a sinner. *Ans.* Just as if we should say, "if the acceptance of the surety's payment acquits the debtor, then the surety is as bad an husband, and as much a bankrupt as the debtor himself." Objection, 4. But if Christ's righteousness be ours, no need of any righteousness of our own. *Ans.* We plead for the meritorious righteousness of Christ to answer the demands of the law, and for a personal righteousness of our own, to answer the commands of the gospel; let us render to all their due; let us render unto Christ the things that are Christ's, to faith the things which are faith's, and to good works the things which are theirs. Let us awfully adore the wisdom of God, who has made Christ unto us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. To relieve our ignorance and folly, he is *our wisdom*; to discharge us from guilt, and free us from condemnation, he is *our righteousness*; to relieve us against the filth and pollution, the power and dominion of sin, he is *our sanctification*; and to rescue us from our miserable captivity of Satan, he is *our redemption*. Blessed be God for the benefit of imputed righteousness to such as live in the practice and power of inherent holiness. True, our sanctification and holiness, when most perfect, cannot justify us before God; but it will evidence our justification before men, and be a witness to our own consciences, that we are accepted in the beloved.

25 Who was delivered for our offences,

and was raised again for our justification.

In this one verse we have an abridgment of the whole gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ declared, and the benefit and advantages of both assigned. 1. For his death; *he was delivered for our offences*. Here note, 1. The person delivered; he, that is, Christ Jesus the righteous; the Lord our righteousness. Note, 2. The person delivering, not expressed, but necessarily implied and understood; Judas delivered him, the Jews delivered him, God the Father delivered him, and Christ himself delivered himself. All these did one and the same act, but not for one and the same end: Judas delivered him for gain, the Jews for envy, the Father delivered him out of love, and Christ delivered himself in great compassion to a lost world. Note, 3. Unto what he was delivered, namely, unto death, even the death of the cross. This in God was an act of the highest justice, in Christ an act of wonderful obedience, in the Jews an act of the highest wickedness. Note, 4. For whom, and for what he was delivered: for us and for our offences; it notes the viceroyalty of his sufferings, not barely for our good as the final cause, and for our sins as the meritorious cause; but for us, in our room, place and stead, dying under an imputation of guilt, and dying as the sacrificed beast for the expiation of that guilt: the original word here for *offences* signifies great falls, grievous offences, and heinous crimes. This sacrificed lamb was delivered and died to expiate the guilt of great sins, and to make atonement for the greatest sinners. Note, 5. It is here said, that Christ was delivered, rather than die for our offences, to lead us to the consideration of the first cause of his sufferings for us: namely, the determinate counsel of God, pursuant to which there was a concession or permission given to wicked instruments to shed his blood; his own father delivering him up to death for our offences. Learn hence, that our sins were not only the occasion, but the moving and impulsive cause of Christ's sufferings. He died as a sacrifice to atone an offended Deity; as the sacrifices of old were brought to the altar, and there slain, so Christ substituting himself in our room and stead, was brought to the altar of his cross, and there died as a victim or expiatory sacrifice for our sins. Thus, *he was delivered for our offences*. Observe next, Our Lord's resurrection asserted, *he was raised again*, and its end assigned for our justification. Christ as our surety was under the arrest of death; but having given satisfaction by his sufferings, our discharge was published to the world by his resurrection; as by dying in our stead, he bare the curse of the law; so by rising again as a common person, we receive our acquittal from the hand of a judge. His death was our payment; his resurrection our discharge; "he was raised again for our justification." Learn thence, that Christ's resurrection was the cause of our justification; not the meritorious cause, for that was his death and bloodshed; but the declarative and perfect cause of our justification. His resurrection was a declaration of our justification, the justice of God thereby declaring itself satisfied, by its prisoner being released. His resurrection is also the perfective cause of our justification. The work of redemption wrought for us by his death, is perfected, and made effectual by his resurrection. This makes our redemption complete, which otherwise had been partial and imperfect; nay, none at all. 'Tis upon Christ, as raised, that our faith must be settled: had he not been raised from the dead, faith in his death

had had no foundation, for it had been an unaccountable thing to believe in one that lay under the power of death. By Christ's resurrection, the efficacy of his death was declared to all the world: therefore, says the apostle, chap. viii. "Who shall condemn us, when Christ hath died for us? yea, rather is risen again." As our redemption was not in its glory till Christ's resurrection; so neither is our faith in its full strength and vigor, till it eyes him." Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

CHAPTER V.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapters asserted, and by many arguments demonstrated the necessity of a sinner's justification by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ: whom God the Father, in infinite mercy and compassion to us, set forth to be a propitiation for us, delivering him to death for our offences, and raising him again for our justification: in this chapter he declares the sweet fruits and benefits, the blessed effects and advantages, which flow from the foregoing privilege, and redound to all such as are in a justified condition; viz. Peace with God, perseverance in grace, patience under affliction, joy in tribulation, hope of glory, &c. But let us consider them distinctly.

THEREFORE, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first blessed effect and sweet fruit of our justification by faith, is peace and reconciliation with God. Pardon and peace go together and accompany one another; a sinner being discharged from guilt, and thereby from his obnoxiousness to God's wrath, is instantly brought into a state of friendship and reconciliation with God; for there is no middle state betwixt his favor and his wrath. Learn hence, 1. That peace is proclaimed in heaven betwixt God and every justified person whatsoever, the enmity betwixt God and such a soul being taken away: peace, I say, is proclaimed in the sinner's conscience: a person may be in a state of peace, and yet want the sense of peace. Again, there is a twofold peace with God; one which is opposite to God's hatred as an enemy: the other opposed to God's paternal anger as a father. Now the apostle here speaks of the former, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" that is, God has no more hostile enmity against us, and will not satisfy his justice upon us, by punishing of us; but if we offend him, we shall certainly fall under his frowns and chastisements, and feel the effects of his heavy displeasure as an angry father! With this agrees that of the learned and pious Bishop Davenant: *Deus absolvit justificatum ab omni pena satisfactoria, sed non ab omni pena medicinali & castigatoria*. Learn, 2. That our reconciliation with God is settled upon a sure foundation by Jesus Christ; "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus;" that is, through him as a Mediator betwixt God and us; he made peace by the blood of the cross, Col. i. 20, that is, by his blood shed upon the cross; his meritorious satisfaction brought us into a

state of peace and reconciliation, and his prevailing intercession keeps us in it: "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A second benefit which flows from justification by faith, is our admission to *grace* and favor with God: this is a privilege beyond the former; a traitor may be pardoned by his prince, and yet not admitted into the presence of his prince; as Absalom's crime was forgiven, but he must not see his father's face: but by Christ's mediation, every justified person meets with divine acceptance; yea, he is not only brought into a state of grace and favor, but he stands and abides in it. No sufferings from God, no sufferings from man for God's sake, no temptations, no tribulations nor persecutions, can cause God to cast him out of his grace and favor; having access by faith into it, he shall stand and abide in it. True, he may fall under his father's rod, but he shall never fall from his father's love: "through Christ we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." A third benefit follows, "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Here observe, 1. The happy union and connection between *grace* and *glory*; grace is glory begun, and glory is grace consummated; grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace in the fruits; grace is the lowest degree of glory, and glory the highest degree of grace. Happy soul, that is partaker of the first fruits of grace! thou shalt ere long reap the crop of glory! Observe, 2. A justified person has the hope of future glory, and always may, and sometimes can, rejoice in the hope; "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God;" he hopes for the glory of God, and well he may, for it is purchased for him, it is promised to him; he has it already in the first-fruits and earnest of that: it is prepared for him, and he is preparing for that; and he rejoices in the hope of his glory, believing it to be great and glorious, sure and certain, never decaying, everlasting.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.

Here the apostle mentioneth a fourth benefit flowing from justification by faith; and that is, glorying in their present sufferings. He told us before, that justified persons, being at peace with God, rejoiced in hopes of future glory; but says he, that is not all, they glory in their present tribulations also. Here note, 1. What sort of sufferings they are which the saints glory in; they are tribulations, that is, such trials and persecutions as did befall them for the profession of the gospel: in these a child of God may rejoice, yea, boast

and glory, as a soldier doth of his marks, wounds, and scars, received in the wars, but not in those sufferings, afflictions and trials which we bring upon ourselves, as punishments for our sins; these we have no more reason to glory in, than a corrected child has to glory in his whipping; "what glory is it when we are buffeted for our faults?" Note, 2. To what a height and heroic pitch the spirit of a justified believer may be raised under sufferings for Christ; *he may glory in tribulation*: it is an high strain of spiritualness in bearing affliction, when a christian can say, *I love to bear*: though I love not that which I suffer, and that which I bear, yet I love to bear what I suffer. But it is a higher pitch than this to say with the apostle, "I rejoice in my sufferings," Col. i. 24. For joy is a degree beyond love; yet it is a degree higher still to take pleasure in reproaches and distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. xii. 10., for pleasure is a degree beyond joy; but to *glory in tribulations*, is beyond them all; it is more than to love, more than to rejoice, more than to take pleasure in them. O the power of faith in Christ, and love unto him, to support and uphold the soul? yea, cause it to glory under the sharpest sufferings and tribulations for him! Note, 3. That it is not in the tribulations themselves that believers glory, but in the sweet issue, happy fruits, and gracious effects of them; finding that by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit *tribulation worketh patience*; that is, exerciseth and increaseth patience, and patience begetteth and giveth experience of God's gracious presence with us, of his assistance of us, and of his faithfulness towards us, in and under all our afflictions: and *experience of these things worketh in us hope of reward*. Here observe, how one grace generates and begets another: graces have a generation one from another, though they have all but one generation from the spirit of Christ. Observe also, that it is not tribulation in its own nature, but when sanctified by the blessed Spirit, that by a happy gradation *worketh patience*, and *patience experience*, and *experience hope*: for when affliction is not sanctified, but meets with a stubborn spirit, Lord, what dreadful effects doth it produce! Then tribulation excites impatience, impatience causes perplexity, perplexity despair, and despair confusion. Note, 4. The effect and property of the believer's hope. *It maketh not ashamed*: his hope will not make him ashamed, neither will he be ever ashamed of his hope: frustrated hopes fill men with confusion and shame: the justified person shall not find his hopes of glory frustrated, but exceeded; and the reason is added, why the christian hope will not deceive or shame him, namely, "because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost;" that is, the Holy Spirit doth in time of tribulation, testify his love to the hearts of the people, which causes them to glory in tribulation. Learn hence, that in time of affliction, especially of persecution for the sake of Christ, good men have a more sensible feeling of God's love shed abroad in their hearts by the blessed Spirit, both to prepare them for trials, and to support them under them. St. Peter calls this a joy unspeakable; it has the very scent and taste of heaven in it, and there is but a gradual difference betwixt it and the joys of heaven: no sooner doth the Holy Spirit shed forth the love of God into the believer's heart, by clearing up his interest in the promise, and his title to eternal glory, but the soul is prepared to rejoice in affliction, yea, to glory in tribulation; and it will be as impossible to hinder it, as it is to hinder a man from satisfaction when he is most delighted and pleased:

"we glory in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

In this verse, the apostle sets forth the efficacy of Christ's love towards us before justification: he had a love towards us when we were sinners, which prevailed with him to die for sinners; "when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." Note here. 1. Man's condition by nature described, a state of enmity, *ungodly*; and a state of impotency, *without strength*. We were without strength, and so wanted help; ungodly and so refused help. Man is but an impotent and an obstinate creature; without power to resist justice, and without affection to desire mercy: so weak, that he trembles at the appearance of a worm, and yet so wicked, that he lifts up his head against heaven. The state of unregeneracy is both a state of enmity and a state of impotency. Note, 2. The way and means found out for our recovery, the death of Christ; "when we were yet without strength, Christ died for us." Though he found the whole race of mankind buried in the ruins of their lapsed state, yet he did not leave them so, but died for them. Note, 3. The seasonableness of the means interposed for our recovery: it was *in due time*, that Christ died: that is in the fulness of time appointed by God the Father, and determined in his decree and purpose. Here we may remark, that Christ came not in the beginning of time, in the infancy and morning of the world (though it was then promised that he should come) nor yet did he stay till the last period and end of time: but came as it were in the middle of time, which is called the *fulness of time*, Gal. iv. 4. and here *due time*. Christ came not for our recovery as soon as ever we were fallen, that mankind might be the more sensible of the badness of their condition: had we been instantly cured as soon as we complained, we should neither have apprehended the danger of our disease, nor esteemed the kindness of our Physician: neither did he stay till the last period and end of time before he came, that the faith and expectation of his church might not be put upon too long and severe an exercise: the patriarchs believed in Christ that was to come; the apostles in Christ then present: and Christians now believe in him that long since did come, and is gone again. So that the apostle might well say here, that *in due time Christ died*.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Here the apostle amplifies, extols, and magnifies the love of Christ in dying for us, when we were enemies to him; by comparing his love to us, with our love to one another: he intimates to us, that among men it is very rare and seldom known that one man will lay down his life to save another's; but if so, it must be for a very extraordinary friend, for a person of uncommon goodness, and of eminent worth; for, says he, *scarcely for a righteous man will one die*. As if he had said, such a thing may be, but it is scarcely ever known, that a person will lay down his life for another, though he be a very righteous, innocent, and truly honest

man: perhaps for a good man, that is, for a very kind and bountiful benefactor; for some person of rare charity, and extraordinary goodness; for a man that is a public blessing and common good to the whole community; some person, from a sense of strong obligations, would even dare to die. The scope of the apostle is this: to set forth the transcendency of Christ's love in dying for the ungodly, to show that it is beyond all human example, and that there can be no resemblance, much less any parallel of it; *he loved us, and gave himself for us*. Had he only as an advocate spoken and pleaded for us, his condescension had been admirable, and his love unspeakable. But to die, yea, to die for us, to be not only our Mediator, but Redeemer; not only our Redeemer, but our Ransom; here is love beyond comparison: blessed Jesus! was ever love like thine?

8 But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Observe here, How the scripture distinctly represents the love of God in giving Christ to die for us, as well as Christ's love in dying for us: *God commended his love*; declared, expressed and made manifest his love to us; Christ's death is often represented in scripture, as an instance of the great love of the Father towards us; because his wisdom did contrive this way for our redemption; and he has graciously accepted of his Son's sufferings in our stead. Verily, the giving heaven itself, with all its joys and glory, is not so full and perfect a demonstration of the love of God, as the giving of his Son to die for us; especially if we consider one endearing circumstance of this love of God which *he commended towards us*; namely that it warmed the heart of God from all eternity, and was never interrupted in that vast duration. Our salvation by Christ is the product of God's eternal counsel, Acts ii. 23, that is, the fruit of his everlasting love; before the world began, we were in the eyes, yea, in and upon the heart of God. In a word, well might the apostle say, that *God commended his love toward us*, forasmuch as in common esteem, he expressed greater love to us, than to Christ himself: for God, in giving him to die for us, declared to us, that our salvation was more dear to him, than the life of his own Son. God repented that he made man, but never that he gave his Son to redeem man. Learn hence, that the death of Christ for sinners, is an evident demonstration of the love of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

As if the apostle had said, "He that loved us when we were enemies, will not damn us now we are his children. He that reconciled us to himself by his Son's death, that is, for the sake of his Son's sufferings, and satisfaction, will cer-

tainly save us from wrath to come by his life, or for the sake of his prevailing intercession;" "if when enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." Here note, that this word (*if*) is not a word of doubting, but of argumentation. The apostle supposes a known truth, or a principle yielded by all christians, that the death of Christ was to reconcile sinners unto God. Learn hence, that Christ has reconciled God and us by the satisfaction which his death has made to the justice of God for our sins; and reparation being made, the enmity ceases on God's part, if the terms of reconciliation be accepted on our part. Our reconciliation with God, when enemies, was effected, 1. By the sacrifices of the death of Christ; which was the price that purchased it, 2. By the application of that benefit to us through faith: and, 3. By Christ's potent and eternal intercession; whereby our state of reconciliation is confirmed, and all future breaches prevented: for if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ the righteous, 1 John ii. 2. We dare not say, that God could not have reconciled us any other way but this; but we may safely say, that no way like this was so expressive of his love to us; it was the most obliging and endearing way imaginable, to reconcile us to himself by the death of his Son.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

As if the apostle had said, "and moreover, we are not only reconciled to, but we glory and rejoice in, God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement or reconciliation." Here note, The christian's great duty to rejoice, the cause of, that his joy, his reconciliation with God, and the means by which he obtains reconciliation with God; *through our Lord Jesus Christ*: that is, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through faith in his death. Hence learn, that our rejoicing, as to reconciliation with God depends upon our believing; it is none, if our faith be none; little, if our faith be little; great, if our faith be great. No man can rejoice in an unknown good; let us therefore give all diligence to clear up to ourselves our interest in this atonement: Christ thought it worth his blood to purchase it; surely then it is worth our pains to clear it, in order to our rejoicing in it. He that seeks not reconciliation with God, is an enemy to his soul; and he that rejoices not in that reconciliation, is an enemy to his own comfort.

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

The doctrine of original sin is not more difficult to be understood, than it is necessary to be known; the apostle here declares the manner how sin and death entered the world; namely, by the fall of Adam the first man; "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Note, 1. An unhappy parent; namely, Adam: by him sin entered into the world. 2. An unhappy posterity; namely, the whole

world, proceeding from and coming out of the loins of Adam, *in whom all have sinned*. 3. An unhappy portion; sin and death: sin entered by Adam, and death entered by sin. This was the legacy which Adam left to all his posterity. Now the sad and mournful truth which the scripture contains, is this: "That our first parent, by his transgression, hath entailed a miserable inheritance, an unhappy portion of sin and death upon all his posterity." Adam's sin becomes ours.

1. By meritorious imputation: God treated with him not as a private person, but as *caput gentis*, as the root and parent of all mankind. Hence a comparison is often made between the first and second Adam; the grace of the one, with the sin of the other; the life conveyed by the one, and the death transmitted by the other. By Adam we were cast, by Christ we were cleared; cursed in Adam, crowned in Christ. Now this comparison would be wholly insignificant, if Adam had not been looked upon as the representative of us all. 2. The sin of Adam is derived to us by way of inhesion: we have received from him a depravity of nature, and evil disposition, a propension to all mischief, an aversion to all good. The sin of Adam transmitted to us, doth not only cause guilt upon our persons, but filth upon our natures; not only lays a charge to us, but throws a stain upon us. 3. We make Adam's sin our own by imitation, by treading in the steps of his disobedience. Every sin we commit in defiance of the threatenings of God, is a justifying of Adam's rebellion against God; and accordingly, we die by our own folly, as well as by his fall; our destruction is of ourselves, by our actual rebellions; and we shall at the great day charge our sin and misery upon ourselves, not on God, but on satan, not on instruments, not on our first parents.

13 For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

The apostle having asserted the doctrine of original sin in the former verse, he prosecutes and pursues it in this and the following verse: asserting, that it is evident all have sinned, because sin was always in the world; not only after the giving of the law by Moses, but also before, even from the beginning of the world to that time. As if the apostle had said, there was certainly a law given before there was a law written: a law given to Adam, before a law written by Moses; now this law was either the law of nature written in Adam's heart, or the positive law of God given to Adam, against which law men were capable of offending before the law of Moses was written; otherwise sin would not have been imputed to them, for sin is not imputed where there is no law." Learn hence, That God having created man a rational creature, capable of moral government, is by immediate resultancy his King and Governor, and has ruled him from the beginning by a law, yet not barely by a law, but by a covenant, with promises and threatenings annexed, rewarding him for his obedience, and punishing him for his rebellion.

14 Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression—

The apostle had asserted, that sin was in the world before the written law of Moses: here he proves it thus: "death, the wages of sin, did reign in the world, and had power over all mankind from Adam to Moses; therefore sin was in the world from Adam to Moses." By "them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" infants are generally understood; the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to them, else death could have no power over them. The argument runs thus: death is a punishment of sin, but infants die who never sinned actually, therefore they die for Adam's sin: sin brought mortality into the nature, and the wages of sin is death: they brought a sinful nature into the world with them, which God gave the Jews of old an intimation of, by appointing the sacrament of circumcision, signifying that infants brought something into the world with them, which was early to be cut off; he also signifies the same to us christians, by appointing the ordinance of baptism for children, which he calls *the laver of regeneration*; Now a laver supposes uncleanness; what is pure, needs no laver. Learn hence, That infants, as soon as they live, have in them the seeds of death: sin is the seed of death, the principle of corruption. God doth infants no wrong when they die: their death is of themselves, for they have the seeds of death in themselves. All death is the wages of sin, and therefore can be no injustice to the sinner; thus *death reigned from Adam to Moses*, yea, even to this day; and like an insatiable tyrant, will continue to reign and slay universally, and beyond number, from the infant to the aged, from the dunghill to the throne, sparing neither age nor sex, neither great nor small, neither sacred nor profane.

—who is the figure of him that was to come.

From hence to the end of the chapter, the apostle enters upon a comparison betwixt Adam and Christ, whom he here calls a figure or resemblance of him that was to come, that is, of Christ. As Adam was the root of sin and death to all his natural seed, so Christ is the root of holiness and life to all his spiritual seed. As by the first Adam, sin, and by sin death came upon all men; so by the second Adam came righteousness, and by righteousness life on all believers. As the first Adam merited death, so the second Adam life for all his offspring. "Thus Adam was the figure of him that was to come."

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift; for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, *which is* by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many,

16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence death

reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

The apostle having noted the parity and resemblance between Christ and Adam in the foregoing verses; here he observes the disparity and difference betwixt them, and that in several advantageous particulars: 1. He compares the sin of Adam with the obedience of Christ, and shows that the sin of the one was not so pernicious, as the obedience of the other was beneficial; Christ's obedience being more powerful to justification and salvation, than Adam's sin was to death and condemnation: for if the transgression of Adam, who was but a mere man, was able to pull down death and wrath upon all his natural seed; then the obedience of Christ who is God as well as man, will be much more available to procure pardon and life to all his spiritual seed. 2. There is a further observable difference betwixt Adam and Christ, as in respect of their persons, so in respect of their acts, and extent of their acts. Thus Adam by one act of sin brought death, that is, the sentence of death upon the whole world (all mankind becoming subject to mortality for that one sin of his;) but it is many sins of many men, which Christ doth deliver from, in the free gift of our justification; absolving us, not only from that one fault, but from all other faults and offences whatsoever. Learn thence, that the obedience of Christ extends itself not only to the pardon of original sin in Adam, but to all personal and actual sins whatsoever. 3. The apostle shows the difference betwixt them two, that is, the first and second Adam, as in respect of the effects and consequences of their acts; if by means of one man, and by one offence of that man, the whole race of mankind became subject to death, then much more shall they who are redeemed and justified by Jesus Christ, be made partakers of everlasting life, wherein they shall reign with him in glory. From the whole, note, the infinite wisdom, transcendent grace, and rich mercy of God to a miserable world in providing a salve as large as the sore; a remedy as extensive as the malady, a sovereign antidote in the blood of the second Adam, to expel the poison and malignity of the sin of the first Adam; O happy they! who having received from the first Adam corruption for corruption, have received from the second Adam grace for grace.

18 Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Observe here, how the apostle informs us of a truth, which all the writings of philosophers never acquainted us with; namely, the meritorious imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity; that all mankind sinned in Adam, and be-

came obnoxious to death, and all other calamities and miseries, as a punishment for their sin. Yea, the writings of Moses himself, though they declare to us the sin of Adam, and that his sin was punished with death; yet that by his disobedience all his race and posterity were involved, and became miserable, is a truth, which we are peculiarly beholden to the gospel, and particularly to this text and context, for the more full discovery of. And the account of that matter seems to stand thus: the rebellion of the first man against the great Creator, was a sin of universal efficacy, that derives a guilt and stain to mankind in all ages of the world. And the account which the scriptures give of it is grounded on the relation which we have to Adam, as being the natural and moral principle of all mankind; as the whole race of mankind was virtually in Adam's loins, so it was presumed to give virtual consent to what he did; when he broke, all his posterity became bankrupts; there being a conspiracy of all the sons of Adam in this rebellion, and not one subject left in his obedience; add to this, that Adam is to be considered as the moral as well as the natural principle of mankind. In the first covenant made betwixt God and him, Adam was considered not as a single person but as a *caput gentis*; and contracted not for himself only, but for all his descendants, by ordinary generation; his person was the root and fountain of theirs, and his will the representative of theirs: from hence, his numerous issue became a party in the covenant, and had a title in the benefits contained in it upon his obedience, and was liable to the curse upon the violation of it: upon this ground it is, that the apostle here in this text and context, institutes a parallel betwixt Adam and Christ; "that as by the disobedience of the former, many were made sinners: so by the obedience of the latter many were made righteous." As Christ in his death did not suffer as a private person, but as a surety and sponsor representing the whole church: in like manner, Adam in his disobedience was esteemed a public person, representing the whole race of mankind; and by a just law it was not restrained to himself, but is the sin of the common nature. But adored, for ever adored, be the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, in providing a remedy which bears proportion to the cause of our ruin, that as we fell in Adam our representative, so we are raised by Christ the head of our recovery, which two persons are considered as causes of contrary effects! The effects are *sin and righteousness, condemnation and justification*. For as the disobedience of the first Adam is meritoriously imputed to all his natural posterity, and brings death upon all; so the righteousness of the second Adam is meritoriously imputed to all his spiritual progeny, to obtain life for them. As the carnal Adam, having lost original righteousness, derives a corrupt nature to all that descend from him; so the spiritual Adam, having by his disobedience, purchased grace for us, conveys a vital efficacy unto us. The same Spirit of holiness which anointed our Redeemer, doth quicken all his race, that as they have borne the image of the earthly, they may bear the image of the heavenly Adam.

20 Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death,

even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

"The law entered that sin might abound; "that is, before the law was written, we became obnoxious to death by one man's obedience, without much sense of it; but after the law was given by Moses, sin did more clearly and conspicuously appear to be sin. Its odiousness and ugliness was more manifest to the conscience of the sinner. As the sinner has abounded in sin, in a way of commission, so *sin* doth by the discovery of the law abound in the sinner's apprehension, in the sight and sense of it, upon the conscience of the sinner. Nevertheless, "as sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." As the exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested by the law, so the superabounding grace and pardoning mercy of God is rendered graciously conspicuous in and by the gospel: that as the power of sin appeared in making us liable to temporal and eternal death, so might the power of grace appear in beginning in us a spiritual life here, and bringing us to eternal life in glory hereafter. In short, when the apostle says that "the law entered, that sin might abound," he doth not mean to make it abound, by encouraging the sinner to the commission of it, but by impressing the conviction of it upon the conscience of the sinner. A man without the law looks upon himself as a small sinner; but after he has viewed his sins in the glass of the law, he sees himself a great and mountainous sinner: as a star which a child thinks to be no bigger than a spark: but a man that views it through an instrument, computes it to be bigger than the globe of the earth. Lord, help us to see our sins in the glass of thy law, yea in the glass of thy Son's blood: and then we shall be sensible what an infinite and immense evil sin is; namely, the stain and blemish of our natures, the disease and deformity of our minds, the highest infelicity of the creature, and the boldest affront that can be given to the majesty of the great and glorious God. Learn from the whole, that the riches, the abounding riches, the superabounding riches of God's pardoning grace, are manifested in the remission of our sins, and in the justification of our person: "as sin abounded, grace doth much more abound." Now, the superabounding riches of pardoning grace do thus shine forth: 1. In the nature of the mercy, which is the richest and sweetest of all mercies. No mercy sweeter than a pardon to a condemned sinner, no pardon like God's pardon to a sinner condemned at his bar. 2. In the peculiarity of the mercy. Remission is not a common but a crowning favor; it never was, never shall be extended to fallen angels: and, it is to be feared, that the far greater part of mankind refuse the terms and conditions upon which pardoning grace and mercy is offered and tendered to them. 3. In the method in which pardoning mercy is dispensed; namely, through the blood of Christ, that all-sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction; by which method, "God has more commended his love to us," than if he had pardoned us without a satisfaction; for then he had only displayed his mercy: but now he has declared his justice, yea, caused mercy and justice to meet and kiss each other, to meet in triumph together. 4. The superabounding riches of pardoning mercy appear in the latitude and extent of that act of grace. Lord, who can understand his errors! yet the blood of thy Son

cleanseth from all sin, small and great, secret and open, old and new, original and actual; all pardoned without exception. O how well might the Psalmist say, "With the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption," Psal. cxxx. Lastly, the riches of pardoning grace do shine forth, as in the peculiarity, so in the perpetuity of remission. As grace pardons all sin, without exception, so the pardons it bestows are without revocation: the pardoned soul shall never come into condemnation; "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," Psal. ciii. 10. As the east and west are the two opposite points of heaven, which can never come together; so neither shall the pardoned sinner and his sins ever meet any more. "God is said to cast them behind his back" that is, he will never behold them more, so as to charge them upon the pardoned sinner, in order to his condemnation. May our faith then, both in life and death, triumph in the assurance of this blessed truth; "that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; and as sin has reigned unto death, even so so hath grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," who lives for ever in heaven, to apply by his prevailing intercession, what he impetrated and obtained for us here on earth, by his meritorious satisfaction. To this Jesus, who is the faithful witness, and first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings, and priests unto God; unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

The design and scope of our apostle in this chapter, is to show that the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ Jesus, which he had so strenuously asserted in the foregoing chapter, is so far from being a doctrine leading to licentiousness, that it greatly tendeth to promote holiness; and obligeth all the professors of christianity to the greatest strictness in conversation, answerable to the dignity and obligations of their christian names.

WHAT shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 God forbid: how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Thus the apostle begins this chapter with an objection, which some licentious persons might be ready to make against what he had delivered in the close of the foregoing chapter: namely, that where sin abounded, pardoning grace and mercy did much more abound. If say they, the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon of sin, let us then take the more liberty to sin, because grace so exceedingly abounds in the pardon of it. The apostle rejects such an inference with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, saying, *God forbid, &c.* As if he had said, "O vile abuse of the most excellent thing in the world? What! did Christ shed his blood to expiate our guilt? and shall we make that a plea to extenuate our guilt? *God forbid!* surely there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared, not that he may be the more abused." In the words, observe, 1. An objection

supposed, as if the doctrine of the gospel did countenance licentiousness, and encourage any to sin, or to continue in sin. 2. Observe with what abhorrency and indignation such a doctrine and proposition is rejected by our apostle. What! shall we continue in sin, because pardoning mercy doth abound! *God forbid*, that such a direct blasphemy against the holy doctrine of our Saviour should be maintained by any professor. Observe, 3. The confutation which he gives of this bold and impudent assertion; "how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Dead to sin, that is, by our baptismal engagement, vow, and obligation; every christian; at his first entrance upon the profession of christianity, doth take upon himself a vow of solemn obligation to die to sin, and to live no longer therein. From the whole learn, that to take any encouragement to live in sin, from the consideration of God's rich mercy and free grace towards sinners, is an absurd, abominable, and blasphemous impiety, contrary to all ingenuity, gratitude, and love, both to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son.

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

"To be baptized into Christ," is by baptism to take the name of Christ upon us, to be incorporated, ingrafted, and implanted into the church of Christ, being made visible members of his mystical body by baptism: "to be baptized into Christ's death," imports, our being conformed to him in the likeness of his death; our being engaged to die unto sin; as Christ died for sin. Learn hence, That the death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death, in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us. Was his death for sin free and voluntary? so must we die to sin. Was his death an universal crucifixion, did no life, sense, or motion, remain with him? thus must we imitate the likeness of his death, by an universal mortification of every known sin, which occasioned his dying. In a word, did Christ die and rise again, never to die more? so must we die unto sin, and walk in a newness of life. How shall we that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein? Thus it appears the indispensable duty of all christians, to transcribe the copy of Christ's death in their hearts and lives.

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,

To urge christians to farther measures and degrees of mortification of sin, and living unto holiness, the apostle uses here a double argument, one from our baptism, the other from the resurrection of Christ. Observe, 1. The argument to move us to die unto sin, drawn from our baptism; "we are buried with him by baptism unto death." The apostle alludes, no doubt, to the ancient manner and way of baptizing persons in those hot countries, which was by immersion, or putting them under water for a time, and then raising them up again out of the water; which rite had also a mystical signification, representing the burial of

our old man sin in us, and our resurrection to newness of life. Learn hence, that the ordinance of baptism lays every baptized person under the strongest engagements and highest obligations to die unto sin, and walk in newness of life. The metaphors of burying and rising again, do imply and intimate thus much: burial implies a continuing under death; this is mortification a continued act, a daily dying unto sin; and rising again supposes a person never more to be under the power of death. Observe, 2. Another forcible argument to encourage us to die to sin, and walk in newness of life, is drawn from the resurrection of Christ; "as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so should we also walk in newness of life." Here note, 1. The proposal of a pattern and exemplar to us; "Christ was raised from the dead." 2. The author and efficient cause of Christ's resurrection; "he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father;" that is, by the glorious power of the Father; yet not without his own power as God: so Christ told the Jews, John ii. "Destroy this temple of my body, and in three days I will raise it up again." Note, 3. The conformity or similitude on our part: as Christ arose, so should we arise out of the grave of sin and walk in newness of life. Learn hence, That Christ's resurrection is a powerful motive, and lays a Christian under strong obligations and engagements to arise from sin, and walk in newness of life. Christ's resurrection is both a pattern and a pledge of our resurrection; a pattern after which we are to conform in our rising from the grace of sin. Did Christ rise early and speedily? so should we: he arose early in the morning of the day, so should we in the morning of our youth; he arose voluntarily and cheerfully, so should we, rejoicing at our spiritual liberty and freedom from sin's bondage and thralldom; he arose with a resolution never to die more; so should we arise, with desires and endeavours, that spiritual death may never more have dominion over us. And if Christ's resurrection be thus a pattern of our resurrection now, it will be a pledge of a blessed resurrection at the last day. Observe lastly, The duty which every baptized person lies under an obligation to perform, in conformity to Christ, into whose death they are baptized; and that is, "to walk in newness of life." Where note, For our encouragement, the account which the scripture gives of the properties of the new life, which such as are buried and risen with Christ, do assuredly live: and here we find it is the most noble life, the most delectable life, the most profitable life, the most holy and heavenly life: holy in its principle and motive, holy in its aim and end, holy in its rule and actings. In a word newness of life is a preparation for, and an introduction into, eternal life, and must needs be the most excellent life; for it is a life from God, it is a life laid out for God, yea, it is the life which God himself lives; and none must expect to live with him in heaven hereafter, that do not walk in newness of life here; but if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Observe here, 1. A supposition, "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death;" namely, by dying unto sin: if as Christ died, we die; he a natural, we a spiritual death: he for sin, and we to sin; he by way of expiation,

suffering, and satisfying for sin; we by way of mortification, killings, and crucifying of sin. Learn thence, That all baptized persons ought to labor for, and endeavour after, a conformity to the death of Christ, in their dying daily unto sin. As he died a painful and shameful death for us, such a death should sin die in us; living a dying life, and dying a lingering but a certain death. Observe, 2. The apostle's inference drawn from the foregoing supposition; "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" that is, we are under an obligation to imitate his resurrection, by rising from the death of sin, unto newness of life. Did he rise early out of his natural grave? so must we out of our spiritual. Did he arise to a new life? so must we arise and walk in newness of life. Did he arise never to die more? so must we that are dead to sin, live no longer therein. Observe, 3. How the power enabling us thus to die unto sin, and to live unto holiness, is derived from Christ by virtue of our implantation into him by faith: "if we have been planted together, &c." As the grass liveth, groweth, and fructifieth by the juice drawn from the stock into which it is planted; so christians being taken out of the old rotten stock, degenerate Adam, and planted into the noble stock, Christ Jesus, are, by virtue derived from him, raised to newness of life, into whom they are ingrafted. Learn hence, That we experience the power of Christ's death and resurrection, in enabling us to die to sin, and live unto God, only by virtue of a real implantation into Christ, by an operative and lively faith. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

By the old man we are to understand our corrupt and derived nature, so-called, because it is as old as Adam, and derived from Adam; born and bred with us. This old man, or our corrupt and vicious nature, must be crucified, to show our conformity and likeness to Christ in his crucifixion. The cross bringeth pain, shame and death: the like must sin undergo in the work of mortification. By the *body of sin*, we are to understand the whole stock mass of corruption, compacted as it were into one monstrous body, prepared with all its members to commit actual sins. Called a *body*, because composed of many sinful passions and lusts, as the body is of many members, and also because they are executed by the body. And farther, because sin had a real substance in us, as if it were a body; not that sin is a substance, but the gravity of a substance. Now this body of sin must be destroyed, not as to actions only, but as to affections and inclinations also; It is not enough that we scratch this old man's face, but we must stab his heart and desire, in purpose, in endeavours: we must seek the death and destruction of all sin, "that henceforth we may not serve sin;" that is, that henceforward we should renounce the service of, and all relation to sin. Where note, 1. That before regeneration, we are all servants of, yea, slaves to sin; so many lusts, so many lords reigning in us, and tyrannizing over us. Note, 2. That it is one thing to sin, and another thing to serve sin; to serve sin, is to yield

willing obedience, to indulge ourselves in any presumptuous act or course of sin. It is not the presence, but prevalency of sin, that destroys and damns the sinner; it is not the flesh being in us, but our being in the flesh, that displeaseth God. O! happy for us, if sin's dominion be taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

"He that is dead," that is, spiritually dead unto sin, in conformity to the death of Christ, "is freed from sin;" that is, not only from the guilt, but from the dominion and slavery of sin. Learn hence, That freedom from the bondage and tyranny, from the dominion and slavery of sin, is the privilege of all those that are crucified with Christ, and dead to sin. Freedom from sin consists in two things: 1. In dispossessing the soul of every evil habit and disposition. 2. In renouncing a sinful course of life and conversation. If sin be weakened in the heart, the fruit of that will appear in the life: the strength of sin lies in the love of sin; if that be broken, the power of sin is shaken.

8 Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Observe here, 1. A supposition, or presupposed condition; the thing supposed, is the baptized person's being dead with Christ; "if we be dead with him," that is, by the exercise of daily mortification: if we have fellowship and communion with him in his death, that as he died for sin, we daily die unto sin: then followeth, 2. The inference or conclusion, "we shall also live with him;" that is, we that have had fellowship with him in his death, shall have communion with him in his resurrection: we shall live with him a life of grace and glory, of regeneration and glorification, the one to newness of life, the other to everlasting life. Hence learn, that all those that are dead with Christ, have no reason to doubt but that they shall also live with him. But who are the persons that may be said to be dead with Christ? *Ans.* 1. All such as own the obligations which their baptismal vow and christian profession puts upon them, and solemnly lays them under; namely, to keep the whole gospel, even as they who were circumcised were obliged to keep the whole law. 2. Such as make conscience of it daily, endeavour to perform it, and obtain the success of their endeavour to perform it, and obtain the success of their endeavours in such a degree, that the reign of sin is broken, though sin itself be not totally destroyed. These may be said to be dead and crucified with Christ, having by the assistance of his Spirit, in some measure crucified the flesh with its inordinate affections and lusts; and if they here live like him, so they shall also live with him: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Here the apostle declares both the death which Christ once died, and the life which he now liveth. Observe, 1. The death which Christ died; "he died unto sin once," that is,

either, 1. He died for sin once, namely, to expiate the guilt of sin, and to make atonement for sinners; or else, 2. He died unto sin; that is, to destroy, conquer and subdue sin in the hearts and lives of his children and people, by the aids and assistances of his Holy Spirit. Observe, 2. The life which Christ now lives after his resurrection; he liveth unto God, and dieth no more. Here note, 1. The perpetuity and immortality of his life; *he dieth no more*. Christ has done his work, in taking away the guilt and power of sin: let us look to it, that we do ours. Note, 2. The perfection and blessedness of his life. *He liveth unto God*; or liveth for ever with God; by which phrase is expressed that eternal and indissoluble union which the Son hath with the Father; he is one with him, and lives for ever in the enjoyment of him. Learn hence, That the due consideration of Christ's resurrection from the dead, will mightily promote the spiritual life in us. Thus it doth these three ways: 1. As it evidences the truth and verity of the christian religion, that Christ is no impostor or deceiver. In the judgment of the world, Christ died as a malefactor; but God justified him, acquitted and freed him from that imputation by raising him from the dead. 2. Christ's resurrection shows the perfection of his sacrifice and satisfaction, that nothing more is needful to take away sin; when the surety is let out of prison, the debtor may be assured that his debt is paid. 3. Christ's arising is a pledge and assurance of our resurrection, and so promotes holiness in us, by obliging us to live as the candidates of heaven, as the children of the resurrection, as becomes the heirs of such glorious hopes.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we have the two parts of our sanctification described, namely, mortification and vivification, dying unto sin, and living unto God. 1. Mortification, or dying unto sin; "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin;" that is, look upon the death of Christ, and your death with Christ, as a strong argument against the reign and power of sin, account yourselves dead unto sin. Now deadness argues three things. 1. Disability. Such as are dead, are disabled from working. Proportionable to the measure of our death unto sin, will be our disability to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin in a regenerate man is no more able to do all its will, than a crucified man is able to do what he will. 1 John iii. 9. "He that is born of God cannot commit sin;" not as others do, and as he himself formerly has done. 2. Deadness to sin argues disaffection towards sin, as well as disability; when we die to sin, our love to sin dieth. 3. Deadness argues liberty and unsubjectedness: he that is dead is free from sin, as the woman by death is freed from her husband, and the christian that is dead with Christ unto sin, "stands fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free." Observe, 2. The other part of our sanctification here declared, and that is, living unto God. This likewise consists in three things: 1. In having our sensitive appetites in subjection, and under the subjection and dominion of reason; when we are governed like men, by reason and conscience, not like beasts by sense and sensual inclinations. 2. In having reason illuminated by faith, guided and directed by divine revelation. And 3. When this faith inclines and enables us to live unto God, when faith begets in us a resolution to obey God, and

to persevere in our duty to him. This is to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. Observe, lastly, Christians are said to be dead unto sin and alive unto God, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Which phrase imports, that Christ is the root and principle of our spiritual life by faith, in whom we are enabled to live unto God, as the scion ingrafted into the stock, lives by the juice and nourishment it receives from the stock: so christians are alive unto God, in, by and through Jesus Christ, receiving from him that virtue, whereby their spiritual life is begun, carried on and maintained, and shall in due time be perfected and completed. From whence we learn, That Christ is not only an head of authority, but an head of influence to his church and members. "He strengthening them, they can do all things," but without him they can do nothing; that is, without interest with him, and influence of grace derived from him.

12 Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof:

Observe here, The duty which the apostle exhorts the Christians to; and that is to prevent the regency and dominion of sin: "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies." But when is sin said to reign? *Ans.* When the bent and tendency of the heart is toward sin, and all the faculties of the soul are on sin's side, and wholly take its part; when sin is not opposed, or but slightly opposed; when sin is committed industriously, and temptations to sin prevail easily; when persons sin without any sense of sin, with small remorse and check for sin; then sin is in its throne, and reigos imperiously. But why doth the apostle say, Let not sin reign in your body rather than in your soul? *Ans.* Because sin and lusts do gratify the body exceedingly; that is, the sensual appetite, the brutish part of man: and farther, because they were acted and executed by the body, or outward man, called therefore *the deeds of the body*. But why doth the apostle here call it a mortal body? "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies." *Ans.* 1. To put us in mind that the mortality of our bodies is the fruit and punishment of our sins, that sin having brought in death upon us, our bodies must die for sin. 2. To show the vanity and transitoriness of the delights and pleasures of sin, which do gratify a mortal body, which after all its pamperings must perish. 3. The apostle may probably call it a mortal body, to show that our conflicts with sin shall endure but a little while; ere long this mortal shall put on immortality. It may encourage us to be violent in the conflict; ere long we shall be victorious in the conquest. From the whole note, 1. That sin is a great and mighty king, which has a regal power over the enslaved sinner. Sin has the love of an husband, the power of a king, and the worship of God in the sinner's heart. Sin is a raging and commanding king, has the sinner's heart for its throne, the members of the body for its service, the world, the flesh and the devil for its grand council, lusts and temptations for its weapons and armory; and its chief fortifications are ignorance and sensuality, and fleshly reasonings. O deplorable degradation? That man, who was created God's subject, is by his shameful apostacy, become the vassal and slave of sin and satan. Learn, 2. That all baptized persons, who are dead with Christ unto sin, are strongly obliged to take care that sin reigns not in them, nor gets any dominion over them, by the desires and interests of this

mortal body. And the obligations which christianity lays upon us, not to suffer sin to reign over us, are many and great; namely, the precepts, promises and threatenings of the gospel, the assistances of the Holy Spirit, the sense of baptismal and sacramental engagements. Happy we, if by the help of these, sin is dethroned, its empire dissolved, and it no longer "reigns in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof."

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God; as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

As if the apostle had said, "Sin, which has such a kingly and commanding power, will be calling upon you to give up the members of your bodies, and the faculties of your souls, as instruments or weapons for its service. But yield not you consent thereto; turn a deaf ear to the voice of sin, and hearken to the call of God, who commands you to yield yourselves unto him, and your members as instruments for his service." Here note, 1. A negative exhortation, "Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Let not sin or satan have an eye, an ear, a tongue, a foot, a hand, nay not so much as a little finger, devoted to their service; how strongly soever they may solicit and move for it. Note, 2. A positive injunction, "but yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Learn hence, That christians ought not to suffer any members of their body to be employed in the service of sin, but to yield them all up unto God, in obedience to his will. Here are two opposite masters, God and sin; the one a tyrant and usurper, the other a rightful Lord and Master: and here also are two opposite employments, unrighteousness, by which is meant all sin, whereby we deal unrighteously with God, our neighbour and ourselves; and righteousness, whereby we give to God, to others, and ourselves, their respective dues. Now the apostle calls loudly upon us to render unto God the things that are God's: to yield every member of the body to him, and employ it for him; for the members of the body were all created by him, and redeemed for him, and shall be glorified with him. O let us then take heed of abusing any members of our body; let us not employ so much as a little finger or hair of our heads in the service of sin; for it is the Lord's: and let every one take heed of dishonoring God with his bodily members, lest he provoke God to deny him the comfortable use of the members of his body. When Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the prophet of God, he presently lost the use of his hand. O! how suddenly can God wither an hand or arm, that is stretched out to do mischief! it is a righteous thing for God to smite an abused eye with blindness, an abused ear with deafness, an abused foot with lameness, a swearing or forswearing tongue with paralytic deadness. Lord, how justly mayest thou recal thy favors, when we fight against thee with them? "Yielding the members of our bodies as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin!"

14 For sin shall not have dominion

over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, exhorted them to take care that sin get not any dominion over them by obeying its motions, yielding to its inclinations, and employing the faculties of the soul, and any of the members of the body in the service of sin; in this verse he gives them an encouraging promise, that though sin may rebel, yet it shall reign no more in a regenerate person: and that if they did pray and watch against it, strive and contend with it, though it would have a being and existence in them, yet it should not have a regency and dominion over them; because they were not under the law, or covenant of works, which gave the knowledge of sin; and required exact and perfect obedience, but gave no strength to perform it; but under grace, under a gospel covenant, which administers strength to resist sin, and to overcome it: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Here observe, 1. The privilege of every regenerate and gracious person; *Sin shall not have dominion over him.* Learn hence, That sin should not, and shall not reign over those who are in a state of grace, and under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit of Christ: *De jure*, it should not; *de facto*; it shall not reign. Sin shall not reign in us, nor have dominion over us. 1. Because of the mischievous influences of it, both with reference to God, and in relation to ourselves; it plucks the sceptre out of God's hands, and puts it into satan's. The throne of the heart is never empty, it is the design of sin to dethrone God and set up itself. And no less mischievous is sin to ourselves; for its servitude is base and burdensome, painful and shameful; the devil is a sure but a sad paymaster: he plagues them most who have done him most service. 2. Because of the unsuitableness of sin to our renewed state, we are not our own, but Christ's; his by purchase, his by conquest, his by covenant; now if after such engagements we suffer sin to reign and have dominion over us, we rescind our baptismal vow, ratified by our personal consent. 3. The reason of the foregoing privilege, why sin shall not have dominion over us, "because we are not under the law, but under grace." *Quest. 1.* But are not believers now under the law, though they live under the gospel? *Ans.* Yes: they are under the rule and direction of the law, but not under the curse and malediction of the law; they are not under the law as a covenant of life, but they are under it as an eternal rule of living. The law of God now binds the believer to the observation of it, as strictly as it did Adam in paradise; but upon the unwilling violation of it, he doth not incur the curse, Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. *Quest. 2.* But were not those that lived under the law of old, in a sort, under grace as well as we? *Ans.* Yes, they were, but not in the same degree; good men then had help and assistance in the course of holiness and obedience, when they lived under the law; but they had it not by the law, but by the gospel, which was preached to them as well as unto us, Heb. iv. 2. This administers strength to subdue sin, and power to overcome it. Learn hence, That the gospel is a manifestation of the Spirit, and furnishes believers with sufficient helps against the power of sin, and with well grounded hopes of obtaining victory over it. The grace of the gospel gives hopes of victory over sin several ways: 1. Because it was the end of Christ's death to slay sin. 2. Because of the new nature put into us, which is

to help us against sin. 3. By assuring us of the spirit's help, which is to assist us in the mortifying and subduing of sin; it inspires the Spirit's operation that we begin, carry on, and accomplish the work of mortification. 4. Because the gospel furnishes us with promises, and thereby gives us assurance of success: so then if from all these encouragements we bid a confident defiance unto, and make a courageous resistance against sin, it shall never have a final and full dominion over us, because "we are not under the law, but under grace."

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Here the apostle starts an objection, which some licentious persons might be ready to make: "If we are not under the law which condemns sin, but under the covenant of grace which allows the pardon, and promises the forgiveness of sin, why may we not then go on in sin, and continue in sin, forbidden by the law, seeing we are not under the law?" The apostle rejects such a suggestion with his usual note of detestation, *God forbid*. From hence we may learn, That it is an high abuse of the covenant of grace, to suppose or imagine, that it countenances any licentiousness, or allows any liberty to sin. The design of the new covenant is to recover from sin, not to encourage any to continue in sin. Learn, 2. That such doctrines and inferences are to be abhorred, which from the grace of God, in mitigating the law, would infer an utter abrogation of the law, denying that it hath a directive regulating power over a believer. True, we are delivered from the curse and condemnatory sentence of the law, from the severity and rigorous exactations of the law: but to refuse obedience to the law, under pretence of christian liberty; to sin because we are not under the law, but under grace; is a turning the grace of God into wantonness, and to use our christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey? whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Two things are here intimated by the apostle; 1. That all men really are, and ought to be reputed servants to that master whose works they do, and whose commands they obey: "Whom ye obey his servants ye are." Learn thence, That we may infallibly know whose servants we are, and what master we serve, Christ or satan, by examining and inquiring whose commands they are, which we execute and obey. 2. The apostle intimates that every person or servant shall receive a reward suitable to the master he serves, and proportionable to the work he does. If satan be our master, sin is our work, and death our wages; if we be the servants of God, obedience is our work, and eternal life will be our reward: "There is a reward for the righteous," and wages for the works of iniquity. The devil's drudges shall have full pay, but no content; the wages of sin is death; there's pay, such as it is, woeful pay, a black penny. God's servants, though they do not work for wages,

yet they shall not work for nothing! "Verily there is a reward for the righteous;" a reward of mercy, not of merit; a reward of grace, not of debt: and accordingly the apostle says here, "His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." But why doth he not say of obedience unto life, as well as of sin unto death? then the antithesis had been more plain and full. *Ans.* Because though sin be the cause of death, yet obedience is not the cause of life, but only "the way to it: *Via ad regnum, non causa regnandi*."

17 But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

We must not understand these words, as if the apostle blessed God, because they were once slaves to sin and satan: but thanks God, that the time of that bondage was past and over: as if he had said, "God be thanked, that though formerly ye were the servants of sin, yet since your conversion, you are become obedient to the precepts of christianity, having obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine, or (according to the original) being cast into the mould of that doctrine, which was delivered to you. Learn hence, That to be turned from the service of sin, to the sincere obedience of the gospel, is a mercy that we can never be sufficiently sensible of, and bless God for. God be thanked, that although ye were the servants of sin, ye are no longer so. Learn, 2. That the doctrine of the gospel has a divine efficacy attending and accompanying it on the hearts of believers: it has a transforming power to change and fashion men's minds into the likeness of it, as the mould doth the metal that is cast into it: the doctrine of the gospel is the mould, and the heart is the metal, which when melted and cast into the mould, receives its form and figure. O happy they! who having all their days sat under the dispensation of the gospel, are able at last to say, We are transformed and changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Our apostle goes on to put the Romans in mind of their past state by nature, and of their present state by grace; they were once the servants of sin, but now free from sin, and made by Christ servants of righteousness: all believers are made free by Christ for service, not only free from serving; to be free to serve is infinitely better than to be free from service; such as are by Christ freed from sinful servitude, are best fitted for, and obliged to most spiritual service. Learn,

hence, That such as are recovered from sin in God, should show the reality of their change, by being as zealous in the ways of holiness, as before they were earnest in the ways of sin. Shall we not do as much for God as for sin and satan! Is not he a better master, his work better service, and his wages a better reward? Lord, shall we not with as much zeal and vigor serve thee, as ever we served our lusts, those imperious exactors of our time and strength? O, had we the faculties and powers of angels, yet would our service for thee fall infinitely short of our obligations to thee! Observe next, How the apostle doth not barely urge the necessity of serving Christ in our regenerate state, but does enforce the proportion which our service now ought to bear to the disservice formerly done in our carnal state: As ye have yielded your members servants to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness." Observe lastly, The great indignation and gracious condescension of Christ, that he should accept those members of ours as instruments of his service, which have been employed in the devil's service. "O blessed Jesus! wilt thou come into that vile heart of mine, which was once the seat of satan, where he has ruled, and every unclean lust been harboured? O Holy Spirit! shall that body be thy temple to dwell in now, which has been so often defiled with lots and vomit heretofore? Shall that tongue ever praise him in heaven, which has blasphemed him by oaths and horrid imprecations here on earth!" One would have expected, that Christ should rather have said, "Vile wretch! Satan has had the use and service of thy body, and all its members, from thy childhood and youth, unto this day; thy will has been his throne, thy memory his storehouse, and all thy members his tools and instruments to sin against me; thou didst indeed dedicate all these to my service and glory in thy baptism, but thou hast employed all these in satan's service for many years past: however, if now thou art willing to yield those very members unto righteousness, and to holiness, which formerly were servants unto uncleanness, I will both accept them, and reward thee for them.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

That is, you were free *de facto* not *de jure*; when you were sin's servants, you were void of righteousness, that had no part of your service then; therefore sin should not have one jot of your service now: as righteousness had no part of your service in your carnal state, so there is no reason why sin should have any service from you in your gracious state. Learn, that such sinners as are now become servants to God, ought to be as free from sin, as before they were free from righteousness; it will evidently appear so, if we consider the great and good Master which we serve, the nature of our present work, the certainty and transcendency of our future reward, the obligations we lie under as creatures, as new creatures, by the law of creation, by the favor of redemption, by the promise and hopes of glorification; all this should engage us to the love and practice of universal holiness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

Here the apostle puts them in mind of the several mis-

chiefs and inconveniences which did at end their former vicious course of life; namely, unprofitableness, What fruit had ye?" Dishonourableness, "whereof ye are now ashamed?" Perniciousness, "The end of those things is death." Behold the complexion of sin's face, in this glass, it being for the time past unprofitable, for the time present shameful, for the time to come deadly; most men consult their profit, their honor, their pleasure, their safety; but sin disappoints us in them all. Observe, 1. The unprofitableness of sin for time past; *What fruit had ye then?* Are ye any thing the better for it? Verily, not at all; there is no solid benefit, no real profit to be got by sin; those sins which we think to be advantageous to us, when all accounts are cast up, will be found to be quite otherwise; all the gain of sin will turn to loss at last. Observe, 2. The dishonourableness and disparagement which sin brings along with it at present, "Whereof ye are now ashamed." Learn thence, That sin is really matter of shame and blushing, rendering us odious to God, infamous to others, loathsome to ourselves: it is a dishonor to our natures, a reproach to our reason and understanding: it doth therefore debase and degrade us, because it pollutes and defiles us, and is a reproach which we voluntarily bring upon ourselves. Observe, 3. The perniciousness of sin, or the fatal consequences of it. "The end of those things is death," natural, spiritual, and eternal: the latter is principally meant, which consists in lively apprehensions of the happiness invaluable which they have lost, and in a quick sense of the pains intolerable which they lie under, and this accompanied with despair of all future relief. Now, when misery and despair meet together, they make a man completely miserable. Good God! make sinners, all sinners thoroughly sensible of the manifest inconveniences of a wicked life; that it brings no present profit or advantage to them, that it will not bear reflection, but causeth shame; and that it is fatal in its event and issue! O then, let no profit tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to enter into any sinful way, or adventure upon any wicked word: for what fruit can we expect to have of those things whereof we are now ashamed, the end of which things is death?

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

As the former verse represented to us the manifold inconveniences of a wicked life, so this verse acquaints us with the manifest advantages of a holy and religious course of life: and this, first, as to the present benefit and advantage of it, "Ye have your fruit unto holiness!" Secondly, In respect of the future reward of it, "And the end everlasting life." Here observe, 1. The description which the apostle makes of the change from a state of sin to a state of holiness: Ye are "made free from sin, and become the servants of God;" intimating, that a state of sin is a state of servitude and slavery; and indeed it is the vilest and hardest slavery in the world, it being the slavery of the soul, which is the best and noblest part of ourselves; it is the subjection of our reason to our sensual appetites, and brutish passions, which is as uncomely a sight as to see beggars ride on horseback, and princes walk on foot. Farther, It is a voluntary slavery, the sinner chooseth his servitude, and willingly puts his neck under

this yoke. Again, the sinner makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those who were born to be subject to him, I mean his own appetites and passions, choosing rather a life of sense and to gratify his lusts, than to obey his reason. Observe, 2. The present benefit of an holy and religious life; *ye have your fruit unto holiness*. What fruit? *Ans* Inward peace and contentment of mind at present, length of days, health and prosperity in this world, solid joy and comfort at the hour of death, a good name and reputation among men after death; and it derives a blessing upon our posterity which we leave behind us. Observe, 3. The future reward and recompence of an holy life in the world to come: *the end everlasting life*; by which the apostle expresses both the happiness of our future state, and the way and means by which we are prepared and made meet to be partakers of it. 1. The happiness of our future state is expressed by the name everlasting life, which imports both the excellency of this state, it is a state of life; and the eternity, or endless duration of it, it is a state of everlasting life. 2. The way and means by which we are prepared and made meet to be partakers of this happiness, and that is, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy and good life: holiness in this life is the certain way, yea, the only way to happiness in the life to come. This appears from the will of God, who has connected the end and means together; from the justice of God, who will reward every man according to his work; from the indecency and unsuitableness of the contrary. Without meetness and fitness for heaven, there could be no happiness in heaven: heaven would not be a paradise, but a purgatory; not a place of happiness, but of the greatest uneasiness to a wicked man; therefore let us have our present fruit unto holiness, that our end may be everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle having all along throughout this chapter exhorted us to die daily unto sin, and to live unto God, concludes with a motive drawn from the different rewards and punishments in another world; eternal death will be the punishment of sin and sinners, and eternal life the reward of holiness and holy persons. Observe, 1. The punishment of sin and sinners; *the wages of sin is death*. Where note, The offence committed, *sin*; the punishment inflicted, *death*; the justice and proportion between the sin and the punishment, it is a stipend, or *wages*, a metaphor taken from soldiers, who at the end of their service receive their pay and stipend. Learn hence, That death is the punishment of sin, it is *finis operis*, though not *operantis*, the end of the work, though not the end of the worker. *Quest*. What death is that which is the punishment of sin? *Ans*. Both temporal and eternal: the former consists in the separation of soul and body from the presence of God, and in an imprisonment with devils and damned to all eternity. *Quest*. What sin is that which is punished with death? *Ans*. Consider sin in its demerit and desert, and so death is the punishment of every sin; consider it in its issue and event, and so it is the punishment only of that sin which is aggravated with impenitency: all sins are venial with respect to the mercy of God, and the repentance of a sinner: but the

wages of every sin that reigns in us, and is not forsaken by us, is eternal death. Observe, 2. The reward promised to holiness, and insured to holy persons; *the gift of God is eternal life*. Here note, The happiness of holy persons: 1. In the Lord or Master whom they serve, God or Christ Jesus. 2. Happy is the reward of their services, eternal life. 3. Happy in the manner of their reward, it is a *free gift*, not wages; a metaphor taken from kings, who bestow upon such soldiers as have signalized themselves, over and above their stipend, coronets and laurels, as badges of their favor; unto which our apostle alludes, calling eternal life a donative, a freely dispensed favor, which may be considered in our eternal destination thereunto before all time, in our conversion and sanctification in time, which we may call the embryo of eternal life; and in our coronation and glorification, when at the end of time full possession of eternal life shall be given unto us: in all which instances heaven appears to be a free gift, not procured by any merit of ours, but by the mediation of Christ our Lord; "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapter, declared how believers are freed from the power and dominion of sin, he proceeds in this chapter to declare that they also are freed from the yoke of the Mosaic law, that being dead to them, and they to it; and the apostle's argument runs thus: dead men are not held under the law, but they are freed and delivered from it. But as many as truly believe in Christ are dead to the law, and therefore are freed and delivered from it: that is, from the rigorous exactions of the law, and from the curse and malediction of the law; not from the guidance and direction of it, as a rule of life.

KNOW ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.

As if the apostle had said, "you Jews, who study the law, and are well acquainted with it, cannot but know that the law of God hath power over a man to require of him exact, perfect, and perpetual obedience, and to accuse, condemn, and bind him over to the curse for the least breach and violation of it; and all this as long as he liveth under the law, and is not freed from the maledictions of it by faith in Christ." Learn hence, 1. That the law of God, in the force and strength of it, and as considered in itself, is a very hard lord and master, exacting perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to its commands, and binding sinners over to the curse for the least transgression and violation of it. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ has freed all believers from the rigor of the law, from the curse of the law, and from the irritation of the law; that is, from the power which is in the law, to stir them up to sin through the corruption of their own hearts and natures. Blessed be God! we are by Christ freed from, and dead to the law, as a covenant of life; but

we are not under it, and may we all our days sit under the shadow of it with great delight, as an eternal rule of *holy living*.

2 For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

3 So then if while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Here the apostle doth exemplify and illustrate the foregoing assertion, namely, that believers are freed from the law, by a similitude taken from the law of marriage: as death freeth husband and wife from the law which bound them to each other, and empowereth the survivor to marry to another person; in like manner the death of Christ was the death of the law, as a covenant of works, holding us under the bond of the curse of it; and so his dying gave a manumission or freedom from that bond, and a capacity of espousal unto Christ; that so living in conjugal affection and obedience to him, we may be made fruitful by his Spirit, doing such things as are agreeable to the will of God, and tending to the glory of God, *Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ*; That is, through the offering up of Christ's body upon the cross. Learn hence, 1. That he that is under the law, is as strictly bound to the rigor and curse of the law, as a married woman is bound to her husband during his life. Learn, 2. That one great end of Christ's death was to purchase our freedom from the law, that we might be capable of being espoused to himself. For whilst we were under the curse of the law, we were not in a capacity of being married unto Christ. He or she that is a slave to another, is not capable to be disposed of in marriage until made free. In like manner we were in bondage to the law, as well as in slavery unto sin and satan; but Christ has bought out our liberty, and thereby put us into a capacity of being espoused unto himself. Behold what manner of love the Redeemer has showed unto us, that we should be called his spouse and he our husband! he loved us, but not for any advantage he could have by us; for we had nothing but sin and shame to present him with. Nay, he must purchase us, and that with his own blood, before he could be united to us. Oh incomparable love! Oh fervent desires! Learn, 3. That though believers are freed from the rigor and curse of the law by the death of Christ, yet have they not an undoub-

ted liberty, but are still under government, under an head and guide. As a wife is under a government of her husband, so are believers under the guidance and government of Jesus Christ, who in special manner guideth them by his word and Spirit; and there being said to be dead to the law, signifies no more than the law's not having dominion over them, in regard of the curse and condemnation of it.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

As if the apostle had said, "when we lived under the dispensation of the law, and were married to the law, we brought forth fruit suitable to that state and condition. But now being freed from the law, and married unto Christ, it is meet and right, equal and fit, that we should bring forth fruit answerable to our more excellent state and condition: that now we serve God, with new hearts and lives by the Spirit of Christ, according to the law of grace, and not carnally in the bondage and terror of the old law, called here *the oldness of the letter*." Learn hence, 1. That all sincere and serious christians, who are dead to the law, and espoused unto Christ, ought to bring forth fruit unto God suitable to their noble estate, and most honorable condition. Freedom and deliverance from the rigor and curse of the law ought to bind us more strongly to God, to love and serve him, to glorify and obey him. Learn 2. That all true believers, who are freed from the rigor and curse of the law, ought to serve the Lord in true holiness both of heart and life, and to yield a new and universal obedience to him. This the apostle here calls *the newness of the Spirit*, to intimate to us, that new obedience is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, as the author of all grace and sanctification. And whereas *the newness of the spirit* is opposed to the *oldness of the letter*; that is, the ministry of the law, which of itself is a dead letter, discovering sin, but not discovering how sin may be either pardoned or subdued; we may gather, that the law of God, and indeed the whole word of God, without the Spirit, is but a dead letter, unable to work grace and holiness in us, or to excite and quicken us unto newness of life. Whenever then we place ourselves under the word, let us pray with David, "Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law."

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.

Observe here, 1. The objection (which the apostle answers) that some were ready to make against the holiness of the law. He had affirmed at ver. 5. that, "the motions of sin were stirred up by the law." "If so, say some then the law

may seem to be the cause of sin; *God forbid*; says the apostle. The thought of such a conclusion ought to be abhorred. Hence learn, 1. That the holiest doctrines and truths of God are subjects to be perverted and abused, and to have absurd inferences and conclusions drawn from them. 2. That the ministers of Christ must be able and careful, not only to propound the truth soundly, but to defend it solidly, against all cavils, and wicked objections whatsoever, and to declare their utter detestation and utmost abhorrence of any such opinion as reflects dishonor upon the holy law of God. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument to confute this wicked notion of the law's being the cause of sin: *I had not known sin, but by the law*. As if the apostle had said, "That which forbids sin, discovers and condemns sin, cannot be the cause of sin; but so doth the holy law of God: it makes sin manifest in and to the conscience of the sinner; therefore the law is not sin, no exciter to it, or cause of it." Learn hence That the law of God is so far from being the cause of sin, that by it men come to a more clear, full, distinct, and effectual knowledge of sin; *I had not known sin, but by the law*. That is, not so clearly and effectually, so as to be duly humbled for it, and turned from it. The light of nature shows a difference between good and evil, but the law of God represents sin as the evil of evils. In it, as in a glass, we behold the foul face of sin, and are convinced by it of the monstrous evil that it is. Observe, 3. How the apostle produces his own experience in this matter, and gives a particular instance in himself, that he *had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*: that is, he should not have understood that the first irregular motions of the heart, the first inclinations and desires of the soul towards sin, (though not consented to by the will) were evil, had he not, by a more attentive consideration of the tenth commandment, found that they were so. Learn hence, 1. That lust or concupiscence of sin; that is, original lust, the first motions of corrupt and rebellious nature, whereby our inclinations are towards evil, though our wills do not fully consent to evil. Learn, 2. That so holy and spiritual is the law of God, that it discovers the sin of nature, and condemns the first motions and inclinations of the soul to sin, even to the pit of hell. All the wisdom of the heathen, yea, of the wisest and most learned persons in the world, was never able to discover the first motions arising from our rebellious natures to be sin; only the holy law of God makes them known, and discovers them to be sins. "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Such is the holiness of the law of God, that it requires not only the purity of our actions, but also the integrity of all our faculties.

8 But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

Observe here, A concession or grant made by the apostle, that although the law was not the formal cause of sin, yet sin was an accidental event of the law, through the depravity and corruption of our natures; lust or concupiscence in us being stirred up more strongly, and breaking forth more violently in us, by being prohibited and restrained by the law. As things forbidden us are the more desired by us; the more the law would restrain sin through our corruption, the

more it enrages sin: as the more you could dam up a torrent, the higher it swells. Thus, "sin takes occasion by the commandment to work all manner of concupiscence in us." Learn hence, That such is the depravity and perverseness of our present natures, that there is found within us a propensity and inclination to all sin; and although the law of God doth not give the least countenance to sin, yet sin takes occasion, from the restraints of the law, to grow more impetuous, and is the more irritated by being prohibited; and consequently it is not from ourselves, but from God's restraining grace, that those evil inclinations, which are in our hearts do not break forth in our lives. The apostle adds, *Without the law sin was dead*: that is, without the knowledge and due consideration of the law, sin is comparatively dead: that is, the corruption of nature lies hid, and is not so much known to be sin; nor had it so much power to terrify the conscience, and to stir up inordinate affections, as after the law is known and duly considered. Learn hence, That such as either know not the word and law of God, or do not duly consider it, have very little sense of inward pollution. But their corruption lies, as it were dead in them, and they in that without touching the conscience, or laying the soul under sensible apprehensions of its sin and danger: *Without the law sin is dead*. Sin in the conscience is like a lion asleep in his den; it awakes not, stirs not, terrifies and accuses not, till the law of God rouses it; and then the sinner sees himself under the curse, and liable to perdition.

9 For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

As if the apostle had said, "Formerly, when I lived a Pharisee, and had the law in my hand, but did not consider in my heart what exactness and perfection it required in my life, I contented myself with an outward observation of it, and concluded my state to be good and safe: but when I came to a right understanding of the word and law of God, and to be convinced by it, that the inward lustings and inordinate desires of the heart were sins, then I found myself a guilty creature, obnoxious to wrath, and in a state of death." Here note, 1. The good opinion the apostle had, and all unregenerate men have of themselves before conversion: *I was alive once*. By life understand liveliness, confidence and assurance of his good estate and condition; he was full of vain hope; false joy, and presumptuous confidence. Learn hence, That natural and unregenerate persons are usually very full of groundless confidence and cheerfulness, without the least suspicion of their bad estate and sad condition: *I was alive without the law once*. Note, 2. The apprehension and opinion which St. Paul had, and others will have of themselves, when they came under the regenerating work of the Spirit, by the ministry of the word and law of God: *When the commandment came I died*. Death here stands opposed to life before, and denotes the sorrows, fears, and tremblings which seized upon his soul, when he was convinced of the badness of his condition: it stabbed all his carnal mirth, joy, and jollity, at the very heart: *I died*. Note, 3. The cause and reason of this wonderful alteration and change of judgment in the apostle; it was the commandment and law of God: *When the commandment came*, that is, close and home to my heart and conscience with a divine efficacy. The commandment was come before to him by way of promulgation, and he had the literal knowledge of it;

but now it came in the convincing power and spiritual application of it. Accordingly, *sin revived*, that is, the sense of sin was more lively imprinted upon his soul; and now he died, all his vain hopes gave up the Ghost now, and his sin and guilt stared in the face of his conscience. Learn hence, that there is a mighty efficacy in the word or law of God to kill vain confidence, and quench carnal mirth in the hearts of men, when God sets it home upon their consciences: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

10 And the commandment which *was ordained to life*, I found *to be unto death*.

Observe here, 1. The natural end and use of the commandment or law of God. *It was ordained unto life*; that is, it was given for a rule of life, and promised eternal salvation to the perfect fulfilling of it. But no man since the fall being able perfectly to fulfil the law in his own person, can be justified by the law in the sight of God. However, the proper end for which the law was ordained, was to give life to them that should perfectly keep it. Observe, 2. The contrary use which the apostle found the law to be of, with reference unto himself. What *was ordained to life*, he found *to be unto death*: that is, through his own corruption and transgression, it became an occasion of death to him, by binding him over to punishment, and rendering him obnoxious to the wrath of God. Thus the word of God, the sweet and saving word of God, that word which God had ordained to bring men to life and salvation, is found to some the savor of death unto death; but the fault is not in the word, but in themselves.

11 For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

As if the apostle had said, "*sin*, or the corruption of my heart and nature, being stirred up by the commandment which forbids lust, and condemns it, enticed me, and persuaded me, and prevailed over me, to yield to the lusts of my own heart, and then condemned me, and slew me for yielding to them." See here the true and genuine nature of *sin*: it first deceives, and then destroys: it deceived me, saith the apostle, and then slew me. Sin doth perfectly besot the creature, and renders it injudicious: it befools and deceives us, it pollutes and defiles us, it doth debase and degrade us, and, without repentance, damns and destroys us. God keeps us from being hardened in sinning through the deceitfulness of sin; let no prophet tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to adventure upon any known sin; for its embraces are deadly, it leads to death, and ends in death; after it has deceived us, it certainly destroys us, "*sin taking occasion, deceived me, and slew me.*"

12 Wherefore the law *is holy*; and the commandment *holy*, and just, and good.

Observe here, What care and holy caution the apostle uses to vindicate and clear the holy law of God from all fault and blame, charging his guilt, not upon the commandment, but upon the corruption of his own heart, which took occasion to be stirring in him, and by the commandment

slew him, affirming nevertheless, that the law of God in itself, and in its own nature, is holy, just and good. Here note, that the apostle adorns the law with the most excellent eulogy and commendation. It is holy, 1. As it enjoins all acts of piety towards God; namely, adoration of his majesty, imitation of his purity, resignation to his providence, obedience to his commands. 2. It is just, as it directs us in our duty to others in every capacity and relation wherein we stand, and obliges us to walk by that rule of equity, to do to others as we would they should do unto us. 3. It is good to the man that keeps it, commanding nothing but what is influential upon his well being both here and hereafter. Could we set aside the authority of the Lawgiver, yet all the precepts of the law, for their moral goodness, deserve our esteem, and choice, and entire observation; nothing being required of us but what is our duty and interest as men, and which tends to the perfecting and ennobling of our natures: well then might our apostle determine, that "the law is holy, the commandment holy, and just, and good."

13 Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

From what the apostle had said in the former verse, he moves an objection to this verse: "seeing the law was holy, and just, and good, how comes it to be unto death?" "Was that which was good made death unto me?" To this he replies, both by way of negation, *God forbid*; for to find fault with the law, is to find fault with God himself! and also by way of affirmation, asserting, that *sin* is the true cause of death. The commandment indeed condemns, or is death to the sinner, yet not of itself, but because of sin; as we say of a condemned malefactor, it is not the judge, but the law, that condemns him; or, strictly speaking, it is not the law, but his own guilt, that condemns him; the judge is but the mouth of the law, to denounce the sentence that guilt deserves. And hereby sin appears to be what really it is, *sinful*, exceedingly sinful, masculinely and vigorously sinful, excessively and out of measure sinful, extremely and beyond all expression, nay, beyond our comprehension, sinful. Learn hence, 1. That the law of God, in the whole, and in every part thereof, is holy and good, both in itself and in its own nature, and relatively in its institution with respect to man: for it was ordained unto life, ver. 10. Learn, 2. That this good and holy law violated and transgressed, condemns and kills, and assigns a person over unto death. Learn, 3. That though the law condemns man's sin, and man for his sin, yet still the law is good and not to be blamed; the law is to be justified by man, even when it condemns man: as man had no reason to break the law, so he has no cause to find fault with the law, though it binds him over to death for the breaking of it. Learn, 4. That it is not the law, but sin, that worketh man's death and ruin. Sin aims at no less, and will end in no less; for the wages of sin is death. Yet, 5. Sin certainly worketh man's death and destruction by that which is good, to wit the law; for when sin hath used man to break the law, it then makes use of the law to break man;

that is, to undo him by condemnation and death for breaking of it. Lastly, from hence it follows, that sin is therefore exceedingly, yea, unmeasurably sinful, poisonous and pernicious, because it kills men, and not only so, but it kills men by that which is good, to wit, the law. That which was appointed for life, becomes the occasion of death; consequently *sin* is the most villainous, virulent, and deadly thing that ever was in the world. "Ah! sinful *sin*, hyperbolically and out of measure *sinful*, thou art a contempt of God's sovereign authority, a contrariety to his infinite holiness, a violation of his royal and righteous law, and the highest affront that can be offered to the majesty of the great and glorious God. Thou hast made man like a beast, like the worst of beasts: worse than the worst of beasts; yea, *sin* is worse than the devil himself, than hell itself. *Sin* made the devil what he is: a devil and hell never had an existence till *sin* had one: God was never angry till *sin* made him angry. Oh! *sin*, it is thou that makest hell to be hell; and the more *sin* the more hell. Well might the apostle then say here, "Sin that it might appear *sin*, worketh death in me, and is become exceeding *sinful*."

14 For we know that the law is spiritual:—

Still observe, How the apostle goes on to assert the purity and spirituality of the law of God: *The law is spiritual*; spiritual in the author of it, God, who is an Holy Spirit; spiritual in the matter of it, requiring spiritual obedience to be paid unto it, requiring perfect purity both of heart and life. Learn hence, That the moral law of God is in the nature of it purely spiritual, perfectly holy, being breathed forth by the Holy Spirit of God, and requireth perfect purity both of heart and life, and perfect conformity to it, both in the inward and outward man. Hence some derive the word which we translate *law*, from a root which signifies to behold and consider, to contemplate and look about: intimating thereby that the holy and spiritual law of God is diligently to be observed and considered, looked into and meditated upon; it being so perfectly pure and holy, that it requires not only the purity of our actions, but also the integrity of our very faculties, our hearts and natures.

—But I am carnal—

So may, 1. every unregenerate man truly say, *I am carnal*, having not only flesh in me, but prevailing in me, *sin* having a regency and dominion over me: he fights under the banner of corrupt nature, acting in a willing, ready, and full subjection to *sin*, and compliance with it; he is carnal, being under the power and unbroken strength of carnal lusts, and sensual propensions, and following them in the daily course of his life. 2. *I am carnal*, may a regenerate person truly say, 1. With respect to that exact purity and spirituality both of heart and life; which the holy law of God requires: the law is spiritual, but I, alas! compared with that spiritual law, am but a lump of corruption, coming infinitely short, God knows of that uprightness and spirituality which the law of God requires. 2. A regenerate person may truly say he is carnal, that is, in part so, having much, too much carnality in his carnal affections found with him, and carnal infirmities cleaving to him: such as

are truly acquainted with the spirituality of the word and

law of God, and also well acquainted with their own hearts, do see sufficient cause to complain of carnal corruption abiding in them and cleaving to them. *I am carnal*, have said, and may say the holiest of saints, with respect to the perfect measure and degrees of holiness. Thus that holy and blessed martyr, Mr. Bradford, complains, styling himself *the hard-headed, unbelieving, earthly-minded Bradford*; yet was a man of a very tender spirit, full of faith, fruitful in good works, and exceedingly mortified to the world. Dost thou groan under the burthen of indwelling corruption? know, that the whole spiritual creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together with thee until now: but blessed be God for the hopes of a deliverer and a deliverance,

—Sold under sin.

This phrase is borrowed from bondmen or captives, some of which are sold, others sell themselves into captivity. The unregenerate man, with Ahab, sells himself to work wickedness. This denotes wilfulness and obstinacy; such a person doth voluntarily prostitute himself to the lust of satan: a regenerate person doth not, with Ahab, sell himself, but is sold, like Joseph by his brethren, and Samson by his wife; being rather passive than active: he is sometimes *sin's* captive, but never *sin's* slave; he is never *sin's* willing servant, but sometimes its unwilling prisoner. The holiest and best of saints, though not held in wilful slavery, thralldom and bondage unto *sin*, yet corruption holds them too much, though in part unwillingly, under the tyranny of *sin*; they do not yield to *sin*, as good subjects yield to their lawful prince, voluntary obedience; but as captives yield to a tyrant, paying him involuntary subjection. His soul is betrayed, says one, by corruption to temptation, and by temptation to corruption.

15 For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.

These words are an argument to prove what the apostle had asserted in the foregoing verse: namely, That he was held under the power of *sin* unwillingly, because he did not allow or approve of any evil which he did contrary to the holy law of God, but did hate and abominate it, was displeased with it, and with himself for it. An unregenerate man's judgment and conscience is sometimes against *sin*, which makes him afraid to commit it; but a gracious person's will, heart, and affections, are all set against *sin*: indeed there is a regenerate and an unregenerate part in the christian's will (he is sanctified *totus*, but not *totaliter*) so far the will is renewed, it hates all *sin*, and meditates the ruin and destruction of it. And observe, It was not this or that particular evil, but all evil which the apostles hated. A wicked man may hate a particular evil, as Absalom hated Amnon's uncleanness; but to hate all *sin*, is the character of none but a regenerate person. Observe, lastly, That a good man sometimes, through the power of corruption, and the prevalency of temptation, doth that evil which is disallowed and disapproved by him: yea, which is very odious and hateful to him: he loathes in part what he doth, and afterwards loathes himself for the doing of it; and when he doth evil, allows not of the evil that he doth.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that *it is good*.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Note, 1. How readily the apostle consented to the equity and holiness of God's law; he did love the law of God, which made holiness his duty: *I consent*, says he, *to the law, that it is good*; he assented to it in his judgment, he complied with it in his will, he clave to it in his inward affections. So far as a person is regenerate, his heart doth correspond with God's law: but may not an unregenerate person consent in his judgment to the law of God, own it to be good, approve it to be holy? Did not Herod hear the word with gladness, and the stony ground receive the word with joy. *Ans.* They may in their judgments approve, yet not in their hearts like and love the law of God: at the same time, that they commend it with their mouths, they cast it behind their backs. Note, 2. How the apostle disclaims, though not disowns, the evil done by him: "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me." As if he had said, "My corrupt affections sometimes overpower me against the approbation of my judgment, and the inclination of my will: *But it is not I* (according to my better part, from which I am denominated,) *but sin dwelleth in me.*" Learn hence, That if we disclaim the evil done by us, as being contrary to us, contrary to the habitual frame and disposition of our hearts, contrary to the deliberate purpose and settled resolution of our wills, Almighty God will not charge our failings upon us to our condemnation, but mercifully distinguish between the weakness of the flesh, and the willingness of the spirit; between us, and sin that dwelleth in us. Sin will remain and dwell, but it must not reign and rule: it is a busy inmate in a gracious heart, but it is a lordly master, yea, an imperious tyrant in a sinner's heart. Happy he that can in truth and sincerity say, "It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me."

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform that which is good, I find not.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's proposition; "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing:" That is, in my corrupt and unregenerate nature, there is nothing truly and spiritually good; and this I myself am sensible of, and privy to, and very well acquainted with. Learn thence, That good men are intimately acquainted with themselves, privy to their own corruptions, sensible of the indwelling presence of *sin* in themselves, which calls upon them to be humble, and excites them to be watchful: "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." Observe, 2. The confirmation of the foregoing proposition; for *to will is present with me*; that is, to will what is good, to purpose good, and to desire that which is good, is present with me; but I want ability to perform that good I purpose. Learn hence, That though to will that which is good is ready and at hand with God's regenerated children, yet through that corruption which still abides in them, they are sometimes disabled for

doing that good which they purpose, design, and desire to do; and that little good they do, is very brokenly and imperfectly done. A mortal father may soon beget an immortal child, as an imperfect saint can perform any thing perfectly good: there can never be more in the effect, than there is in the cause: a weak grape cannot make strong wine: whilst we are saints on earth, though we may and ought to aspire after, yet we shall not be able to attain unto, the sinless perfection of the saints in heaven: a real christian is one that is continually laboring after the attainment of that which he knows in this life he shall never attain unto; namely, perfection in grace: in heaven we shall have no occasion to complain, that "how to perform that which is good, we find not."

19 For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Here the apostle repeats what he had before asserted; namely, That he did not always do that good which he desired to do, but sometimes being overpowered by the flesh, did what the law prohibits, and what he would not do. And farther adds, That it was no longer himself, (choosing and approving the action in his mind) that did this, but sin dwelling in him, which sometimes hurried him to the commission of it, against the inclination and law of his mind. Here note, 1. That the corruption of nature in the soul of man, is a real but a distinct thing from the soul itself. A dweller in an house, is really distinguished from the house he dwells in. Sin is not a substance, but the pravity and depravity of our faculties. Note, 2. That the corruption of our own hearts and natures, is the root and cause of all that evil that is done by us. Note, 3. That the habitual bent, the settled purpose, and determinate resolution of a Christian's will, is against all *sin*; and he doth not sin with the full consent of his will. Although there are not two distinct persons, yet there are two distinct principles in a regenerate man. Sin and he are distinguished. In a good man there is a conflict between sin and grace, but in an unregenerate man there is no combat between the flesh and the Spirit, for he is all flesh: the flesh and he are one; the combat is not between grace and sin, but between one sin and another, and between one faculty and another: Light in the understanding opposes lust in the will: whereas the conflict in a gracious person is not between his judgment and his will, but betwixt the regenerate and unregenerate part in his will. Sin, like a preternatural bias clapped upon the soul, sometimes carries it away from the mark which the christian aims at. However, though a good man be overcome *in praelio*, yet not *in bello*; though grace is sometimes foiled in the combat, yet it keeps the field, maintains and recovers its ground. The saint will not throw down his weapon till he lays down his life, and grace shall at length be finally victorious.

21 I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

As if the apostle had said, "I verily find sin, having an impelling power and impulsive virtue in it, like a law in my members, thwarting and contradicting the inclinations of my mind, and the resolutions of my will, that *when I would do good, evil is present with me*, to oppose and hinder me from the doing of it." Note here, A double burden which the apostle complained of; 1. Of the presence of sin at all times, *evil is present with me*. It follows me, as if he had said, and is as inseparable from me as my shadow. This he calls a law, because of its mighty power and efficacy and because of its constant residence in his nature. 2. Of the operation of it, especially at some particular and special times and seasons. *When I would do good, then evil is present with me*. As if he had said, "when I address myself to any holy duty, and heavenly employment, when I desire and design to draw near to God, and would hope for the sweetest fellowship and communion with him, then, alas! then to my great sorrow, is *evil present with me*. Ah, when I promise myself most comfort and communion in the enjoyment of my God, how do I then find a dead heart in the best season, a dead and drowsy spirit when I would be most spiritual in the duties I perform!" From whence learn, that the holiest and best of saints in this their imperfect state, do sensibly feel, and sadly bewail, the working of sin and corruption in them; and that in the very seasons and opportunities of their communion with God: *when I would do good, then evil is present with me*.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

If by the inward man we understand the mind and understanding of a man only, then the unregenerate person may be said to delight in the law of God, with Ezekiel's hearers, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. with Herod, Mark vi. 20. with the stony ground, Matt. xiii. 20. That is, they delight and satisfy themselves with the bare hearing of the word, and with a national and speculative knowledge of their duty; either the eloquence of the preacher whom they hear, or the pleasingness of some truths which they hear, affects them with a sudden joy; they delight to hear the word, but they take no delight to do it. It is neither a spiritual delight, nor an abiding delight, that such men take in the law of God. If by the inward man we understand that which St. Peter calls the hidden man of the heart, the new man, or the regenerate part in man, as being seated in the inward powers and faculties of the soul; then, to delight in the law of God, is to love it for its purity and spirituality, because it makes holiness our duty; to take pleasure in the knowledge of the law, in meditating upon it, and in practising every good duty contained in it, and enjoined by it. Thus David did delight to do the will of God, because the law of God was within his heart. Where there is *lex in corde*, there will be *cor in lege*; where the law of God is in the heart, there the heart will be engaged in that obedience which is by the law required, and by the Christian performed. He delights in the law, and the law is delighted by him.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Here observe, That in this and the foregoing verses, mention is made of four laws contending one against another, whereof two are on one side, and two on the other; namely, the law of God, and the law of the mind; the law of the members, and the law of sin. By the law of God is understood the word of God; by the law of the mind, is understood in the regenerate, grace in the heart: in the unregenerate, light in the conscience; by the law of the members, understand original lust and concupiscence; by the law of sin, those corrupt principles according to which lust governs. Learn hence, That there is a conflict or combat between the law of the mind, and the law of the members, and thus both in regenerate and unregenerate persons. This appears, 1. By the testimony of nature speaking in the heathen. Thus *Medea, videri meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*; their rational appetite displeaseth reason, and leads it captive. 2. By the testimony of scripture, and that 1. As to the unregenerate, witness Herod, Mark vi. 26 who had a conflict between lust and conscience: so had also Pilate upon the occasion of our Saviour's death: conscience bid him spare, popularity bid him kill. 2. As to the regenerate, Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, &c." 3. By the testimony of experience; who finds not every day within himself a contest of contrary motions and inclinations? A Christian's bosom is like Rebecca's womb, it has twins of two contrary natures: a smooth Jacob and rough Esau, flesh and spirit. But wherein consists the difference between that conflict which is found in the natural and spiritual, the regenerate and unregenerate man? *Ans.* 1. The conflict in an unregenerate person is not between grace and sin, but between one lust and another; the struggle is, which lust shall be in the throne, as rebels in a kingdom, having cast off the authority of their lawful prince, every one anathemes at the sceptre, and would command and rule. Thus every lust is ambitious of superiority, and usurps a regency in the soul: so that though the sinner oft changes his master, yet not his servitude, he is a slave still. Now, from this contrariety of lust rebelling in a carnal heart, he is necessitated to oppose the lust which he favors less, to gratify another which he favors more. Thus the conflict is between sin and sin, not between grace and sin, 3. As an unregenerate man's combat with sin is betwixt one lust and another, so it is only between one faculty and another. Thus light in the understanding opposes lust in the will. The judgment and conscience of a sinner says, "Oh do not that abominable thing which the soul of God hates." But then lust in the will votes for it, and is angry with conscience for being so bold as to oppose it. Whereas, the conflict in a regenerate person, is betwixt grace and sin, not betwixt sin and sin; and not betwixt the understanding and the will, but betwixt the regenerate and unregenerate part in the same will. And although grace be foiled in a particular combat, yet it keeps the field, and the christian will not throw down his weapon, till he lays down his life.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

These words are a sad and sorrowful complaint of the present and too great prevalency of indwelling sin and unsubdued corruption: and in them observe, 1. The person complaining, St. Paul. 2. The matter of the complaint, not of affliction, but of sin: not of a death, but of a body

of sin and death; which he carried about with him. 3. The manner of the complaint, it is with vehemence and affection, it is *vox anhelantis*, the voice of one that pants and breathes after deliverance; not of one that doubted, much less desponded of a deliverer and a deliverance. As if the apostle had said, 'Oh how am I tired and wearied with continual conflicts and strivings with indwelling sin? How do the remains of unsubdued sin, and (as yet) unmortified corruption, oppress and afflict me? who will deliver me? and when shall deliverance be enjoyed by me?' Learn hence, that there are sad remains of indwelling sin, and unsubdued corruption, in the very best and holiest of God's children and servants in this life, which they sadly complain of, sensibly groan under, daily watch against, continually conflict with, and shall, in God's time, be fully and finally delivered from.

25 I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord—

Here the apostle espies a deliverer, the *Lord Jesus Christ*; one that had delivered him from the condemning and reigning power of sin, and would ere long deliver him from the presence, as well as prevalence of sin. And whereas the apostle styles Christ Jesus not his Lord, but *our Lord*, that is, the Lord of all believers; it gives us the consolation and joyful assurance, that the happy hour is at hand when we shall be everlastingly freed from the indwelling presence of sin, from all temptations to sin, from all inclinations to offend, yea, from all possibility of sinning: when we shall obey God with vigor, praise him with cheerfulness, love him without measure, fear him without torment, trust in him without despondency, serve him without weariness, without interruption or distraction, being perfectly like unto God as well in holiness, as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality. Lord strengthen our faith in the belief of this desirable happiness (when and where nothing shall corrupt our purity, nothing shall disturb our peace) and set our souls a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

—So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.

Here the apostle acknowledgeth two principles in himself, grace and sin, a sweet and bitter fountain, from whence do flow suitable streams. The law of the mind inclined to serve *the law of God*; but the law in his members disposed him to obey *the law of sin*. The habitual bent of a good man's heart is to serve the law of God; he loves it, and delights to obey it. Yet sometimes, contrary to his firmest resolutions through the power of temptation and indwelling corruption, he is carried aside contrary to his covenant and his conscience; but he laments it, it is his grief, his shame, the sorrow of his heart, the burden of his soul, that ever he should be so false and unworthy. In fine, if a good man, at a particular time, does the evil that he hates, he always hates the evil which he does. Blessed be God, sin shall never hurt us, if it does not please us. As God will not finally judge us, so we ought not censoriously to judge one another, or injuriously to judge ourselves by a single act, by a particular action, but by the habitual and constant bent of our resolutions, and the general

course and tenor of our conversation. Blessed be God for the covenant of grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter is a summary of evangelical duty, and a magazine of christian comfort: we cannot wish to be more holy than to do what is here enjoined, nor more happy than to possess what is here promised. For sublimity of matter, for variety of evangelical truths, for admirable support and comfort to believers, this chapter is not inferior to any part whatsoever of the holy scriptures. Here the believer's union with Christ, and exemption from condemnation, the Spirit's agency, in freeing from the dominion of sin, the law's inability to justify and save, the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ, are set forth and declared. In short, the whole chapter is consolatory; there is a vein of heavenly comfort running through the whole body of it. With this it begins, and with this it ends. It begins with no condemnation to believers, ver. 1. It ends with no separation from the love of God, ver. 38, 39. Let the sincere and serious christian study, weigh, digest, believe, and apply, what is laid down in this chapter, and let him walk dejectedly if he can. This chapter before us, may be divided into three parts: The first contains powerful supports for such as groan under the burthen of indwelling sin. The second contains consolations under sufferings and afflictions. The third abounds with high and holy triumphs over both sin and sufferings, to the end of the chapter.

THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

Observe here, 1. The apostle doth not say, there is no corruption in them that are in Christ Jesus, but there is no condemnation to them. Perfection in holiness is the saint's aim in this life, his attainment only in the next. 2. He doth not say there is no correction belongs to them, but no condemnation: corrected they may be, condemned they never shall be; yea, they are therefore corrected that they may never be condemned. 3. The apostle doth not say, there is nothing that deserves condemnation, nothing damnable in them, but no actual condemnation belonging to them. 4. He doth not say, there is no condemnation to this or that particular believer, to himself, and such as had attained to the like measures and degrees of grace with himself; but he extends the privilege to all believers indefinitely, *there is no condemnation to them*: that is, to any of them that are in Christ Jesus. 5. He says not, there shall be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but there is *now* none; he hath everlasting life, and is already passed from death to life. 6. Our apostle doth not say, there are not many condemnations belonging to them, but not any: *neque deus*, not one either from law or gospel; for the gospel has its condemnatory sentence as well as the law; yea, the highest and sorest condemnation, is that which the gospel denounces, John iii, 20. *This is the con-*

damnation, &c. Learn hence, 1. That it is a great felicity and happiness, not to be obnoxious to condemnation. 2. That this felicity and happiness is the portion of all those, and only those, that are in Christ Jesus; not by external federation, and visible profession only, but by virtue of a personal implantation into him by faith. Learn, 3. That such as are thus in Jesus Christ, obey not the inclinations of corrupt nature, but the holy motions of the blessed Spirit of God. Learn, 4. That an uniform and constant course of holy walking in the paths of sincere obedience, is both the indubitable mark and character, and also the indispensable duty and obligation of all such as are freed by Christ from condemnation.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

If by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus be meant the doctrine of the gospel, which is called the ministration of the Spirit, then the note is, that the gospel or new covenant is a law, that it is the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus, and that it sets the sincere Christian at liberty from the slavery of sin, and the condemning power of the law. If by the law of the Spirit of life be understood a real and vital principle of regenerating grace, working a new and heavenly life in the soul with great power and efficacy; thence we learn, 1. That the holy and blessed Spirit of God is a Spirit of life. 1. Essentially and formally in himself: as the Father hath life in himself, so the Spirit hath life in himself also. And, 2. Effectively or casually, with respect to us. He is a quickening, or life giving Spirit, being the original spring and fountal cause of that spiritual life, which is in a gracious soul. Learn, 2. That every person before the Spirit of life takes hold of him, is under the law of sin and death. Learn, 3. That such as are truly regenerate, are made free from the law of sin and death. 4. That it is by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that any soul is made free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,

That is, when mankind could by no means be freed from sin and death, God sent his own and only Son to be a sacrifice for sin, that our liberty might be fully accomplished. Observe here, 1. The impotency and weakness of the law declared: there is something which the law cannot do, it cannot justify, it cannot save, because it requires that which the fallen creature can never perform, and cannot make reparation for what the fallen creature has done. Learn hence, That the moral law of God, though an holy and excellent law, and designed by God for holy and excellent ends; yet having now to do with fallen man is, become weak, altogether unable to justify and save. Observe, 2. The reason of the law's impotency and weakness assigned: *It is weak through the flesh*; that is, through our corrupt and depraved natures. Its weakness doth not arise from itself, but from us; the law properly is not weak to us, but we are weak to that. The law

retains its authority of commanding, but we have lost our power of obeying. No mere man, since the fall, was able perfectly to observe the law of God: none ever could keep the law of God perfectly, but the first Adam; none ever could and did keep it perfectly, but the second Adam. Observe, 3. The way and means which the wisdom of God found out for relieving the law's impotency, and for the fallen sinner's recovery; "He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ was God's own Son, the Son of himself, his natural Son, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father, partaking of his father's essence by an eternal and ineffable generation. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father: he was sent, therefore, he had a being before his incarnation; for that which was not, could not be sent; he was sent by the Father, therefore he was, and is a person, and a person really distinct from the Father; the one sends, and the other is sent. But what doth God's sending Christ imply? *Answer*, His appointing and ordaining of him before all time to the work and office of a Mediator; his qualifying and fitting him in time for that great work and office: and his authoritative injunction of him to take upon him our nature, and in that nature, to make satisfaction for our sin. Learn, 3. That Christ, God's own Son, was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of flesh: it was real flesh that Christ assumed, but like unto sinful flesh; he was dealt with and handled, treated and used, just as guilty and sinful men are, accused of gluttony, winebibbing, sorcery, blasphemy, and what not; arraigned, condemned, executed for an impostor, deceiver, blasphemous, and breaker of the law. Thus though no sinner, yet was he a reputed sinner, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. Learn, 4. That the end for which Christ was sent by God, was through the sacrifice of his death to condemn sin, that is, to expiate and take away the guilt of sin; so as that it shall never be charged upon believers to their eternal condemnation: for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. Blessed be God, condemning sin is condemned by a condemned Saviour.

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Our apostle here assigns another end and cause, for which God sent his Son into the world: namely, to do what the law commanded, as well as to suffer what the law threatened; perfectly to fulfil the righteousness of the law for us, which it was impossible for us to do for ourselves; for the sake of which we are accounted righteous in the sight of God. Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ being made under the law, fulfilled the law; whatsoever the law did or could demand is fully satisfied and fulfilled by Christ. Learn, 2. That Christ having fulfilled the law on our behalf, what ever can be required of us by way of punishment, is discharged likewise. Learn, 3. That though the righteousness of the law be fulfilled for us by Christ, yet the gospel righteousness must be performed by ourselves. Christ has answered the demands of the law for us, but will never fulfil the conditions of the gospel for us. We must repent ourselves, obey ourselves, or Christ's obedience will profit us nothing: none can safely or comfortably pretend to an interest in Christ's obedience, either active or passive, but only such

who in their course are actuated and influenced by the spirit, and not by the flesh. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

5 For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Observe here, 1. A difference of persons mentioned. Those that are after the flesh, and them that are after the Spirit. 2. A difference of properties belonging to these persons; the one minds the things of the flesh, the other the things of the Spirit. They mind them: that is, they relish and savor them, they lay out their thoughts about them, and let out their endeavours after them. Learn hence, 1. That there are but two sorts of men in the world: some after the flesh, and some after the Spirit. 2. That these two different sorts of men have two different objects, which they savor and relish; namely, the things of the flesh, and the things of the Spirit. 3. That all men discover the true tempers of their minds, and the complexion and disposition of their souls, by the respect which they give to either of these objects, by minding the things of the flesh, and the things of the Spirit; that is, by minding them willingly and cheerfully, resolutely and constantly.

6 For to be carnally-minded, *is* death; but to be spiritually minded, *is* life and peace.

In the former verse we had a description of those that are carnal, and them that are spiritual. In this verse we have the end of the one, and the issue of the other; the end of the one is death, the issue of the other is spiritual life, joy and peace. Observe, 1. The end and conditions of all carnally-minded persons, so remaining and still continuing, it is death: always demeritoriously, that which deserves death; and sometimes actually, it procures and hastens the sinner's death; but especially it exposeth to an endless and eternal death. Observe, 2. The sweet fruit and joyful issue of spiritual-mindedness, it is *life and peace*. 1. It is life, it is eternal life initially, and it leads to eternal life ultimately. Grace is the first degree of glory, and glory but the highest degree of grace. 2. It is peace: to be spiritually-minded, lays the foundation of peace with God, with conscience, with the world; the fruit of righteousness is peace, quietness, and assurance for ever.

7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

By the carnal mind are meant the rational powers corrupted by our sensitive appetite, or a mind enslaved by sensual lusts. Such a temper of mind is opposite to, yea, enmity against God and goodness. Learn hence, 1. That carnal persons are no better than enemies unto God: there is a perfect contrariety in their affections, inclinations, and actions, to the will of God. They are called haters of God; not that they hate him as a Creator, but as a lawgiver; they

hate his holiness, not his goodness. Learn, 2. That whilst men remain carnally minded, there is no breaking off this enmity between God and them; *the carnal mind*, whilst such "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" not that this impotency and inability will excuse from guilt, because it is not a created, but a self-contracted impotency; not a natural, but a moral impotency: which arises from a perverse disposition of will, is joined with a delight in sin, and a strong aversion from the holy commands of God. Man must thank himself, and not God for his lame hand: that he *cannot be subject to the law of God*, is occasioned by his natural enmity and contracted hardness of heart against God.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

To be in the *flesh*, is not barely to have the flesh in us, but prevailing in us: to be wholly possessed by the flesh, to be drenched and drowned in sin: instead of fighting under Christ's banner against sin, to fight under the banner of corrupt nature against Christ. *Such cannot please God*: nay they cannot but displease him, both in their persons and in their actions; for none can please him that are unsuitable and unlike unto him, because all liking is founded in likeness, and all complacency in correspondency. Learn hence, That carnal men neither do, nor can please God, because not renewed by God, nor reconciled to him: "Such as are in the flesh cannot please God."

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.—

Observe, He doth not say, the flesh is not in you, but ye are not in the flesh, so as to be acted and influenced, guided and governed, misled and carried away by it. Sincere and serious christians, although they live in the flesh, yet do they not live after the flesh: *But ye are in the Spirit*, that is, illuminated, inclined and enabled by the Spirit to do the will of God; *And the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*, as a Spirit of truth to enlighten your understandings, as a Spirit of holiness to renew your will and affections, as a Spirit of love to inspire the soul with divine and unutterable desires after the favor and grace of God: and the phrase, *dwelling*, imports presence and propriety, fellowship and intimacy, operation and activity, residence and constancy of abode.

—Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Observe here, 1. That the Holy Ghost is called the *Spirit of Christ* passively, and by way of reception, as being bestowed upon him, and received by him: also actively, and by way of collation, as being bestowed by him: and conveyed from him. Observe, 2. That all sincere christians have the Spirit of Christ, they have him for the blessing of conversion, they have him for the benefit of communion. He dwells in them by his sanctifying impressions, powerful assistances, quickening and comforting influences. He pours in both the oil of grace, and also the oil of joy and gladness into their hearts. Observe, 3. There are some that have not the Spirit of Christ; such as are carnal and sensual have not the Spirit; such as are censorious and en-

vious have not the Spirit; such as are malicious and revengeful have not the Spirit; such as are implacable, and of an irreconcilable temper of spirit, have not the Spirit of Christ. Observe, 4. That all such as have not the Spirit of Christ, are none of Christ's; they have no spiritual relation to him, they have no special interest in him, and can expect no present consolation or future happiness from him; the proposition is indefinite, and without exception, "If any man, prince or peasant, rich or poor, bond or free, have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of Christ's."

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body is dead, because of sin, but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.

If Christ *be* in you, that is, by his holy Spirit, the body is dead, that is, still subject to death, because of sin which will never cease to be in us till we die: but the Spirit is life, that is, will give life to it again, because of righteousness, or of that justification which is unto life. Learn hence, That Christ in believers is a sure pledge and earnest to them of eternal life, both in body and soul; Christ is in believers two ways. 1. Objectively, as the object is in the faculty, or the things we think of, love and delight in, are in our hearts and minds: thus Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. 2. Effectively, so Christ is in believers by his Spirit, whose gracious influences produce life in them, and likeness unto him. Learn, 2. That the bodies of believers, in whom Christ dwells, are subject to death as well as other men's, and that because of sin, both original and actual: sin brought mortality into their natures, death entered the world by sin, and sin goes out of the world by death; true, they are by Christ delivered from the sting, but not from the stroke of death: "their bodies are dead because of sin." Learn, 3. That believers, though mortal, and subject to death in regard of their bodies, yet they live, and are in a state of immortality, in regard of their souls: *the spirit is life*: that is, the spirit of the believer is immortal, yet not exclusively, but emphatically; not as if other men's souls did not live after death, but it is a life worse than death: it is a special immortality that the believer is partaker of. Learn, 4. "The spirit is life because of righteousness." If we understand it of Christ's righteousness, that gives us a right and title to salvation; if of our own inherent righteousness, that is a qualification to fit and prepare us for eternal life and salvation; take it in either sense, it teaches us, that without righteousness there can be no hope of eternal life and happiness; we can be neither fit for the employment of heaven, nor for the enjoyment of heaven without it, Col. i. 12.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

As if the apostle had said, "Although your body must die, yet it shall live again in the morning of the resurrection, and that by virtue of the Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in you, and is the bond of union with him your head; others shall be raised by the power of Christ as their judge, but you shall be raised by virtue of your union with him as your

head: they are raised *officio judicis*, you *beneficio mediatoris*." Observe here, an happy resurrection promised, and the condition upon which that promise is made and insured. 1. An happy resurrection promised, the same holy Spirit of God that raised Christ shall raise you, because the same Spirit dwelleth in you. Learn thence, That the bodies of the saints are the temple of the Holy Ghost, his dwelling-place, living, dying, and dead; if the Holy Spirit dwells in us here, sanctifying our persons, the same Spirit will not forsake our bodies in the grave, but raise them up to glory and happiness. Death dissolves all other unions, except that betwixt the believer and the Spirit of Christ; but the grave itself cannot separate them. Observe, 2. The condition upon which this promise is made and insured, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." Where note, 1. A blessed relation; the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father, because the Father is the fountain and original of the Deity, and doth communicate it both to the Son and to the Spirit, to teach us to seek unto the Father, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, he being the donor and dispenser of it. Note, 2. A glorious operation, the Spirit raised up Jesus from the dead. Where observe, that the holy scriptures ascribe Christ's resurrection to all the three persons in the glorious Trinity: the Father raised him, Acts x. 40. Him God raised up the third day; Christ raised himself, John x. 18. "I have power to lay down my life, and to take it up again;" the Holy Ghost raised up Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Note, 3. A gracious possession, and special inhabitation; He dwelleth in us; in our hearts by the gifts and graces, in our bodies as his living temples, which proves him to be really God, for none but a God possesses a temple; and also to be a distinct person, not an energy or operation, for none but a person, can be said to inhabit or dwell; and should teach us to take heed of defiling our bodies by any uncleanness, which are or ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; "for if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

That is, seeing the Holy Spirit dwelleth in us, quickening our souls for the present, and raising our bodies for time to come, furnishing the one with grace here, and fitting the other for glory hereafter; therefore we ought to live unto God and not to the flesh; we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. Where note, that the word flesh is not to be taken in a physical, but in a moral sense: not in a physical sense, for the body of man: every one is a debtor to his own body, he owes it food and clothing, nourishment and provision: the beast must be fed, though not pampered, lest it kick and throw its rider; but flesh is here to be taken in a moral sense for sin, for the progenerate and unsanctified part in man: and then the sense is, that no man owes any thing to the service and satisfaction of his sinful lusts, and inordinate desires; none of us owe sin, satan, or the world, an hour's service; these are not warrantable creditors for any of us to be indebted to. Learn hence, that believers are not indebted, or owe any thing to the flesh, but all to the Spirit; the flesh is a cheater, an usurer, an oppressor; what it calls for, it has no right to demand: but the Spirit is a just creditor, and we are greatly indebted to him, as the author and producer of grace in us, and he is the preserver

and increaser of that grace to us which he has begun. O blessed Spirit! we owe all that we are, and all that we have to thee, all that we have in hand, and all that we have in hope; thou hast a right to all, yea, more than all that we can pay thee, so infinitely are we indebted to thee; but for sin and the flesh, we never promised any thing to it, we never got any thing by it, nothing but shame and sorrow from it, and, therefore, we are not indebted to it. Lord, keep us from being debtors to the most cruel and severe creditors in the world, sin and satan; for the more we pay to them, the more we run in arrears with thee, to whose justice we must pay the uttermost farthing.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Our apostle here adds a farther reason why a christian should not live after the flesh: before, an argument was drawn *a debito*, now *a damno*: he told us in the former verse we owed nothing to the flesh, here he acquaints us what losers we shall be by living to the flesh, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*: which words are a dreadful commination, and severe threatening. In which observe, 1. The persons threatened, ye, the believing Romans, called to be saints, chap. 1. 7. even they are threatened with hell, who were candidates of heaven: he threatens them with death, to keep them from death. Learn thence, that the ministers of God may use arguments drawn from hell torments, to dissuade the holiest and best saints from sin, and to persuade them to duty; *if ye live after the flesh, &c.* Observe, 2. The threatening itself. *Ye shall die.* Learn thence, That Almighty God threateneth all those that live after the flesh with nothing less than eternal death and damnation: to live after the flesh, is to have the flesh our governing principle, our work and trade, our scope and end; and to die for living after the flesh is to undergo a temporal, spiritual, and eternal death; an everlasting banishment from the blessed presence of him in whose presence is fulness of joy: "but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The former words were a threatening to excite our industry; these are a promise to prevent our dejection. In which, observe, 1. The act specified, or duty enjoined, and that is a mortification; *if ye mortify*, that is, kill every sin: It is not enough to oppose sin, but we must destroy sin, nothing but the destruction of sin must content us. Note also, the continuance of the act, *if ye do mortify*, though they had already mortified sin, yet they are called upon to proceed in the work: the axe must be daily laid to the root, and the knife must still stick in the throat of sin, till it drop down dead. Mortification must be continual, and it must necessarily be painful: nothing that has life will be put to death without pain and struggling: the longer we delay to mortify sin, the more painful shall we make it to ourselves. Observe, 2. The proper object of this duty, *the deeds of the body*, by which all sin is to be understood, relating both to the inward and outward man, though the latter only be mentioned, because the body is that which is *manifestatum peccati*, it is that wherein sin doth especially show and discover itself. Learn thence, mortification must be universal as well as continual, not one deed, but deeds: not the deeds of the body only, but of the soul also must be

mortified; all evil dispositions, depraved habits, corrupt affections, as well as irregular actions, must be watched against, and the whole body of sin become the object of mortification. Observe, 3. The agents in this work, and they are two: 1. The more principal agent is the Holy Spirit. 2. The less principal is the christian himself, *if ye, through the Spirit*, we can do nothing without him, he will do nothing without us. Learn hence, that in mortifying sin, the Spirit's assistance and our endeavours must concur: mortification indeed, is not the work of nature, yet man must be an agent in it, not in his own, but in God's strength; we have brought sin, that rebel into our own souls, and we must use our own endeavours to cast it out: true, it cannot be done alone by ourselves, but it never will be done without ourselves; we can sin of ourselves; but cannot overcome sin by ourselves; we know how to be slaves, but are unable of ourselves to be conquerors. The believer is *principium activum*, but the Spirit is *principium effectivum*. Observe, 4. The reward promised to the performers and performance of this duty; *ye shall live*: namely, a life of grace and boldness, a life of joy and comfort, a life of glory and happiness. Our life of grace is an evidence and an earnest of the life of glory: grace is a glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the fruit. Learn, that a life of grace and comfort on earth, together with a life of glory and happiness in heaven, is and shall be the assured portion and privilege of all those, who by the Spirit's assistance, and their own concurring endeavours, do mortify sin, and crucify the deeds of the body; *if ye mortify, &c. ye shall live*: that is, holily, comfortably, and eternally; ye shall live a life of exemplary graciousness, a life of highest delight and pleasure on earth, and of eternal blessedness and glory in heaven.

14 For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege proclaimed, the being *the sons of God*. 2. A description of the persons to whom that privilege doth belong, they are such as *are led by the spirit of God*. Learn, 1. That the Holy Spirit of God doth perform the office of a guide and leader to all the children of God, he gives life and motion to them, by infusing gracious habits, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) by exciting the soul to act suitably thereunto, and by assisting it in acting; he gives directions and guidance to them, he directs their actions, by enlightening their understandings, by guiding their inclinations, by influencing and inclining their wills; and where he guides he governs. A general that leads an army, orders its motions and marches; as Christ was, so the Holy Spirit is, a leader and commander to the people. Learn, 2. That such as are thus led by the Spirit of God, may know and conclude themselves to be the sons of God, because holiness is a certain evidence of adoption. Such as are *led by God's Spirit*, are undoubtedly *God's children*; and such as are not his children, refuse to be led by his Spirit, but live under the uncontrolled activity of their own.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Observe, 1. That there is a spirit of bondage, which the

children of God do for some time receive, working fear in them. By the spirit of bondage understand those convictions and terrors of conscience which awakened persons labor under, when the law of God charges them home with the guilt of sin; and lays them under dreadful apprehensions of the wrath of God. The spirit of bondage is neither to be slighted, nor yet to be rested in; not to be slighted, because it is preparatory to conversion; and not to be rested in, because it is like a spark of hell kindled in the conscience; it is as a bearded arrow shot into the conscience, which only the hand of God can pluck out. Observe, 2. That the spirit of bondage to God's children is succeeded by, and ends in a spirit of adoption; the signs of such a spirit are a childlike love to God, a childlike fear and hope, a childlike trust and dependance, and a childlike obedience to his commands. Observe, 3. That God's Holy Spirit, after he has once been a spirit of adoption, never again becomes a spirit of bondage to the same soul, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Observe, 4. That one principal work of the spirit of adoption is to enliven and imbolden the soul in prayer, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Observe here, 1. That our adoption into God's family is evidenced by the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness to and with our spirits; here are two witnesses produced to testify the truth of the believer's adoption, namely, God's Spirit and his own; the Spirit testifies by laying down marks of trial in the holy scriptures, by working such graces in us as are peculiar to God's children, and by helping us to discover this work in our own souls more clearly and evidently; our own spirits testify by reflecting upon our primitive conversion, upon our habitual disposition, upon our general conversation; the Spirit testifies our adoption by evidencing to us our sanctification: and all this is done, not by sudden impulses, and immediate inspirations, which is the witnessing of the Spirit that enthusiasts pretend to, but the Spirit witnesses in a way of argumentation. Thus, whoever repents, believes and obeys the gospel, says the scripture, shall be saved; but the Spirit helps us to see that we do so, and accordingly enables us to infer and conclude that we shall be saved. Observe, 2. That a christian may in this life, without a divine revelation, attain a well-grounded assurance of his adoption and salvation; for the Spirit of God both bears witness to him, and bears witness with him, as touching the sincerity of his heart and life. Observe lastly, That there is no safe and secure way to prove our adoption, but by testimonies brought of our sanctification; the privy seal of our adoption must be thus attested under the broad seal of our sanctification; the goodness of our state and condition must be evidenced by the holiness of our lives and conversation.

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Our apostle having asserted and insured the believer's adoption in the foregoing verse, doth in this verse infer the certainty of his inheritance: "If children, then heirs." Learn thence, That all God's children, by special grace and adoption are undoubted heirs of a blessed and glorious in-

heritance. He next declares whom they are heirs of, and whom they are heirs with; they are, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." 1. They are heirs of God, they do inherit God himself, their Father is their portion; man leaves his heirs what he has, God gives his heirs what he is; he which gives them the inheritance, is the inheritance itself which he gives them, by being not only heirs to him, but heirs of him; they have an interest in all his attributes; his wisdom is theirs to guide and direct them, his power is theirs to sustain and preserve them, his mercy and pity is theirs to relieve and succour them. O happy and blessed privilege of God's adopted ones! they are not only heirs of heaven, but heirs of God himself; they have him for their portion, and exceeding great reward. 2. They are heirs with Christ: as Christ is God's heir, so are they heirs with Christ; Christ is God's heir by nature, as he is the Son of God by nature; whatever is God's is his, and they are heirs with Christ; they are members of him, and shall be heirs with him, 1 Cor. iii. ult. All is yours, and ye are Christ's Eph. i. 11. In him we have obtained the inheritance; we are heirs in his right. O blessed Jesus! how endearing are our obligations to thee! All that we have is from thee, by thee, and in thee: we are chosen in thee, justified by thee, sanctified through thee, and shall be glorified with thee; "For if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It follows.

—If so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Here we see what accompanieth our adoption, namely, present affliction; we are now to suffer, but not alone, we suffer with Christ; "If so be that we suffer with him." This is not a word of ambiguity and doubting, but a word of certainty and assurance, and signifies as much as seeing that we suffer with him. Learn hence, 1. That a state of suffering and affliction on earth is one condition of obtaining our glorious inheritance in heaven; we must suffer that God may be glorified, our graces improved, our love to the world mortified, our longings for heaven increased. Learn, 2. That the sufferings of believers are the sufferings of Christ; they suffer with him, and he with them; they suffer with him in a way of conformity, he with them in a way of tender sympathy; they are sensible of any indignity offered to him, and he is sensible of any injury offered to them: the suffering saint pledges Christ in his own cup. Farther, they suffer with him when they suffer for him, when they suffer in his cause, and for his sake: that is, for doing their duty. Finally they suffer with him, when they suffer by an assistance derived from him, when by his enablement, and by a power communicated from him, they suffer hard things for his name and truth. Learn, 3. That as sufferings go before, so glory shall certainly follow sufferings; "If we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together." Suffering is the beaten path to glory, and that which makes it so much the more glorious; suffering fits us for glory, and disposes us for the reception and fruition of it; by the cross we are fitted for the crown. Learn, 4. That suffering members shall not only be glorified, but be conformable to their glorified head in glory; as they have here "suffered with him," they shall hereafter be "glorified together," not with equal glory, but with the same kind of glory. Three things are implied in our being glorified toge-

ther with Christ: 1. Conformity: we shall be like him in glory. 2. Concomitancy; we shall accompany him, and be present with him in glory. 3. Conveyance of derivation; we shall be glorified with him; that is, our glory shall be derived from him; his glory shall be reflected upon us, and we shall shine in his beams. O happy condition of God's adopted and afflicted children; The supports which you have under suffering, the comforts which you have in suffering, the benefits which you have by suffering, and the glory which will follow after suffering, render it not only tolerable but desirable; well may they glory in tribulation, which expect such a glory after it.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Observe here, 1. The nature and property of the saints' present sufferings; they are short and momentary: "The sufferings of this present time." If sharp, they shall yet be short; though great, they cannot be long; for their afflictions cannot last longer than their lives; the one shall end when the other ends. O blessed condition of the righteous; your afflictions are only for this present time, the grave will set you beyond the reach of trouble. Ah, wretched condition of the wicked! your sufferings are not only "for this present time," but for eternal ages; your worm will never die, your fire never be quenched, but you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Observe, 2. The nature and property of the saints' future glory; it is hidden, it is "a glory that shall be revealed." Learn thence, That the glory which God has prepared for his suffering saints and children, is an hidden glory; it is hidden from the eye of the world, and lies altogether out of their sight and view; and it is in a great measure hidden from the saints themselves; it is now the object of their faith, but ere long it shall be the object of their sight. Observe, 3. The vast disproportion between the christian's present suffering and his future glory and happiness; the one is not worthy to be compared with the other: "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." Learn thence, That the weight of the saints' cross is not comparable with the glory of their crown; the happiness of their future glorified state doth infinitely outweigh the misery of their present afflicted state, they are not to be named in the same day. Observe, 4. The apostle's judgment or determination about this matter: *I reckon*, I have cast up the matter, as if the apostle had said, and have had my share of suffering; but I make light of them, they are not worth speaking of, compared with the glory I shall receive as the reward of my sufferings. Learn hence, That such of the saints of God as have been exercised and tried with the heaviest of sufferings, make lightest of them, having the highest account of heaven's glory: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, &c.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject

to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope;

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now:

Observe here, 1. That there is a time indeed a coming, when all the sons of God, all his adopted children, shall be made manifest: how manifest? 1. In their persons: it shall then appear who are God's sons, and who are satan's servants; they shall then be made manifest to themselves, to one another, yea, to the very consciences of the wicked. 2. In their actions, 1 Cor. iii. 13. Every man's work shall be made manifest, of what nature it is, what they have done, whose interest they were in. 3. In their condition; their glory and happiness shall be made manifest: "When Christ their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory." Observe, 2. That the creature, or whole creation; expecteth, waiteth and longeth for the time of this manifestation. Some by the creature, and the whole creation here understand the Gentile world; and then the sense is, "That the heathens shall, by the preaching of the gospel, be rescued from their idolatry, unto which they have been long enslaved, and be brought into the glorious condition of Christ's redeemed ones, to whom the glorious inheritance of heaven doth belong." But others, by the creature and the whole creation, understand this visible world, sensitive and rational, animate and inanimate; and then the sense is, "That the whole frame and course of the creation is so ordered and disposed of by God, as that it carries in it a vehement desire, an earnest longing for the full manifestation of God's glory in and towards his children." Observe, 3. The present condition which the creature is subjected to through the sin of man, "It is made subject to vanity;" that is, to corruption and mortality, to servitude and servility; the sin of man did not only stain the glory of man, but marring and spoiled the beauty of the whole creation; all creatures are fallen from their first perfection by the fall of our first parents. Observe, 4. The restlessness and uneasiness of the creature under this vanity and servility, it groans like a man under a burden, or like a travelling woman in labor. Learn hence, That the sin of man is burdensome to the senseless creature; it is in continual labor to serve man's necessity; it is oft-times punished together with man for the sin of man, witness the old world, and Sodom: and as they are oft-times constrained and compelled by men to serve the lusts of men, thus the whole creation groaneth under the burden of man's sin, when he himself groans not; and accordingly, the groans of the creature are upbraiding groans, they upbraid our stupidity and unthankfulness; they are accusing groans, they will witness against us at the bar of God; they are awakening groans, to excite and stir us up to sigh and long for a better state; and they are instructive groans, to teach us our sins, and their vanity. Observe, 5. The expectation which the creature is under of a state of liberty and freedom from that vanity and corruption which they are now

subject to for our sin, it has "an earnest expectation" of being delivered from this bondage. But how can the senseless and inanimate part of the creation be said to have an earnest expectation? Not properly, as if the creature was able to put forth such an act directly; for then it must be supposed to have not only life and sense, but reason and grace: but the meaning is, that there is a vehement inclination in the creature to be restored to that first condition which it was in before the fall; and accordingly it is said to "wait for the manifestation of the sons of God;" that is, for that liberty and freedom from servility and corruption, which according to their captivity, the creatures hope for and expect, when the full privileges and dignities of the sons of God shall be manifested. Observe, lastly, that the liberty which God's children are reserved for, and appointed to, is a glorious liberty; that is, a liberty which shall be attended with unspeakable glory: "the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

"And not only they;" that is, all the creatures in the visible creation, join in this, they groan together; they do not some groan and others sing; some travail in pain, and others in pleasure; but they all groan and travail together in pain until now; that is, until the glorious manifestation of the sons of God; but not only do they groan, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, &c. Observe here, 1. A special description of God's adopted children; they have the first-fruits of the Spirit; that is, they have the Holy Spirit in its sanctifying gifts, and graces, and comforts, in some measure, called here first-fruits, because of the smallness of their quantity, the first-fruits were but an handful, a little portion in comparison of the whole crop: yet was it an evidence and pledge that God would give them the full crop. Thus grace is an earnest of glory, it is a pledge of everlasting life: the beginnings of grace here, are certain forerunners of the accomplishment of glory hereafter. Observe, 2. The actions attributed to the forementioned persons; they groan, they wait. 1. They groan: "We who have the first fruits of the Spirit do groan?" they groan under the burden of sin and affliction; the guilt of sin, the pollution of sin, the sad remains of indwelling sin, make them groan; their proneness and inclination to evil, their backwardness and indisposition to do good, make them groan: their too frequent backslidings, their daily infirmities make them groan; their sufferings also from God, and from man for God's sake cause them to groan; but it is added, "We groan within ourselves;" that is, secretly to ourselves; undiscovered by the world, and in a manner peculiar to ourselves, as persons influenced by religion and grace; as christians have joys and comforts, so have they griefs and groans peculiar to themselves. 2. They wait; but for what? 1. For the adoption, that is, for the completing of their adoption, for the last finishing stroke of their sanctification, and for their perfect glorification. 2. For the redemption of their bodies; that is, for their resurrection, for their redemption from mortality and corruption, for the re-

demption of their whole man, soul and body, do believers wait; their bodies were members of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, instruments of, and companions with the soul in holy duties; and accordingly the hour is coming, when the complete redemption both of soul and body shall be fully and finally perfected: but in the mean time they groan and wait for it. Learn from the whole, that all sanctified christians who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan and wait for a much better state than what they do at present enjoy.

24 For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

"We are saved by hope;" that is, we are at present supported by hope, our present expectation of our future glorious condition beareth up our spirit under all sufferings, and carrieth us joyfully through all difficulties: or, "we are saved by hope," that is, all the salvation which we have at present is in hope, not in hand: in expectation, not in possession; heaven in hope, is more worth than the whole world in hand: and seeing there is a certainty of hope, there is a certainty of salvation: "We are saved by hope." Observe next, the nature of hope declared; it is an expectation of good things promised but not enjoyed; vision and fruition put an end to hope; none hopes for that he already enjoys: hope is conversant about things unseen as well as faith: faith is the evidence of things not seen, and hope is the expectation of those things: the object of hope is a future good, a possible good, a promised good, a good promised by God, and believed by us. Observe, lastly, the necessary adjunct, and the inseparable companion of hope, and that is patience, and waiting for the good hoped for; "if we hope, &c. then do we with patience wait, &c." Learn hence, that they only hope for eternal life aright, who continue in the pursuit of it with patience and perseverance; there must be found with us a waiting patience, a working patience, a hearing and forbearing patience, with a persevering continuance in well-doing, if we hope for glory and immortality, and eternal life.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,

Learn hence, 1. That the holiest and best of saits labor oft-times under great infirmities in the work and duty of prayer, not knowing what to pray for, or how to manage that important affair as they ought. Hence it was that the apostles themselves, being sensible of their own disability in this kind, made their addresses to Christ himself to teach and instruct them how to pray, Luke xi. 1. Learn, 2. That it is the work and office of the Holy Spirit of God to help our infirmities in prayer, or as the word signifies, to help together with us, to set his shoulder to ours, and lift with us at the same burden: the spirit of Christ and our own spirit must both do their part in carrying on this work; if ever we ex-

pect the Spirit's assistance, we must exert our own endeavours; more particularly, the Spirit helps us in prayer, by working in us a deep sense of our spiritual wants, by giving us an insight into the promises, and enabling us to plead them at the throne of grace, by creating and stirring up desires in our souls to have our wants supplied by encouraging and emboldening us to come to God in prayer as to a Father, with an humble reverence and childlike confidence. But though the Holy Spirit be our guide and assistant in this duty, yet not so as to give us occasion to think that the words of prayer are immediately inspired and dictated to us by the Holy Ghost: let us have a care that we mistake not an idle and foolish loquacity, a frothy eloquence, and affected language, outward vehemency and boldness of speech, a natural fervency, or an acquired fluency of expression, for the Spirit's help and assistance in prayer. Implore the Spirit's help, and he will help thy infirmities; he will show thee thy sins, to give thee matter of confession! he will show thee thy wants to give thee matter of petition; he will show thee the mercies and blessings of God, to yield thee matter of thanksgiving; he will show thee the church's miseries and necessities, to furnish thee with matter of intercession: thus the Spirit will assist thee, but never expect that he should act without thee. Learn, 3. What is the proper work and office of the Holy Spirit in prayer; it is to make "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." But how is the Spirit our intercessor? Is not that Christ's office? *Answer.* Christ is an intercessor for us, the Holy Spirit is an intercessor in us. Christ, in respect of his meritorious sufferings, is an Advocate, Mediator, and Intercessor with the Father for us: the Holy Spirit intercedes in us, by enabling us for, and assisting us in, the duty; by quickening our affections, and enlarging our desires; by setting us a groaning after the Lord. Groaning denotes the strength and ardency of desire, which through the fervency of it puts the soul to pain; and an holy impatience, till it be heard. Lord, how flat and dead are our hearts sometimes in prayer! How much are our Spirits straitened! But if we want words, let us not want groans; let thy Spirit help us to groan out a prayer when we want ability to utter it; for silent groans proceeding from thy Spirit, shall be heard in thine ear, when the loudest cries shall not be heard without it.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Observe here, 1. The title or attribute given and appropriated unto God; *he searcheth*, or knoweth *the heart*. He was the maker of the heart and is the disposer of the heart, and will judge every man according to his heart; and therefore, he must know the heart thoroughly and perfectly, certainly and infallibly; and it is the joy of an upright person, that God knoweth and searcheth the heart. When the world condemns him for insincerity, he rejoiceth that God knoweth his integrity; and when he has it in the purpose of his heart to do good, but wants power in his hand to accomplish and effect it, this is his consolation, that God accepts it as done, what he did desire and resolve to do, 2 Chron. vi. 8. Observe, 2. The action here attributed to the heart-searching God; he "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." That is,

he knoweth the workings of the Holy Spirit, and of our own spirits also, in the duty of prayer. It is a great comfort to the children of God, that the Lord knoweth what kind of spirit is working in their hearts, when they are before him upon their knees. Do we labor under difficulty of utterance in prayer? Are we attended with distractions in prayer? Do we at any time forget and leave out in prayer what we intended to put into it. The Lord knoweth what is the mind of our spirits in that matter. God doth not only hear his people's prayers, but he hears their desires, and grants not only the desires of our lips, but the desires of our hearts, which have not been expressed by our lips. Observe, 3. Who the persons are whom the Holy Spirit intercedes for in prayer; they are saints: "he maketh intercession for the saints;" for them exclusively and none but them; for them inclusively, for all and every one of them: the Spirit sanctifies all those in whom and for whom he intercedes; he is first a Spirit of regeneration, before he is a Spirit of intercession; he first puts gracious dispositions into us, and then stirs up holy desires in us. Observe, 4. The qualification necessary to render our prayers acceptable to God, they must be according to God; that is, *according to the will and mind of God*. And that, 1. In respect of the matter of them, we must pray only for things lawful and warrantable. 2. In regard of the manner of them, we must pray in faith with fervency, and in the name of Christ. 3. In respect of the end of them, and what we propound to ourselves in them, which is the glory of God: notwithstanding Christ's mediation, and the Spirit's intercession, we may ask and not receive; if we ask amiss; that is, for bad ends, that we may consume it upon our lusts.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his purpose*.

That is, "All dispensations of providence whatsoever, whether they be ordinary afflictions, or extraordinary trials, which do befall the children of God in this life, shall certainly be directed by his wisdom, and overruled by his power and goodness, for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good of his children and people." Observe here, 1. What those things are, which are especially intended in that comprehensive term, *all things*. By *all things* here we are to understand, *Omnia tristitia, non omnia turpia*: "all the saints' afflictions, and not their sins; for then they might rejoice in their sins and wickedness; which is damnable impiety, as well as in their sufferings for Christ, seeing they may rejoice in that which by God's designation tendeth to their good; but by *all things*, the apostle means all providential occurrences and dispensations, all stations and conditions whatsoever, be it prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, liberty or captivity, life or death: God's glory and his children's good, shall be certainly furthered and advanced by it. Observe, 2. In what sense *all things* may be said to *work for good*, to good men; namely, as they shall promote and further the temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare of the children of God. If it be good for them to be rich, to be in honor, to be at liberty, they shall be so; if it be better for their souls, and more conducive to their eternal welfare to be low in the world, to be frequently under the rod, to be harassed with afflictions, and assaulted with temptations,

they shall have them: nothing that is needful shall be kept from them, only God must be judge what is needful, and when it is needful. He that thinks he can cut better for himself, than God can carve for him, makes himself wiser than God, and hath not only lost his faith, but his wits too. Observe, 3. That *all things* are said to *work together* for good; not singly, separately, and apart, but as coadjutors and adjuvant causes, and mutual helps. Afflictions and temptations seem to work against us: but being put into the rank and order of causes, they work together with other blessed instruments, as the word and prayer, to an happy issue. More particularly they work together with God and us, and they work together one with another, for our good sooner or later. Observe, 4. How can *all things* be said to *work for good*; particularly evil things? Sufferings from God, and sufferings from man for God's sake? What! must we call evil good, pain pleasure, torment ease, and loss gain? Must we disbelieve our senses, that we may believe the scriptures? *Ans.* Though affliction, which is evil in its own nature, cannot bring forth good, yet surely God can bring forth good out of evil, light out of darkness, and make his people's troubles the way to their triumph, and every cross providence, a step to the accomplishment of his promise. God suffers evil things to befall us, to keep out worse things, and causes evil things to prepare us for better things; the cross makes way for the crown: for affliction there is glory; for light affliction, a weight of glory, and for light affliction which is but for a moment, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Observe, 5. The character of the persons to whom this privilege doth belong; they are described by their christian affection, they *love God*, and by their effectual vocation, they are *called according to his purpose*. They love God and evidence their love to him, by an high estimation of him, by their delight in him, by their desires after him, by their longings for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him. And as they love God, so are they called of God; externally, by the dispensation of the gospel; internally, by the operation of his Holy Spirit: they are called out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, and all this efficaciously and powerfully, yet sweetly and freely; in a way congruous to the will's liberty. Observe, 6. The certainty and evidence of this proposition and assertion, *That all things work together for good*. It is not built upon conjecture, or bare probability, but upon certain knowledge; *we know*; partly by divine revelation, God has told us so; partly by experience, we find it so. And when the apostle speaks it out, *we know*, it is a word of confidence and assurance, it is a word of comfort and encouragement; all the saints of God to the end of the world, as well as the apostle himself, may depend upon it, live in the faith and assurance of it, and draw all that consolation from it, which may render their lives, in some sort, an heaven upon earth. And now, if this be an indubitable and undeniable truth, that whatever sufferings and afflictions a saint meets with shall work together for good; then we may infer, that a suffering condition is not so bad a condition as the world supposes it. The lion of affliction is not so fierce as he is painted. Times of difficulty and trial bring serious thoughts of God in our minds, who are too prone to forget both him and ourselves in affluence and quiet. Blessed be God, the time of affliction is no unprofitable time, nor uncomfortable time neither: it is a thinking time, an awa-

kening time, a teaching time, a repenting time, a weaning time; therefore, blessed is the man whom God correcteth and teacheth.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

St. Paul in these verses, lays before us a chain of the cause of salvation inseparably linked together, the first of which was before all time, namely, God's foreknowledge of us from all eternity, and his predestinating and appointing of us to eternal life: *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate*. But what were we predestinated unto? He tells us in the next words. *To be conformed to the image of his Son*; That is, to be made like unto our Lord Jesus in affection and disposition, in life and conversation, in the temper of our minds, and in the actions of our lives; like unto him in his sufferings, in the cause of his sufferings, righteousness sake and well-doing; in the kind of his sufferings, reproach, hatred, outward violence, and death itself; and in the manner of his sufferings, with meekness and patience; and like unto him in his glory: suffering with him, we shall be glorified together. The second privilege we are partakers of, is in time, namely, effectual vocation; *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. They are called out of a state of ignorance and darkness, of sin and wickedness, of slavery and bondage, unto knowledge, grace and holiness; and the Holy Spirit of God inclines and enables them to obey this call. The third privilege is justification: *Whom he called, them he also justified*. That is, absolved from guilt, and freed from condemnation: discharging them from their obnoxiousness to wrath, and the severity of divine displeasure. The last privilege we are partakers of, is after time, namely, glorification; *Whom he justified, them he also glorified*. They are already glorified in Christ their head, they have already the earnest and firstfruits of glory, namely, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and they shall ere long partake of the same glory which Christ himself is in possession of; John xvii. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me, where I am, to behold my glory." But it may be said, that one link is wanting in this golden chain of salvation, namely, sanctification: no mention is here made of that. *Ans.* Some conceive, that sanctification is couched in effectual vocation; others, that it is included in glorification; for sanctification is *gloria inchoata*, glorification is *gloria consummata*; grace is the lowest degree of glory, and glory is the highest degree of grace. Others answer, that the apostle makes no mention here of sanctification, for this reason, because he was now setting down here the causes of salvation. Now, sanctification being the way to salvation, but not the cause of it, the apostle mentions not that here; though elsewhere he sufficiently shows, that none are now justified, nor can be hereafter glorified, that are not here sanctified and renewed. From the whole learn, 1. That there were certain persons, before all

time, chosen of God to possess and inherit eternal life. 2. That God's design in choosing of them, was to render them conformable to Christ, in his holiness, in his sufferings, and in his glory. Learn, 3. That those whom God chooseth before time, he calleth, justifieth, and sanctifieth in time, and will finally glorify, when time shall be no more.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

What shall we say to these things? that is to the forenamed truths and doctrines, to the forementioned privileges and benefits, what comfort doth arise from them? How shall we live up answerable unto them? Neither the tongues of men or angels is sufficient to declare the comprehensive fullness of the foregoing favor of vocation and justification here, and glorification in heaven. Such love and goodness are beyond expression; it is as much as if the apostle had just said "What boundless love did our God move? No tongue can it express: no angel can this mystery seen, nor tell our happiness." *What shall we say to these things?* It follows, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* That is, seeing God is for us, who can safely and successfully, be against us? Learn hence, 1. That at all times, but especially in the time of affliction and distress, danger and difficulty, God ever has been, and will be on his people's side. 2. That those whom God is for, and on whose side he is of, need not fear, either how many or how mighty they be that are against them. God is for his people; that is, he approves and owns them, he assists and helps them, he will succeed and bless them, reward and crown them. Who then can be against them rationally, against them successfully, against them safely? How dangerous is it to be against those whom God is for? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And if God be against us, who can be for us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Here we have, 1. A proposition laid down containing matter of the highest consolation to us, namely, that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. *He spared not;* that is, he did not spare to give him, or part with him; with Abraham, he did not withhold his Son, his only Son from us. Again; *he did not spare him;* that is, he did not spare to punish him; he did not abate him one farthing, nor spare him one stroke, which divine justice did or could demand. It is farther added, that *God delivered him up for us all.* Judas delivered up Christ, Pilate delivered him up, and the Jews also; Judas for money, Pilate for fear, the Jews for envy: but none of these delivered him up for us; but God the Father delivered up his Son, and God the Son delivered up himself, as a prisoner, by the sentence of the law is delivered up for execution: and his being delivered up for us, denotes the viceregency of his sufferings, not only for our good, as the final cause, but for our sins, as the meritorious cause, in our room, place, and stead. Learn hence, That the utmost rigor and severity of divine

justice was inflicted and executed upon our Lord Jesus Christ in the day of his passion, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father: "he spared not, but delivered up his own Son." Observe, 2. The comfortable inference and conclusion which the apostle draws from the foregoing proposition; "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Intimating, that the greatest mercies and best of blessings shall not be denied to us, or withheld from us. If Christ be ours, 1 Cor. iii. 21, all things are yours (that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal mercies) and ye are Christ's. For, 1. No other mercy can be so dear to God as his own Son: he was his soul's delight. If, therefore, he spared not the most excellent mercy, he will not withhold any inferior mercy. 2. There is no other mercy we want, but we are intitled to it by the gift of Christ, and it is conveyed to us with Christ: all things, (as to right) are ours, if we be his. 3. If God gave us his Son, when we were his enemies, certainly he will deny us nothing that is good for us, now we are reconciled and made friends. It is our apostle's argument, Rom. v. 9. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's confident and daring challenge: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Where note the universality of the challenge: it is universal in a double respect: 1. In respect of persons accusing, *Who shall?* He expects none in heaven, none on earth, nay, none in hell; neither sin, nor the law, nor satan, nor conscience, having any thing to lay to our charge, in order to our condemnation. 2. In respect of crimes; he expects no sort of sins, though never to heinously aggravated, and sadly circumstantiated; justifying grace is their full discharge. Learn hence, That it is impossible for any charge or accusation to take place against those whom God doth justify, because there is nothing to accuse them of, none to accuse them to, and nobody to frame or make the accusation against them. Well might the apostle say, who can, who shall, who may, who dare lay any thing to the justified person's charge? Observe, 2. The ground and reason of this confident challenge; it is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? Here note, 1. That there is a very gracious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call justification. 2. That it is God that justifieth the believer's person, and pardons his sins, and none but God; he is the person against whom the offence is committed, and he alone it is that absolves us from the guilt contracted. When the justice of God accuses, when the law of God accuses, when our own consciences accuse, when satan and wicked men accuse, the mercy and goodness, the truth and faithfulness of God, will, for the sake of his Son's satisfaction, acquit and discharge us; for *it is God that justifieth.*

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The apostle here goes on with the triumphant challenge in the foregoing verse begun, who shall condemn the justified believer? And here observe, 1. The holy challenge of faith, it is ready for all comers, and bids defiance to all accusations. If the law implead, faith says, Christ, in the likeness of sinful flesh, has condemned sin in the flesh. If death look the believer in the face, faith saith, Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. If satan roar, faith can scorn, and tell him to his teeth, he is a conquered enemy; that Christ by his death has destroyed him that had the power of death. Yea, if God himself frown upon the believer, faith can bring to God a righteousness that is highly pleasing to him, with respect to which God may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Observe, 2. The ground of this triumphant challenge which faith enables the believer to make, and that is the mediation of Jesus Christ, in the four eminent branches of it, his death, resurrection, exaltation and intercession, *Christ died, is risen again, is even at God's right hand, making continual intercession for us.* Thence learn, that a believer's triumphs over condemnation, do eminently arise from the several acts of Christ's mediation. Christ died and rose again: our debt is therefore paid, because our surety is discharged; he sits at God's right hand as a testimony of the completeness of his sacrifice and satisfaction for us, and he continually intercedes, that is, presents himself to his Father in both his natures, and in our names, as our surety, our Advocate and Mediator; "who then shall lay any thing to the believer's charge, or who shall condemn him?"

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

That is, none shall separate, nothing shall separate the believer from the love of Christ: either from the love that Christ bears to him, or from that love which he bears unto Christ; no person shall, no condition of life can separate them, neither outward troubles, nor inward distresses, no evils either felt or feared; the apostle defies and despises them all, because neither of them, alone, nor all together can unclasp the arms of divine love, in which believers are safely enclosed. Learn hence, that no troubles, tribulations or distresses whatsoever, can dissolve the union betwixt Christ and believers, or ever separate them from his love.

36 (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.)

As if the apostle had said, "the saints of old have endured all manner of suffering, and yet were not separated from the love of God: therefore, the like, or worse suffering shall not be able to separate us now." Here note, what may be the lot and portion of believers in this life, and that is, killing for the sake of Christ; *for thy sake we are killed all the day long.* The words, *all the day long*, denote the continuance of the persecution, the unweariedness of the enemy, and the patience of the saints. Learn hence, that such as resolve upon the profession of christianity must prepare for killing, if God requires, and be ready to lay down their

lives for their religion, when God calls; *for thy sake we are killed*; that is, ready to be sacrificed; a readiness of disposition, and a preparation of mind is found with us, to part with all that is dear unto us, even life itself, for the sake of Christ.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

As if the apostle had said, "we are so far from being separated from Christ, by the afflictions and persecutions which we undergo, that we are conquerors by our patience, nay, more than conquerors; we do not only bear our trials, but we glory in tribulations; we conquer by our patience, we are more than conquerors by our cheerfulness." But because these words, *more than conquerors*, look big, and sound great, the apostle instantly subjoins, that it is by Christ's strength, and not by our own, that we overcome and conquer; *more than conquerors* through him that loved us, which words are a periphrasis of Christ: it is both a proper description of him, and a comprehensive description. When the apostle said, *he that loved us*, he doth in effect say every thing else; he that was born for us, that died for us, that redeemed and saved us; all these were the effects and fruits of his love, and they are all comprehended in this saying, *him that loved us.* Note lastly, how the believer is said to overcome by the help of this person. "More than conquerors through him that loved us." Whence learn, that all a Christian's strength lies in Christ, and not in himself; all his strength for victory over sin; all his strength for victory over suffering, is all received from Christ, is all to be attributed and ascribed to Christ; the strength of every saint, yea, the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our apostle concludes this excellent chapter with triumphant expressions, as he had begun it; in the first verse he proclaims, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: here in the last verse he pronounces, that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; *I am persuaded, &c.* Where observe, 1. The proposition positively laid down, nothing shall separate from the love of Christ: his love is like himself, unchangeable and everlasting; he loves the same person, and ever loves the same reason: likeness is the ground of love, the attractive and loadstone of it; now the image of Christ, by the Spirit of Christ, is both preserved and increased in the believer's soul: this engages the heart of Christ towards christians in such a manner, that nothing shall separate them from his love. Observe, 2. The enumeration and induction of particulars which the apostle makes use of, for confirming this proposition, that nothing can separate the be-

liever from the love of Christ, nor diminish his interest in him, *neither life nor death*, that is, *neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death; nor angels; neither good nor bad; not the angels, for they will not attempt it; nor the bad angels, for they can never effect it; nor principalities nor powers; by them understand earthly power, the great and mighty potentates of the world persecuting us for Christ, yet shall never be able to divorce us from him; nor things present, nor things to come; neither the things which we enjoy at present, or endure at present, or may hereafter meet with, be it prosperity or adversity; their present and future condition of life shall be sanctified, whatever comes: come what may come, come what will come, come what can come, nothing shall come amiss unto them; whatever has happened, does happen or may happen to them in this world, shall not frustrate their hopes of future happiness in the world to come: nor height, nor depth; that is, neither height of honor, nor depth of ignominy; neither the top of worldly advancement, nor the bottom of wordly debasement, neither the height of spiritual enlargement, nor the depth of spiritual desertsions. God can and will keep his saints in an honorable, in a comfortable, yea, in a safe state and condition all at once: nor any other creature; that is, if there be any other creature not comprehended, or comprised in the foregoing enumeration, whatever it be, it must fall under the rank and domination of creatures; and no creature either in heaven, or in earth, or in hell, shall separate Christ and us. Learn hence, That it is a matter of unutterable consolation, and inexpressible triumph to believers, that nothing, though never so great and powerful, though never so amiable or terrible, shall be able to separate them from the love of their Saviour. Blessed be God, for standing in Christ is not so lubricious and slippery as it was in Adam: he might stand or might fall; the believer shall stand, the root bears up the branches; we shall be kept by the mighty power of God, with the concurrence of our own careful and continual endeavours, through faith unto salvation. Observe, 3. The full assurance which the apostle had of the stability of a believer's estate, *I am persuaded*, or *I am fully assured*; but how so? Not by extraordinary and special revelation, not by rapture into heaven; not by the apparition of an angel to him: but his assurance is built on that which is common to all believers: namely, the same spirit of faith, and the same love of God shed abroad in the hearts of all believers. Observe, 4. How the apostle having spoken in his own person in the former verse, saying, *I am persuaded*, changes the number in the last verse: nothing shall separate *us* not *me*. Where note, How he associates himself with all true believers in the participation of this privilege; they have all an interest in the same love of God, the same promises of salvation, and have felt the sanctifying work of the same spirit. It is impossible that God should retract his merciful purpose to save believers; he that chose them from eternity, from before all time, and gave his Son to suffer death for them in the fulness of time, will persevere in his purpose; namely, by grace to bring them to glory. He whose grace prevented them when they were in their pollutions, in a state of enmity, yea, in a state of obstinacy, will he leave them after his image is engraven, and reinstamped upon them? He that united them to Christ when they were strangers, will not cast them out of his love, now they are his members; their intercessor will preserve*

them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his Father's glory with exceeding joy. God's love unto his children is everlasting, and the covenant that is built upon it, is more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth: well might the apostle, then say, nothing shall separate *us* from the love of God. Observe, 5. and lastly, the ground of this love's permanency and duration towards believers; it is the love of God in Christ Jesus that is vouchsafed to us for the sake of Christ Jesus: God looks upon Christ, and loves him, and them in him; he loves all that are members of him, and all that are like unto him. Oh blessed Jesus! it is for thy sake that the Father smiles upon us; we are chosen in thee, justified through thee, sanctified by thee, and shall be eternally glorified with thee; "for neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature whatsoever, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eternal thanks to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the consolation that flows from hence! May so high and glorious a privilege oblige all that are interested in it, to the exercise of universal holiness, remembering that as the privileges of the gospel are glorious and great, so the duties it requires are exact and strict. If we would enjoy the consolation in the last verse of this chapter (here dilated upon) we must perform the duty in the first verse, (there insisted upon) namely, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; otherwise the privilege of non-condemnation there, and of no separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus here, will neither belong unto us, or ever be enjoyed and improved by us.

CHAPTER IX.

Our apostle, in this and the two following chapters labors mightily to convince his countrymen the Jews, of their obstinacy against God, in rejecting his counsel concerning their justification by faith in Christ: and that this obstinacy of theirs was the certain cause of their rejection, or casting out of the favor of God, and of the calling of the Gentiles, that is, of investing the Gentiles with the privileges of the abdicated Jews. And because he foresaw that this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles, would be looked upon as a hard saying, and be marvellously offensive and displeasing, he begins this chapter with a most solemn protestation, that what he said did not proceed from the least disaffection towards them, much less from an exulcerated prejudice against them; but calls Christ and the Holy Ghost to witness, that he spake the truth impartially, and did not lie. For thus he says:

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;

Observe here, 1. The apostle's solemn asseveration or oath; he calls Christ and the Holy Ghost to witness for the truth of what he says, which is the very formality of an oath. Learn thence, That it is not barely lawful, but in some cases expedient and necessary to assert and confirm by oath the truth and certainty of what we speak; in cases of great moment, which cannot otherwise be sufficiently confirmed, a christian may establish his saying by an oath. Observe, 2. The persons whom the apostle swears by, *Christ and the Holy Ghost*; he calls them to be witness of the sincerity of his conscience in what he doth assert: *I say the truth in Christ, &c.* But why doth the apostle swear by the name of Christ, and not rather by the name of God, seeing the Jews did not believe his divinity, and so were not like to give any whit the more credit to what was attested by him? *I answer,* Probably to assert the Godhead of Christ, which the Jews generally denied, and therefore wanted that honor which was and is due unto it. None but God was to be sworn by: the apostle swearing by Christ, proves him to be truly and really God; as also the Holy Ghost: for an oath being an act of religious worship, and the apostle swearing by Christ and the Holy Ghost, doth thereby acknowledge their divinity, according to the words of Moses in Deut. vi. 13. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." Observe, 3. As the apostle appeals to Christ and the Holy Ghost, so also to his own conscience, as the avoucher and witness of the truth of what he says *My conscience also bearing me witness.* Learn thence, That God has placed a conscience in every man, whose office it is to bear witness of all his words and actions; yea, of all his thoughts and inward affections. Conscience is God's register, to record whatever we think, speak, or act; and happy he whose conscience bears witness for him, and doth not testify against him; who can say with the apostle here, "My conscience beareth me witness, that I lie not, but say the truth in Christ."

2 That I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart.

The original word signifies such sorrow as is found with women in travail; a sorrow continually affecting his heart, and afflicting his spirit, for his countrymen and kinsmen the Jews, upon the account of their obstinate infidelity, obduration of heart, and spirit of slumber which was fallen upon them, which had provoked God to resolve to cast them off, to reject their nation, and to scatter them up and down throughout the world. Behold here, 1. What are the dismal effects and dreadful consequences of obstinate unbelief, under the offers of Christ tendered to persons in and by the dispensation of the gospel, without timely repentance; the issue will be final rejection, inevitable condemnation, and unutterable. Behold, 2. The true spirit of christianity; it puts men upon mourning for the sins and calamities of others in a very sensible and affectionate manner. Good men ever have been, and are men of tender and compassionate dispositions; a stoical apathy, an indolency of heart, or want of natural affection, is so far from being a virtue, or matter of just condemnation unto any man, that the deepest sorrow and heaviness of soul, in some cases, well becomes persons of the greatest piety and wisdom. Learn, 3. That great sorrow and continual heaviness of heart for the miseries of others, whether imminent or incumbent, but especially for

the sins of others, is an undoubted argument, sign, and evidence of a strong and vehement love toward them. The apostle's great heaviness and continual sorrow for the Jews, his brethren, was a great instance and evidence of his unfeigned love and affection to them.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh :

That is, "So great is my concern for the salvation of my brethren the Jews, that I could undergo the greatest misery and evil that can befall myself, to prevent their destruction." This wish of St. Paul is plainly an hyperbolical expression of his great affection to his countrymen the Jews, and his zeal for their salvation, which was so intense and vehement, that were a thing reasonable and lawful, were it proper, and could avail to the procuring their salvation, he could have wished the greatest evil to himself; for their sakes, not only to be excommunicated from communion with the church of Christ, but to be separated from Christ himself. If it be said, that such a wish is sinful and unnatural, to desire the salvation of others, with our own damnation; *I answer,* true: and therefore the apostle's words are not an absolute and positive wish; he doth not say, *I wish*; but *I could wish*; just as we are wont to say, when we would express a thing to the height, which is not fit nor intended to be done by us; "I could wish so or so: I could even be content to do this or that." Which kind of expression no man takes for a strict and precise declaration of our minds, but for figurative expressions of a very great and vehement passion. Thus here, the apostle says not, *I wish*, but *I could even wish*. Were it proper to make such a wish, I could even wish so great a blessing to my brethren, though with the loss of my own happiness. Hence learn, 1. That it is neither lawful nor reasonable for any man to renounce his own eternal salvation, and to be willing to be damned upon any account whatever, be it for the good of the brethren, or for the glory of God himself. The very thought of such a thing is enough to make human nature tremble at its very foundation: for the desire of our own happiness is the deepest principle that God has planted in our natures: and to pretend a reason from the glory of God, is impossible; because our damnation cannot make for the glory of God, unless by our own impenitency and wilful obstinacy, we have deserved damnation. Learn, 2. That such may be the ardency of a saint's affection towards others, and so fervent his desires for their conversion and salvation, that he may be willing to sacrifice himself, and all that is dear unto him in this world, for the accomplishing of that end: "I could wish I were accursed from Christ for my brethren, &c."

4 Who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Our apostle, to vindicate himself for bearing such a passionate affection to the Jews, and for being so highly con-

cerned for their eternal welfare, doth, in these two verses, recount and sum up the high privileges and prerogatives belonging to the Jews above any other nation under heaven; namely, these, they were Israelites, that is the seed and posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; *To whom pertaineth the adoption*; that is, national adoption, not personal; God adopting the nation of the Jews to be an holy people to himself, and calling them his sons and his firstborn: *And the glory*; that is, the glorious presence of God among them, the temple, the ark, but particularly the Shechinah, or divine presence, from between the cherubims: *And the covenants*; that is, the covenant made with Abraham and Moses, the old and new covenant. Jer. xxxi. 32. *And the giving of the law*; it was the prerogative of this people, that all their laws, ceremonial, judicial, and moral, were composed and delivered to them by God himself. *And the service of God*; that is, they only had the true worship of God amongst them, and no other nation could have the like, but by being a debtor unto them for it: *And the promises*; that is, in general, all the blessings promised to them in the land of Canaan; and, in particular, the promise of the Messiah, or God's gracious purpose and intention to send his Son into the world, to accomplish its redemption: *Whose are the fathers*; that is, the beloved fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were their ancestors, and they their offspring: *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*; that is, of which Israelites Christ came; the promised Messias according to the flesh, or human nature, was their offspring, even he, who, according to his divine nature, *was over all, God blessed for evermore*. Note here, 1. How the apostle reserves the greatest privilege for the last: Christ's being born one of their nation, and according to the flesh, descended from the Jewish stock, this was the topping privilege. Note, 2. That this restrictive clause, *according to the flesh*, plainly supposeth another nature in Christ, according to which he came not from the Israelites, which can be no other but the divine nature or God-head, which, in the following words, is attributed to him: *Who is over all, God blessed for evermore*. Which glorious title given to Christ, as it highly exalts the prerogative of the Jews, as being a people of whom so blessed and great a person descended; so, on the other hand, it aggravates their sin and condemnation, in rejecting a person of such infinite worth and dignity, notwithstanding he descended from them. Now from the whole, learn, 1. That a fulness or richness of instituted means of grace, for the true knowledge and worship of God, is matter of high dignation and gracious condescension from God to man: here the *glory*, the *covenants*, the *service of God*, &c. are numbered amongst the great and gracious respects vouchsafed by God to the Jews. Learn, 2. That the highest privileges and vouchsafements from God may be conferred upon a people who are neither pleasing to God nor accepted with him: such were the Jews, to whom the forementioned privileges did belong, a people rejected by God for their obduracy and unbelief. Learn, 3. That it is no small honor to be of the race or kindred of such as have been holy saints and faithful servants of the most high and holy God: the Jews here were very honorable, as they were the seed of Abraham; but much more so, had they trod in the steps, and done the works of their father Abraham. Learn, 4. That Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, was yet according to his divine nature, *Lord over all, God blessed for evermore*: He is over all, that is, over all things, and over all

persons: and he is blessed for evermore, which is the constant title given to him that is God, and to none but him. The Socinians, to avoid the force of this text, which fully proves the divinity of Christ, turn the words into a thanksgiving for Christ, and read them thus: of whom Christ was, according to the flesh: *God who is over all, be blessed for ever*. A manifest perversion of the sense of the apostle's words, which was to show, that according to the flesh he descended from Abraham; but that he had another nature, which was not derived from Abraham, even a divine nature, which was not derived from Abraham, even a divine nature, according to which he was over all, God blessed for evermore.

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7 Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9 For this is the word of promise: At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son,

Here the apostle answers an objection against the rejection of the Jews: "if they be cast off by God, what will become of the promise of God made to Abraham? saying, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*." He answers, by distinguishing a two-fold seed that Abraham had: some were only his carnal seed, or the children of his flesh; others were his spiritual seed, or the children of his faith. Now the carnal seed of Abraham, born according to the course of nature, were not the children of God, to whom the promise was made, but the children represented by Isaac, born by the supernatural power of the Spirit of God; these are to be accounted the true seed of Abraham, mentioned in the covenant, when God says, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed*. So that the force of the apostle's argument lies thus: The rejection of such Jews, or such of Abraham's seed only who were so according to the flesh, cannot make the word or promise of God to Abraham and his seed of no effect, because he made no absolute promise to them as such. But, says the apostle, none of those Jews, whose rejection I speak of, have any such promise made to them; therefore the rejection of some of Abraham's natural seed doth not, cannot made void the word and promise of God. Learn hence, 1. That the promises of God to his children and people, are firm and stable; they shall not be made void, but be accomplished and made good to those that have a title to them, and interest in them, and fulfil the conditions of them: *Not as though the word or promise of God has taken no effect: All are not Israel that are of Israel*. Learn thence, 2. That as all were not true Israelites of old that did bear the name of Israelites; so all are not true Christians at this day, who take upon them the name of Christ, and bear the name of Christians. Learn, 3. That men are very prone to bear up themselves upon the piety of their ancestors, though strangers, in practice, to their piety; as

the Jews boasted they were the seed of Abraham, but did not the works of Abraham; whereas men are so far from being God's children, because they had godly parents, that Christ told the Jews, who came forth out of Abraham's own loins, that they were of their father the devil. John viii. 44.

10 And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac:

11 (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.)

12 It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger.

13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, proved, from what was done in Abraham's family, that it was the purpose and pleasure of God to account only those for Abraham's seed who were the children of his faith, and to reject the rest for their unbelief; in these verses he prosecutes the same argument, by insisting upon another special dispensation of God in the family of Isaac, whose wife Rebecca had twins, namely, Jacob and Esau, and had neither of them any thing in them to move God to love the one, and dislike the other: Yet a reference was given to the one, before the other: so that the apostle's argument runs thus: "As Jacob and Esau were begotten of the same father, born of the same mother, lay together in the same womb, and had neither of them done any thing at all to oblige or disoblige Almighty God; yet he was pleased to make a difference between them and their posterity after them, giving the beloved Canaan to Jacob and his seed, which by birth-right belonged to Esau and his offspring: so in like manner is it the will and pleasure of God, that the believing Gentiles should become heirs of the promise by faith in Christ, and that the unbelieving Jews should be rejected and cast off for their infidelity." Learn hence, 1. That Almighty God chooses persons to the participation of divine favors. Learn, 2. That the choice which God makes of men to the enjoyment of that special favor of being his peculiar people, is not according to their external privileges or works, but according to his own free pleasure. Learn, 3. That as Jacob's and Esau's being unborn, and having done neither good nor evil, is used as an argument to prove, that the choice of the one before the other could not be of works; so it is a strong argument against the pre-existence of souls, and their being sent unto bodies by way of punishment for former sins: for upon that supposition, it could not be true, that the children had done neither good nor evil before they were born, seeing they might both have sinned in that state of pre-existence. Learn, 4. and observe, that the apostle doth not say, that before the children had done either good or evil, God said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau hated, but only, *the elder shall serve the younger*. Hated here may be taken two ways, either, 1.

For a less degree of love. God preferring the seed of Jacob before the posterity of Esau, giving the former the good land of Canaan, to the latter the barren mountain of Seir. Or, 2. If hatred be taken in its strictest sense, then God is said to hate Esau, that is, the Edomites, after their wicked and unnatural behaviour toward their brethren the Israelites: and upon that occasion, see Obadiah, ver. 10. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." Nothing renders a person the object of God's hatred but sin: he doth not hate the devil himself as he is his creature, but only as he is a sinner. God adjudges none to eternal perdition, but with respect to sin. Observe, 5. That Jacob and Esau are not here to be considered personally, but collectively; for the Israelites that descended from Jacob, and for the Edomites which sprang from Esau; for Esau in his own person did not serve Jacob, but the Edomites did serve the Israelites. Thus *the elder did serve the younger*. Again, it appears, that Job and all his friends were of the posterity of Esau: God did not then hate the person, or all the posterity of Esau, but only those of them who by their violence and wickedness rendered themselves the object of his hatred.

14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

The apostle having by the two foregoing instances asserted his doctrine, concerning the purpose and decree of God to justify those that should believe in his Son, be they Gentiles or Jews; and consequently made it good, that no word or promise of God falls to the ground by the rejection of the unbelieving Jews; proceeds in this verse to demonstrate the righteousness of God in the execution of this his purpose. *Is there then*, says he, *unrighteousness or injustice with God? God forbid*. As if the apostle had said, "Is there any cause to say, that God who preferred the posterity of Isaac before that of Ishmael, and the seed of Jacob before the numerous offspring of Esau; is there any just reason to say, that God is now unjust in calling the Gentiles, and upon their faith owning them for his people, the spiritual seed of Abraham, and rejecting the Jews because of their unbelief? God forbid that we should accuse him of unrighteous dealings upon this account." Learn hence, That God is just, infallibly and inflexibly just and righteous in all his dealings with, and dispensations towards the children of men: is there unrighteousness with God? That is there is none, there can be none. Learn, 2. That all such tenets or doctrines which reflect any manner of unrighteousness upon God, or charge him with hard dealing, ought to be disclaimed with the utmost abhorrence and detestation: "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Observe next, How the apostle proves that there is no unrighteousness in this dispensation of God, in rejecting the Jews, and calling the Gentiles, because he had said to Moses, he would show mercy, where, when, and to whom, or to what people he pleased. If therefore, upon the infidelity of the Jews, he will call the idolatrous Gentiles, and receive them to be his people, who can accuse him with any injustice upon that

account? Shall not Almighty God dispense his favors where, and upon whom he pleases? May he not confer his kindness upon some, which he owes to none? Learn hence, That God is absolutely and ultimately resolved to follow the counsel of his own will, in and about the justification of sinners; and whatsoever he doth, or resolves to do, his will being the rule of righteousness, is for that reason exactly just and undeniably righteous.

16 So then *it is not of him that willeth, nor, of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*

As if the apostle had said, "That the foregoing instances abundantly show, *that it is not of him that willeth*; for Abraham willed that Ishmael might live to be a partaker of the blessing promised to his seed, when he said, Gen. xvii. 18. *Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!* Nor is it of him that runneth: for even Esau ran to fetch venison for his father, that he might receive the blessing, Gen. xxi. the wisdom of God saw fit to have it otherwise, and to confer the blessing upon Jacob! but it is of God that showeth mercy, that any one is chosen to be the seed to which the promise made to Abraham belongs, and so to be his church and people." Learn hence, That it is of God's mere grace and mercy, that any sinners are called and admitted to the privilege of justification and adoption, upon any terms and conditions whatsoever. The reason why the sinful and unworthy Gentiles were called to be a people, who were not a people, while the Jews were left out, and cast off for their obstinate unbelief, was not because the Gentiles were either more worthy or more willing, but from God's discriminating grace and mercy: "It is not of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy."

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

Our apostle here proceeds to remove another objection, namely, the seeming injustice, or severity of rejecting the Jews, and reserving them to wrath, giving them up to an obdurate heart, because they would not accept of the way which the wisdom of God had appointed for their justification; namely faith in his Son Jesus Christ. This he clears by another instance: to wit, that of Pharaoh, who had so often hardened his own heart obstinately, and provoked God at last to harden him judicially. *For this cause says God, have I raised thee up*: in the original it is, *I have made thee to stand*; that is, "I have sustained thee, and kept thee alive, when thou deservedst, and mightest justly have expected to be cut off by the several plagues inflicted on thee, for thy obstinate hardness of heart, *That I might show my power in thee, &c.* Or, I have patiently borne thy stubbornness for a long time, that my power and justice might more illustriously appear at last in that conspicuous judgment, which I will execute upon thee in the sight of all the nations of the earth." Learn hence, That some sinners, whom the patience of God has long waited upon, are preserved of him, and raised out of great and imminent dangers by him for this end; namely, to make them examples of his just indigna-

tion against stubborn and obdurate rebels, and that in the most illustrious and signal manner. *For this cause have I raised thee up, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

As if he had said, "From these scripture instances, we may gather and conclude, that God may, without the least injustice, magnify his mercy, in sparing and pardoning some sinners, and render his justice glorious in punishing others; yes, in punishing sin with sin, hardening them judicially, who had hardened themselves obstinately." Here observe, That God did not harden Pharaoh's heart by any positive act or influx upon it, by infusing any evil into it, for this would make God the author of sin; but he was hardened by way of judiciary tradition, after he had long hardened himself. First he was delivered up into the hands of satan, who deluded him by the magicians counterfeiting the same miracle that Moses wrought; and this hardened him against the belief of any thing that Moses either did or said. Secondly, He was delivered up to his own lusts, particularly, idolatry, ambition, and covetousness, and these hardened Pharaoh's heart. As an idolater, he was loath to receive a message from the God of Israel, whom he knew not; "Who is the Lord," says he, "that I should obey him?" I know not the Lord." As an ambitious prince, it went to his very heart, to hear so mean a man as Moses control him in his own dominions, saying, "Let the people go, that they may serve the Lord." This enraged him, to hear of any Lord over that people but himself; and as a covetous man he was loath to hear of parting with a people, by whose pains, in making brick, he had so great an income. Thus Pharaoh's affected hardness, was followed with inflicted hardness. Learn hence, That God doth justly deliver that man up to hardness of heart, by way of punishment; who has often hardened his own heart against God by repeated acts of sin.

*Iuste toties cor ejus obduratur in pœnam,
Quoties ipse cor suum obduravit inculpam.*

Lightfoot.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

Here the apostle brings in the unbelieving and rejected Jews making an objection against God: "if the case be thus, that God doth sometimes, and that justly, leave obdurate sinners to harden themselves, why is he offended at it, and

complains of it? If God hardeneth us because he will, why doth he find fault with us for our hardness of heart? For who hath at any time resisted his will? How is it in our power to avoid being hardened, if it be his will that we should be hardened?" Learn hence, That guilty sinners are full of hard thoughts of God, and very prone to think the divine dispensations unreasonable, if not unrighteous; but upon false and mistaken grounds; "Why doth he find fault? Who hath resisted his will?" To this objection, the apostle returns a very smart answer, saying, "Who art thou, Oh man, that repliest against God? Shall, &c." In which answer, Observe, 1. A vehement obijuration or reproof. 2. A substantial vindication of the righteousness and wisdom of God, in his proceedings with men. Note, 1. The obijuration or reproof drawn up in an interrogative form, which argues great intendment of mind in the person speaking: *Nay, but, Oh man, who art thou?* As if the apostle had said, "What bold and unheard-of presumption is this, that man, blind and ignorant man, guilty, sinful man, obnoxious to wrath and eternal death, that he should undertake to reprove and censure, to judge and condemn the actions and dispensations of the most high and holy God, as if they were crooked and perverse, defective either in justice or wisdom!" Learn hence, That it is no less than horrid and horrible presumption, for so weak, sinful and worthless a creature as man is, to contest or dispute with the most high God about the wisdom or righteousness of any of his ways: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Note, 2. How the apostle vindicates the wisdom and righteousness of God in his proceedings with men in general and against the Jews in particular; showing, That there is no more cause to make this objection against God for rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and showing favor to the believing Gentiles, than for the potter to contend with him that formed it, why he made it of such a shape, and not of another figure; or for the clay, when it is marred and broken, to complain of the potter, for making of one part of it a vessel unto honor, and the other unto dishonor. Learn hence, That men, who have made themselves obnoxious to the justice of God, by a long continued course in sin and disobedience against God, (as the unbelieving Jews here spoken of evidently did) have no cause to complain, either of God's severe proceedings against themselves, or of his favorable dispensations towards others. What just cause had the Jews, rejected for their own unbelief and hardness of heart, to murmur against God for showing mercy to the Gentiles, who submitted to the terms of mercy?

22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

presently punish the obstinate and unbelieving Jews according to their desert, but beareth with them, and exercises forbearance towards them, and they go on, by their continual rebellions to make themselves fit objects of his wrath: but he is pleased still, with great gentleness and patience, to bear with them, as he did with Pharaoh; and if, after all, they be more hardened, as he was by God's forbearance, what show of injustice, I pray, is it, if he punishes them at last with greater severity, as God did him? If he swallow up their nation, destroy their temple, ruin their city, what injustice is it to destroy those, who, by making themselves objects of God's wrath, are fitted for destruction?" Here note, That the *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, are such as the apostle saith, *God endured with much long-suffering*; and therefore, they were not made vessels of wrath by God, but by themselves; after they had filled up the measure of their sin, and thereby fitted themselves as vessels for destruction. God endured them with much long-suffering, though judgment at last took hold upon them to the uttermost. Learn hence, That Almighty God may, without the least suspicion of injustice or unrighteousness, punish, with the utmost severity, such a person or a people, whom he hath long endured, with much forbearance, to go on in a course of sinning, if at last they repent not. This was the manner of God's dealing with the Jews here. His lenity towards the Gentiles is next expressed, ver 22 "That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, &c." As if the apostle had said, "Can God be taxed with unrighteousness, in showing the riches of his glorious grace and mercy towards the despised Gentiles, whom he hath called to the faith of Christ, and thereby fitted and prepared them to be vessels of mercy? Hath he not just right to show his mercy to such persons who have submitted to the terms upon which he has promised favor and acceptance, and to own them as his particular people, although they be not the natural seed of Abraham, seeing they are his spiritual? Note here, That as the unbelieving Jews were called in the former verse, *Vessels of wrath*; so the believing Gentiles are called in this verse, *Vessels of mercy*; because the vessels are fitted and formed by the hand of the artificer, for the use to which they are designed, in like manner, are believers wrought by God, and framed by his Holy Spirit, and made meet to receive the mercy of God; that is, the fruits and effects of his mercy, especially, pardon of sin, and peace with God. Concerning the vessels of wrath, the apostle speaks positively, they are fitted for destruction: concerning the vessels of mercy, he speaks actively, that God has prepared them unto glory; that is, made them meet and fit by grace here, for glory hereafter. Learn thence, that the new creation of the saints, and all the spiritual workmanship that is found upon them, is to be ascribed unto God, and to the effectual working of his grace: "He hath afore prepared them unto glory." Learn, 2. That the fullest measures of glory hereafter, shall be the portion of such, and only such, as are first prepared by grace and holiness to receive them here. Learn, 3. That those only are vessels of mercy, prepared by God unto glory, who upon the evangelical call, have been prevailed with, by faith and repentance, to answer the call and command of God: "That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called.

25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call

As if the apostle had said, "What though God doth not

them my people, which were not my people : and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people* ; there shall they be called, The children of the living God.

Our apostle having hitherto vindicated the wisdom and righteousness of God, in the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles; lest the Jews should stumble and take offence at it, in these, and the following verses, he proves that the calling of the Gentiles was long before foretold, both by the prophet Hosea, and the prophet Isaiah: by the prophet Hosea, chap. ii. 22. "I will call them my people, which were not my people" And chap. i. 10. "Instead of, Ye are not my people, it shall be said, Ye are the sons of the living God" Which expressions signify and import, God's receiving the Gentiles into the church, as an act of free and undeserved mercy, whom the Jews looked upon as cast-aways, as strangers, as dogs: accounting themselves only to be of his family and household. Next, he produces the testimony of Isaiah.

27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.

28 For he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.

Here the apostle shows how the rejection of the obdurate Jews was foretold by Isaiah, as well as Hosea: that although the number of the Jews, according to the flesh, were as the sand of the sea, yet the greatest number of them would be passed by for their unbelief, and a remnant only saved. This the prophet speaks of those Jews who escaped the hand of Sennacherib; and the apostle makes the deliverance of those few, a type of them that should believe in Christ, and be saved by him. And the prophet farther adds, That God would finish his work and cut it short in righteousness; that is, God will make quick work with that incorrigible and unreclaimable people; such swift destruction shall come upon the multitude of evil-doers in the land of Israel, as shall bring them very low, cut them short, lop them off, so that they shall be left as a tree, of which only the stump remaineth. They shall be reduced to a small remnant, and a remnant only of that remnant shall be converted. Now first, From the literal import of these words, "Though Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant only shall be sav-

ed," we learn, That a numerous people or nation, among whom God hath been truly worshipped, and this for a long season, may, notwithstanding, for their wickedness, be destroyed and be reduced by God to a very small number. Secondly, From the typical import of these words, together with the apostle's scope in citing of them, we gather, that amongst those multitudes who are called by the gospel to believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, and who make a profession of his name and truth, the number of those who will be at last eternally saved, will be but comparatively small and little: *A remnant shall be saved.*

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith:

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone:

As if the apostle had said, "Lord, what shall we say to this great mystery of grace, the calling of the Gentile world, and the cutting off and casting away most of the present Jewish nation? That the Gentiles who lived in ignorance and blindness, in sin and unrighteousness, should attain to righteousness by faith in Christ; and that the Israelites, who had God's own righteous law amongst them, and trusted to be justified by the observation of it, yet should not attain to that righteousness which God accepteth. And wherefore have they not attained it? but because they sought not justification by that faith which God prescribed for that end, namely, faith in the Mediator; but thought it must be attained by the works of the law, keeping all the ceremonial precepts, by which no flesh can be justified; and the reason why they sought it not by faith was this, *They stumbled at the stumbling-stone*; that is, at the Lord Jesus Christ, taking offence at his poverty and mean condition in the world, and at the spirituality of his kingdom." Learn hence, That the great humiliation of Christ in the days of his flesh, did prove a snare and occasion to many persons to despise and reject him, to stumble at him, and fall foul upon him. But in what respects is Christ called a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. *Ans.* Negatively; not because he was by God designed either intentionally, or accidentally, to be such. All stumbling and offence taken at Christ are accidental, proceeding from the depravity of man, not from the design of God. Much less were the Jews fore-appointed and ordained by God to stumble at his Son; for God appoints no man to do that which he prohibits all men from doing. And as no man is necessitated by the decree of God, so neither is he constrained or necessitated by satan, by corruption, or any other instrument, to stumble or take offence at Christ; for actions necessitated upon men are neither demeritorious nor punishable. But positively Christ is called a stone of

stumbling, because men willingly ignorant, and wilfully perverse, do take offence at him. Though God never designed or desired any man's stumbling at Christ, yet he knew and foresaw, that many, very many, would stumble at him; and accordingly expressed him by a prophetic character, answering the event, and predicting that which in time came to pass: *Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-block.*

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Observe here, 1. What use and office our Lord Jesus Christ is of to his church: he is a stone, a corner stone, the chief corner stone; a corner stone for strength, the chief corner stone for ornament and beauty; as the corner stone bears the weight of the building, so doth Christ bear the weight of his church, and supports all the pillars and supporters of it; yet this precious corner stone is accidentally and eventually a *stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*. Some are offended at the poverty of his person, and the meanness of his condition; others at the sublimity and sanctity of his doctrine; some are offended at his cross, others at his free grace; but such as, instead of being offended at him, do believe on him, shall never be ashamed of, or confounded by him. Learn hence, That those who, according to the direction of the gospel, do believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, shall never have cause to be ashamed. Here note, What they shall not be ashamed of, when and why they shall not be ashamed. *Answer*, He shall never be ashamed of his choice; he shall not be ashamed of his profession; he shall never be ashamed of the cause and interest of Christ which he has owned and vindicated in the world; he shall never be ashamed of the work and service of Christ, nor of any time sincerely spent in that work and service; he shall never be ashamed of his reproaches and sufferings, tribulations and persecutions, for the sake of Christ. In a word, he shall never be ashamed hereafter, that he never was ashamed here, either of Christ and his gospel, his work and service, or his cause and interest. Note, 2. When the believer shall not be ashamed; namely, when he is called forth to bear his testimony of Christ before the world, at the hour of death and at the day of judgment; neither the dreadfulness of the day, nor the majesty of the Judge, nor the number of the accusers, nor the impartiality of the sentence, nor the separation that shall then be made, will in the least cause him to be ashamed. Note, 3. Why the believer shall never be ashamed. 1. What the sincere believer shall not be ashamed of? *Ans.* The cause of shame is removed and taken away, namely, sin; those only from whom he can reasonably fear shame, will never be ashamed of him; he can look God and Christ, his own conscience, and the whole world, in the face, without shame and blushing. Oh that sinners would now be ashamed of their unbelief! which otherwise will put them to eternal shame, and bring upon them everlasting confusion in the day of the Lord: "Whosoever believeth on him, shall never be ashamed; but he that believeth not on him, shame and the wrath of God abideth on him."

CHAPTER X.

Our apostle prosecutes in this the argument which he had begun in the former chapter, viz. The temporary rejection of his countrymen the Jews, for their obstinate refusal of the way of justification which the wisdom of God had prescribed, namely, by faith in his Son Jesus Christ; and well knowing, that what he was about to say upon that argument, would sound very harsh in their ears who were so addicted to see justification only by the works of the law, he begins this chapter, as he did the former, with a most solemn protestation of his unfeigned love unto them, and most fervent desire for their salvation; for thus he speaks:

BRETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Where observe, 1. The mighty concern which the apostle had for the eternal salvation of his countrymen the Jews, who sought his destruction; their salvation lay very near his heart, and he was afraid they should miss it, by taking the wrong way for obtaining it, but by building all their hopes of salvation upon such a bottom as would never bear the fabric, but utterly fail them, namely, justification by works. Observe, 2. What it was that made the apostle so concerned for the Jews: it was not upon the account of their wicked lives and scandalous immoralities, but for their bad principles and fundamental errors. They opposed the honor of God to the Son of God, and the observation of the law to the faith of Christ. From whence learn, That we ought to be concerned for those who lie under damnable errors, although they be men of good carriage and commendable conversation. Not only the vicious and ungodly, but the erroneous and unsound, are to be the objects of our pity and prayer: for error is as damnable as vice; the one is an open road, the other a by-path to hell and destruction; and accordingly he that has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles, as of debauched practices.

2 For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

As if the apostle had said, "I can bear them witness that many, very many of the Jews, have a zealous desire in their way to please God, and do what is acceptable in his sight; but though it be warm, it is but a blind zeal, and not according to right knowledge." Here observe, 1. The apostle is desirous to say the best he could of his countrymen the Jews; he commends the good meaning of their zeal, but blames the ill conduct of it. It was a misguided and mistaken zeal, and not directed as it ought. Zeal is either one of the best or worst things in the world: it is a good thing, when it is right in its object, right in the measure and degree, and pur-

sued by right means. As to the object of our zeal, it must be that which is certainly good, and considerably good : certainly good, or else we are zealous for we know not what ; and considerably good, or else it doth not deserve our zeal. To be zealous and hot beyond all due measures for the observation of a ceremony or custom, as some in the christian church were of old about the observation of Easter, is certainly a zeal not according to knowledge. Again, zeal must be prosecuted by lawful and warrantable means ; we must not from a principle of zeal do any evil, that good may come. But there is a zeal amongst the church of Rome, which I am sure cannot be according to knowledge, and that is a zeal for ignorance. This is a zeal peculiar to themselves ; they will not allow the people to understand what they do in the service of God ; they require them to pray, but will not let them know what they pray for ; and all this under a pretence, that ignorance, which makes a man a block, is the mother of devotion ; as if the less men understand the service of God, the better he was pleased with it, and the more they were edified by it.

3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

That is, the Jews being ignorant of God's way of justification by faith in Christ, discovered in the gospel, and relying upon, and trusting to their own works, their obedience to the ceremonial and moral law, to justify and save them, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ; that is, to the way and method which the wisdom of God has discovered for the justification of a sinner by the blood of his Son. Observe here, 1. That by God's righteousness we are to understand that righteousness which Christ has wrought for us, which God bestows upon us, and the gospel reveals unto us : by establishing their own righteousness, it is to be understood their resolution and endeavour to depend upon their own works ; their obedience to the law for their justification before God, in opposition against, and in contradiction to, that way of justification which God had declared ; namely, by faith in Christ Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Observe, 2. That upon the first opening of the gospel, no evangelical doctrine was more disrelished by the Jews than justification by the righteousness of Christ. They were possessed with this principle then, that eternal life was attainable only by the works of the law : and according to the example of the Jews at the beginning, persons ever since, even to this very day, are fond of that way of justification. The natural man is a proud man, he likes to live upon his own stock, he cannot stoop to a sincere and universal renunciation of his own righteousness, and to depend wholly upon the righteousness of another. It is natural for a man to choose rather to eat a brown crust, or wear a coarse garment, which he calls his own, than to feed upon the richest dainties, or wear the costliest robes, which he must receive as an alms from another. Lord, how hard is it to subdue this pride of spirit, and to be thoroughly convinced of the absolute necessity of another and a better righteousness than our own, to constitute us righteous in the

sight of God ? From the whole, learn, 1. How dark sighted the wisest men are by nature in God's way of justifying and saving sinners ; *ignorant of God's righteousness*, that is, of the way which the wisdom of God has discovered for justifying guilty sinners by faith in his Son. This is known only by divine revelation, Rom. i. 17. "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith : it is purely an object of faith, and hangs all upon divine revelation, both as to the righteousness itself, and the manner of imparting it. Learn, 2. How absurd is the attempt and how injurious the design, to set up and establish a righteousness of our own, either in opposition to, or in conjunction with, the righteousness of God. Alas ! we fulfil the law only in sincerity, we cannot fulfil it to perfection ; and if it be not to perfection, cannot be to justification. Therefore, to trust to any righteousness of our own for justification before God, which is imperfect and polluted, is both sinful and unsafe. Sinful because it is confronting the plain declarations of the gospel ; and unsafe, because it evacuates Christ : for Christ is of no effect unto us ; whosoever are justified by the law, are fallen from grace, Gal. v. 4. Learn, 3. What an hindrance is pride to the salvation of men : it stiffens the will that it won't stoop to God's terms : they will not have justification in God's way, and they shall not have it in their own. Here it stuck with the Jews ; they would not submit to the righteousness of God ; and here it sticks with too many at this day. Learn, 4. Not to count a righteousness of your own needless to be possessed of, because you want the righteousness of another to confide and trust in. We plead the meritorious righteousness of Christ, to answer the demands of the law ; but contend for a personal righteousness of our own, to answer the commands of the gospel. Christ doth indeed ease us of the load of our sins, but not discharge us from the care of our duty. Our being in Christ frees us indeed from condemnation, but then that inbeing must be proved by our holy walking : not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Rom. 5. 1. Learn, 5. To submit to the righteousness of God as ever you would enjoy peace with God. The more holy we are, and the more sanctified we grow, the meaner opinion we shall have of ourselves, and the more need of a Saviour, and of justification by him ; and shall bless God for the gospel, in which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith ; and shall dread it as hell to be found amongst the number of those who, though they be not ignorant of God's righteousness, yet will go about to establish their own righteousness, refusing to submit to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

There was a threefold law of God, which Christ may be said to be the end of ; namely, judicial, ceremonial, and moral. 1. The judicial law was that which God by Moses delivered to the Jews, containing directions for the administration of their civil government. Now Christ was the end of this law, as he has abolished it : for the Jewish polity was to continue till the coming of the Messiah, and not longer, Gen. xlix. Dan. ix. 2. The ceremonial law was that which did prescribe certain sacred rights and ceremonies, to be observed in the external worship of God by the people of Israel. The former law had relation to them as

a nation, this as they were a church. Now Christ is the end of this law, as he has abrogated it. All the ceremonies of that law were shadows and types of Christ; now the shadows were to cease, when once the substance was come. 3. The moral law is that holy and eternal rule of righteousness given by God to men, for the right ordering of their thoughts, words, and actions towards God, their neighbour, and themselves. This law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, and is called *the law of righteousness*; Rom. ix. 31. *the royal law*, by St. James, chap. ii. 8. Now Christ may be said to be the end of this law, 1. As he is the scope of it. 2. As he is the accomplishment of it. The precepts of the law point at Christ, as he by whom they are accomplished; the promises of the law point at him, as he by whom they are ratified; and the threatenings of the law may be said to point at him, as he by whom they are escaped. Christ was the sum of the law as well as the substance of the gospel. In a word, 3. Christ is the end of this law, inasmuch as he is to a believer, what the law would have been unto him if he could have perfectly kept it; namely, righteousness and life, justification and salvation. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to be imputed to every one that believeth in him, the law being our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, Gal. iii. 25.

5 For Moses described the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things, shall live by them.

As if the apostle had said, "Righteousness by faith can never be obtained by the works of the law, because Moses describeth the righteousness of the law thus, That the man that doeth these things shall live by them; that is, a prosperous and happy life in the land of Canaan, say some; and eternal life in heaven, say others." But then by the law must be understood the moral, not the ceremonial law, according to that of our Saviour, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" that is, the moral law. This do, and thou shalt live. Where note, That such as seek justification and salvation by the works of the law, must keep the moral law perfectly and exactly; which being impossible to man in his fallen estate, Christ has obtained of his Father, that for the sake of his righteousness, our sincere, though imperfect obedience, should find acceptance with God, and be available to salvation.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise; Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead:)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach;

In which words the apostle seems to set forth the great anxiety and trouble of mind which is found with an awakened sinner: he is at a loss to find out the way how he shall stand justified in the sight of God. The law propounds to him life, but it is upon an impossible condition; but the gospel clearly reveals to him, that Christ has performed what is necessary for his justification, and that, by a practical and lively faith, he shall have an interest in it. We need not therefore say, "Who shall ascend into heaven for us?" for Christ being ascended, he hath given us a convincing proof, that the propitiation for our sins is perfect: for otherwise our surety had not been received into God's sanctuary: therefore to be under perplexities how we may be justified, is to deny the value of his righteousness, and the truth of his ascension. And say not, "Who shall descend into the deep?" that is, to bear the torments of hell, and expiate sin; for this is to deny the virtue of his death, whereby he appeased God, and redeemed us from wrath to come. In the *law*, the condemning righteousness of God is made visible: in the gospel, his justifying righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. Eternally magnified be omnipotent love, that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has graciously discovered how God may show mercy to repenting and returning sinners, without any prejudice or injury done to his justice. Hereby the soul is at once freed from the fear of God's wrath and anger, and has a lively hope of his love and favor. Lord, what sins are there which so entire a satisfaction doth not expiate? What torments can they deserve, which his wounds and stripes have not removed? God is just as well as merciful, in justifying him that believeth on Jesus. From the whole, note, That the way of acceptance with God, is so clearly stated and discovered in the gospel, that we need not be in any doubtful suspense where to find it, or seek other satisfaction than God has given us in his word. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart; that word of faith which we preach."

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Observe here, The two great and principal things which the gospel requires, in order to our justification and salvation. The first is, "Confession of Christ with our mouth;" that is, in all times of danger, particularly in a time of persecution, to own Christ Jesus our Lord, and to declare that we will serve him, and adhere to him, be ruled of him, and expect only to be saved by him. The second is, "to believe in our hearts, that God hath raised Christ from the dead." But why is the article of Christ's resurrection only named, seeing faith respects his birth, life, and death, &c. *Ans.* Because this article of the resurrection pre-supposeth all the rest of the antecedents to it, and consequents of it; as, namely, his incarnation, death and passion, ascension and intercession. This article therefore of the resurrection is put for all the rest, and includes all the rest; for as he could not have

risen, had he not first died; so his death had availed us nothing, unless he had risen again. Learn hence, 1. That all those who would be accepted with God unto righteousness and life, must be such as do believe in Christ with the heart, and openly confess with the mouth, that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world: "if thou confess and believe, thou shalt be saved." Learn, 2. That the principal seat and subject of faith is not the understanding barely, but the will, called here the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" not the head. Although knowledge is so necessary to faith, that it is sometimes put for faith, as in Isa. liii. "By his knowledge, or by the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servants justify many;" yet there may be much light in the understanding, where there is no life in the will; much knowledge in the head, where there is no faith in the heart, nor obedience in the life. Therefore, says the apostle here, "with the heart man believeth, &c."

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Observe here, How the apostle proclaims Jesus Christ a common and universal Saviour of all mankind who believe in him, without any discrimination or difference between Jew and Gentile: "Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed; and whosoever shall call upon his name, shall be saved." Where, by believing on him, and calling upon him, must be understood such a faith in him, as is the parent and principle of obedience to him. For the devil himself may as well pass for a believer, as a disobedient soul. If our works be no better than the works of devils, our faith is no better than theirs neither, in the account of God. He believes, so as not to be ashamed, who lives as he doth believe. In vain is it to expect salvation by Christ, if we do not yield subjection to him. Lord, how many are there that desire thou shouldst suffer for their sins, so they may have the satisfaction to commit them: content that thou shouldst bear the blame, so they may have the liberty to commit the faults? If they may but live in their sins, they take it kindly that Christ will die for them; but the design of Christ's death was to deliver us not only from the danger, but from the dominion of our sins; to free us not only from the wrath of God, but from the rage of our lusts.

14 How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the

gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

The scope of the apostle in these words is to prove, that there was a necessity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, in order to their believing on Christ; and his way of arguing is very forcible, demonstrative, and convincing. Thus, "God has by the prophets promised salvation to the Gentiles: but without calling on him, there is no salvation; and without faith, there is no calling upon him by prayer; and without hearing, there is no faith; and without a preacher, there is no hearing; and without solemn mission, or sending by Christ and his ministers, there can be no preacher." And the apostle's manner of speaking is by way of interrogation, which is equivalent to a negation; "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" That is, it is impossible to do it, and it would be impious and wicked to do it. None must be the object of our prayers, but he that is the object of our faith and trust; now it is God alone that is the object of our faith and trust; therefore he alone must be prayed unto. And if so, then the practice of the papist in praying to angels and saints departed is very blame-worthy and abominable in the sight of God. How can they pray unto them, unless they believe in them, and trust in them? And if they trust in them, that curse falls upon them, "Cursed is that man that trusteth in man;" that is, in any creature. The truth is, if Christ himself were a mere man, and not God as well as man, we should sin by worshipping of him: but it is one good argument to prove the divinity of Christ, that the scripture represents him as the object of faith, and religious invocation. From the whole, observe, That the only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, the only way to faith is by the word, it cometh by hearing; the only way, that is, the only ordinary way. What becomes of those that never heard of Christ in the preaching of the gospel, God only is fit to judge. This is certain, that all men at the great day shall be judged according to the law that they were under, and obliged by, and no other. Now promulgation being the essence of the law, the gospel cannot be a law to them to whom it was not promulgated, and made known: but a practical belief of the gospel is indispensably necessary to the salvation of them to whom it is revealed. Observe farther, The great reverence and high esteem which is due and payable to the preachers of the gospel, and that by the approbation of God himself. He commands us to admire the very feet of them that preach the gospel of his Son unto us, and bring glad tidings of good things; "How beautiful are the feet of them, &c." And for great reason should it be thus; because the ministers of the gospel are the messengers of Christ; they receive both their mission and commission from him; they are instructed by him, they negotiate for him, they speak in his name, they act in his stead; and whatsoever they either promise or threaten in God's name, he stands ready and resolved to perform it. Isa. xlv. 26. He "confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers." Lord, how beautiful and blessed are the feet of thy messengers, and ministers in thy account? Let them be so in thy people's estimation also. Learn hence, That nothing ought to be so welcome to us, and so joyfully entertained by us, as the preaching and preachers of the gospel; "How beautiful are the feet of them, &c."

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel; For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Here an objection is tacitly implied and answered, Some might say, "If the gospel be thus excellent, and the test of them that preach it so beautiful, whence was it that the Jews, to whom it was first preached, did not receive, and yield obedience to it?" The apostle answers, that this infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews was foretold by the prophets of old, particularly by Isaiah, who complains, chap. lii. 1. "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Learn hence, 1. That the faith of the gospel is not common to all that hear the gospel. True, the hearing of the word is necessary unto faith, but faith doth not necessarily follow the hearing of the word. Learn, 2. That the prophets of God did foresee, and by a spirit of prophecy foretel, what small success the preaching of the gospel would have to and among the Jews. Learn, 3. That yet the prophet's prediction was not the cause, but the consequence of the Jews' rejection of the gospel: it was not because the prophet said so, that they did not believe; but because they believed not, therefore the prophet said so: "They have not obeyed the gospel." for so Isaiah saith of them.

17 So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As if the apostle had said, "It is very evident, and these testimonies show, that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the preaching of the word of God." The grace of faith is wrought by the Spirit in the act of hearing; and the matter heard by which this faith is wrought is the word of God preached. Persons must hear, that they may believe; and God's word must be preached, that they may hear. A non-preaching minister, then, is no minister; he is like a bell without a clapper, or a crier without a voice; he neither answers the design of his commission, nor the end of the gospel's institution, which was to be the instrumental mean of faith; *Faith cometh by hearing.*

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

It was no less than a miracle, that the gospel, in the space of a few years, should be preached to all the nations, and planted in the remotest parts of the world, and yet thus it was. Which makes St. Paul here apply that to the preaching of the apostles, which David applies to the preaching of the heavens. Ps. xix. 4. The gospel of Christ, like the sun in the firmament, casts its beautiful and glorious beams all the world over. For upon the commission given out by Christ to his apostles, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, the apostles divided themselves into the several quarters of the world, for the speedy performance of this service, namely, the carrying of the light of the gospel, as the sun doth his light, unto all the nations of the earth. As if St. Paul had here said, "Like as the voice of the heavens are gone through the world, so is the voice of Christ, and the light of his gospel, which doth much

more declare the glory of God, than the sun and the moon in the heavens can do. Some observe, That there was hardly any one considerable nation in the world, but within forty years after Christ's ascension, had the glad tidings of the gospel preached to it. Hence the apostle tells us, Tit. ii. 11. "That the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men." That is, the gospel without restriction was tendered to all nations, Jew and Gentile; to all persons, bond and free, honorable and ignoble. Behold! the goodness and mercy of God, in enlightening the dark corners of the world, with this glorious light from heaven. Behold! the great power and efficacy of the word, under the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit. Behold! an example of laborious diligence and industry, in ministerial service! What pains did the apostles take? What hazards did they run? What journeys did they undertake, to preach Jesus Christ, to plant and propagate the everlasting gospel? Shall we not attend our flock, and travel from house to house to visit our charge, which falls within the compass of a few miles, when the apostles compassed sea and land, travelled far and near, labored night and day, to transmit the gospel to the ends of the world? Lord! how does this indefatigable diligence shame our supine negligence!

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Did not Israel know, that is, of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and of their own infidelity in rejecting it? This they might have known, both from the testimony of Moses and Esaias. First from Moses' testimony, who says, Dent. xxxii. *I will provoke you*, (Jews refusing to believe) *unto jealousy by them that are (yet) no people (of God); and by a foolish nation*, (so the Gentile were accounted by the conceited Jews) *I will anger you*. When God preferred the Gentiles before the Jews, the hearts of the latter were vexed with jealousy and anger, to behold all their privileges taken from them, and given to the former, whom they accounted a people most vile and despicable. The second testimony is that of Esaias, who the apostle says was very bold; that is, very plain and express, in foretelling God's calling of the Gentiles, and rejecting of the Jews; calling the Gentiles by his free grace, and seeking them that first sought him not; and casting off the Jews, who, after all his forbearance and long-suffering, did continue obstinately to reject the offers of his grace, and the tenders of his mercy. Here note, 1. The holy courage of this evangelical prophet Isaiah, in the discharge of his office: with great boldness and freedom he foretels the calling of the Gentiles, and casting off the Jews, although it cost him dear, even his life,

being sawn asunder with a wooden saw, as some affirm. There ought to meet in the ministers and messengers of God, both courage and impartiality; courage in fearing no faces, impartiality in sparing no crimes. Note, 2. What little cause of reason the ministers of God have to sit down in despondency, after so many unwearied attempts made in vain to reclaim sinners from their wicked way; when they consider the infinite patience of God towards them, "who stretcheth forth his hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people; that is, patiently contends with their obstinacy and perverseness. Lord, why should we, that are sinners ourselves, think much to bear with sinners? Let us rather imitate thy example in waiting upon them with the offers of grace and mercy, and follow them with our melting entreaties and passionate importunities, till we overcome their obstinacy, or leave them totally inexcusable.

CHAPTER XI.

The design and scope of our apostle in this chapter, is two-fold:

1. To keep the Jews from dejection and despair. 2. To preserve the Gentiles from presumption and pride. To keep the Jews from despair, he tells them, That though God hath certainly rejected them for rejecting his Son, and the gospel of salvation by him, yet this rejection of theirs was neither total nor final: though many of them are blinded, yet not all; some believed then, and many more should believe afterwards, before the end of the world. To preserve the Gentiles from pride and presumption, he prescribes to them humility and lowliness of mind, not to be high minded, but fear; lest being ingrafted into the good olive, they should, for their security and unfruitfulness be broken off, as the Jews had been before them, who were natural branches. Thus he bespeaks them both:

I SAY then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Our apostle having shown, in the end of the foregoing chapter, that the Jews would be rejected, and the Gentiles called, begins this chapter, by answering a great and popular objection. Some hereupon might be ready to say, "If this be so, then God has cast away his covenant-people, violated his covenant-promise, forgot the seed of Abraham his friend." He answers, by his accustomed form of denial, *God forbid*; and then proceeds to show that the rejection of the Jews was not total; God did not reject them all, but the unbelieving part of them only. And this he proves by producing himself as an instance in the case, "I myself, says he, am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." As if he had said, "I am myself a Jew by nature and nation, not a proselyte converted to the Jewish faith, but a Jew by lineal descent, of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh; yet I am not cast off by God; there-

fore, God has not cast away his people." Learn hence, How many unbelievers soever God rejects, he will not cast away one soul that sincerely believes in his Son, and gives up himself to the obedience of the gospel. Believers are God's jewels; he will not cast them away. They are his children, his portion, his inheritance: he will never cast them off. They are united to him by the bond of the Holy Spirit, and he has engaged himself to them by the bond of an everlasting covenant. Believers love God and his truth for ever, and the God of truth will love them for ever. "God hath not cast away his people."

2 God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew.—

Here we have a second argument, to prove that God would not wholly cast off the Jewish church and people; namely, because he had foreknown them; that is, had chosen the body of them to be a special and peculiar people to himself, above and before all the people of the earth: and has also foreknown, that is, foreseen, that many of them would through the assistance of his Holy Spirit, savingly believe on the promised Messiah. God never did, never will cast away such either among Jews or Gentiles.

—Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal*.

Another instance is here produced, to prove that God had not suffered all the Jews to apostatize and fall away through unbelief; and that is the instance of Elias, in whose days there was such a general revolt among the Jews from the worship of the true God to Jeroboam's idolatry, that he thought himself alone. But God assures him, there was not such a dearth of saints as he feared, he having reserved to himself seven thousand true and faithful worshippers of himself, who had never bowed knee to the image of Baal. Learn hence, That even in times of universal apostacy and epidemical degeneracy, God has a number to stand up for, and witness to his name and truth, and that the number of them is more than we either imagine or believe. God has ever had, and always will have a seed to serve him, which shall be accounted to him for a generation; and although the number of revolvers be great, yet the number of the righteous is not small.

5 Even so then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace: But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.

Here we have St. Paul making application of the foregoing example to the present case. As Elias was not alone in the corrupt state of Israel then, so neither was the apostle alone now, in this time of general rejection of the Jewish church and nation. God had a number then, he has a remnant now, which, according to his free and gracious purpose, are brought to believe in his Son. Although the Jews who believed were few, in comparison of them that were rejected, called therefore a remnant which is but small and little in respect of the whole piece: yet there were many thousands of them that did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and obtained, no doubt, salvation by him; Acts xxi. 20. "Thou seest brother, how many thousand Jews there are which do believe." Observe farther, The conclusion which the apostle doth infer and draw from the forementioned assertion: "If a remnant be saved according to the free purpose and gracious election of God, then it is upon the consideration of the merit of their own works; they are not justified and accepted for the works of the law, otherwise *grace is no more grace*: for what need is there of grace, where men have continued in all things written in the law to do them? For the man that doth these things shall live in them: but, on the other hand, if it be of works that we are justified and accepted, then *it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work*." Learn hence, 1. That such as are chosen in Christ to be a people near unto God, are put into this state by mere grace, and unmerited favors. Learn, 2. That grace comes in to supply the defect of our works, and to procure pardon for the non-performance of them, according to the tenor of the law. God was good to man before his fall, in making him his creature: he is gracious to man since his fall, in recovering him to the divine favor, by restoring him to the divine likeness. The fabric of grace in the hearts of his people goes up, as did the building of the second temple, with shouts and acclamations. *Grace, grace*: and every stone in the building of our salvation, from the foundation to our superstructure, is all free-stone, *otherwise grace is no more grace*.

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded:

8 According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.

Observe here, 1. What the apostle affirms concerning the main body of the Jewish nation, they obtained not what they sought after: that is, deliverance by the Messiah, justification and righteousness by the works of the law. This they sought but found not: yet the *election hath obtained it*; that is, the chosen generation of believers, seek-

ing righteousness and life in a gospel way, namely, by faith in Christ the Mediator, have obtained it. *And the rest were blinded*: but how and by whom? *Ans.* 1. By their own sin and prejudice; and then, 2. By the just judgment of God, leaving them to their own ignorance and obstinacy, for shutting their eyes against the clear light of the gospel: and by giving them over to satan, the god of this world, who blindeth the eyes of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Observe, 2. The direful judgment which followed upon this dreadful sin; they shut their eyes, and said, they will not see; God closed their eyes, and said, they shall not see: because they would not obey the Spirit of God, which would have awakened and enlightened them; God gave them up to a spirit of slumber, stupidity and blindness; that is, he permitted them to continue and lie under those prejudices against the true Messiah, which they had taken up and entertained in their minds. Learn hence, That no greater judgment can befall a people, than a sottish stupidity of mind, and insensibility of spirit; whereby they are drowsily careless of their salvation, and know not the things belonging to their peace, although they be before their eyes. This was the case with the chief body of the Jewish nation, and continues to be still their case: they have eyes and see not; ears, but hear not unto this day.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them.

10 Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always.

The apostle proceeds here to declare unto us, that the general unbelief and hardness of heart which was found amongst the rejected Jews, was not to be wondered at, because it was prophetically foretold by holy David, in the person of the Messiah, of whom he was a type, that his own people the Jews should extremely injure and wrong him, oppress and vex him: for which wickedness he foretels what dreadful and tremendous judgment should come upon the Jews; namely, "That their table should be made to them a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block;" that is, that all their pleasant and delightful things should become the instruments of their destruction. "That their eyes be darkened, and they may not see." The darkening of their eyes signifies the taking away of the judgment and understanding from a people. And the bowing down of the back always," intimates and implies their grovelling upon this earth; their relishing and savouring nothing but earthly things, never lifting up either head or heart to God. Now all this which David spake of the wicked Jews in his time, the apostle applies and adapts to the incredulous and unbelieving Jews in his days, to whom the very preaching of the word was an occasion of obduration and hardness of heart. Learn hence, 1. That to the obstinate and obdurate enemies of God, the best things become baneful, and, through their own corruption, become the instruments and means of their own destruction: "Let their table be made a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block. Learn, 2. That to be deprived of the use of our judgment and understanding, especially in things pertaining unto God, is a very dreadful judgment; "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see." Learn, 3. That imprecations are to be used

very warily, and only in weighty matters. These, and other expressions of David, which look like imprecations, may as well be accounted prophetic predictions, foretelling what will come upon obstinate sinners, rather than praying that evil may come: great is the sin and danger of using imprecations lightly, either upon ourselves or others. Some persons use them to gain credit to what they say; but this will not do with wise men, who frequently observe, that persons most guilty, are most apt to call for vengeance upon themselves, that they may be thought guiltless. Lord, how do some sinners wish, and call for that at which the devils tremble? I mean damnation. Alas! it slumbereth not; within a moment or two thou shalt feel what thou wilt not fear.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather*, through their fall, salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Our apostles had in the preceding verses proved the rejection of the Jews not to have been total; here he proves, that it shall not be final, but they shall be generally called before the end of the world. "Have they stumbled," says he, "that they should fall?" that is, "Have they so stumbled and fallen as never to rise more? Are they utterly forsaken and cast off? No such thing; but God in his just and righteous judgment hath permitted them to fall, that they having obstinately refused the gospel, it might be preached to the Gentiles: and their receiving of the gospel, God will in his infinite wisdom, make use of, to provoke the Jews to jealousy and emulation, seeing themselves so far outstript by those whom they so contemned and despised, and in the close, make this jealousy and emulation a mean and occasion of the Jews' conversion." Learn hence, That emulation and jealousy doth heat and heighten the mind of man to an eager pursuit of the best things. Observe it in the instance before us, the salvation of the Gentiles bred emulation in the Jews: "What! say the Jews, shall the Gentiles go away with heaven alone, whom we thought the vilest people upon the earth? Come, let us put in for a part, and share in gospel mercies and privileges with them." Thus they were provoked to emulation, and this emulation occasioned their conversion.

12 Now, if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fulness?

As if the apostle had said, "If the casting off the Jews was so profitable to the Gentile world; if the Gentiles have been such great gainers, by occasion of the sin and fall of the Jews, how much more when they shall become christians, will they add to the fulness, the glory and greatness of the christian church?" Observe here, The wonderful wisdom, the astonishing goodness, the overruling providence and power of God, in causing the fall of the Jews to be the occasion of God's manifesting his abundant grace in the conversion of the Gentiles, and spreading the plentiful knowledge of Christ over all the world; and also, in causing the general conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world, to confirm the faith of the believing Gentiles.

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world: what *shall* the receiving of *them be* but life from the dead?

Observe here, 1. The honorable office which St. Paul was called to; namely, to be an apostle, and the apostle of the Gentiles. 2. The honor which God put upon him in the faithful execution of that office: (1.) In making him instrumental, for calling many of the blind and ignorant Gentiles to the obedience of the faith: and, (2.) In provoking the Jews (whom he calls his own flesh, because of his own nation) not to suffer the Gentiles alone to go away with the privileges of the gospel, but to put in for a share with them; "If by any means I may provoke to emulation:" as if the apostle had said, "O that I could at once see an holy emulation take hold of my countrymen: that rather than not believe at all, and be saved, I might see them at last believe for anger, or for very shame, and go to heaven in a holy chase!" Observe, 3. What an argument the apostle makes use of, why all persons should greatly desire the general conversion, both of Jews and Gentiles, to the faith of Christ. As *the casting away of the Jews at present, will be the reconciling of the world*; that is, be an occasion of sending the gospel to the Gentiles all the world over, whereby they become reconciled unto God: what will the receiving of the Jews again into the grace and favor of God, and the communion of the visible church, be to you Gentiles, but even as life or resurrection from the dead? Learn hence, (1.) That the conversion of the Jews, and the calling in the fulness of the Gentiles, are mercies much, very much, to be desired, and earnestly prayed for. (2.) That such will be the blessed state of the church, when the fulness both of the Jews and Gentiles, are brought into it, that it will be looked upon as a new life or resurrection from the dead.

16 For if the first-fruits *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Here the apostle produces another argument to prove the universal restoration of the Jews unto the grace and favor of God, before the end of the world; and it is drawn from the covenant of God made with Abraham (as the root of the Jewish nation) which said, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." Now, the argument runs thus, "As the branches follow the nature of the root, so do the Jews follow the condition of Abraham and the holy patriarchs, with respect to the outward privileges of the covenant. Was the root holy, so are the branches holy, not inherently, but federally holy, being called, consecrated, and separated from the world unto the service of God. If then Almighty God, by entering into covenant with Abraham, hallowed to himself all his posterity, even as the first-fruits hallowed the

whole lump; in like manner, will God in his own good time, be so mindful of the Jews, the posterity of Abraham, as to bring them again nigh unto himself, in the remembrance of his holy covenant: so that they shall be his people, and he will be their God." Learn hence, That the Jews, though at present cast off by God, are still an holy people; they are under an hereditary dedication to God, they have a federal holiness, as descending from holy progenitors, with respect to whom the love and compassion of God are towards them, and they shall in his own time, be called and converted by him: and therefore in the mean time, the Jews are not to look upon themselves with desperation, nor should the Gentiles look upon them with disdain. "The first fruits being holy, the lump is also holy: the root being holy, so are the branches also."

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and, thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree:

18 Boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20 Well: because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

The design and scope of our apostle in these words, is to exhort the believing Gentiles not to despise and reproach the rejected and unbelieving Jews: and he draws an argument from the condition of the Gentiles, both past and present; in their past condition, they were like a wild olive-tree; in their present condition they were grafted into the true olive. Here note, That by the olive-tree, we are to understand the visible church of God; by the root he means Abraham; he was the root of the olive-tree, the Jewish church. But how so? *Ans.* Not the root by way of communication, but in a way of administration; not by way of communication, as if either a Jew or Gentile did receive any sap or spiritual life from him, as branches receive a natural life from the root: for thus Christ alone is the root of the church. But Abraham was the root of the olive-tree in a way of administration, the Lord calling him forth as the first man with whom he was pleased to treat, and enter into that covenant with. Again, by the fatness of the olive-tree, we are to understand all outward privileges and ordinances, all spiritual benefits and blessings which belong to the Jewish church. By the branches of the olive-tree, we are to understand the members of the Jewish church: and by the wild olive, the Gentile world. Now, though the Gentiles, though rich in grace, were instated in the privileges of the Jews, yet the apostle foresaw, that instead of thankfulness to God, for the favors received from him, they would

be puffed up with pride: and accordingly, he advises them, not to be high minded, but fear: as if he had said, "O ye Gentiles, your state is high, let your hearts be humble. The Jews are fallen, and unless you walk in holy fear, you cannot stand: unbelief ruined them, take heed that pride doth not ruin you: for the just and holy God is no respecter of persons. He that spareth not the natural branches, will no more spare thee." From the whole learn, 1. That man is naturally a very proud creature; and although he has nothing, but what he has freely received, yet is prone to boast. 2. That man is especially apt to magnify himself, and to glory over those who are fallen before him, either into sin or under affliction. 3. That the best preservative from falling, is humility and holy fear. If ever we stand in the day of trial, it is the fear of falling must enable us to stand. Take heed you do not fall, by thinking it impossible to fall. "Be not high-minded but fear." *Timor tuus, securitas tua;* Thy holy fear will keep thee from falling, when others security and presumption will lay them on the ground. Let not a man that stands on the top of a tree boast of his height, but look to his hold.

22 Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: For God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive-tree?

Our apostle, in these and the following verses, precedes in his exhortation to the Gentiles, not to insult over the rejected Jews, but to carry it towards them with great modesty and christian humility; and he used several arguments, by way of motive, to excite and quicken them thereunto. The two first are drawn from the severity of God in cutting off the Jews and the goodness and bounty of God in calling of the Gentiles: Behold the goodness and severity of God, &c." Justice and mercy, goodness and severity, are attributes or qualities, eminently found in God; and contrary only in their effects upon men. The same God is merciful and severe, with respect to different persons, and different qualifications. All mercy is not a virtue, but that which is consistent with other perfections of wisdom and righteousness. The next argument is taken from the condition upon which the Gentiles hold their present standing in the favor and grace of God; namely, "If they continue in his goodness, that is, if they walk worthy of this favor from God, and suitably to such a kind and gracious dispensation; otherwise they, the Gentiles shall be cut off and cast away, as well as the stubborn and unbelieving Jews." The Lord is with a people *only* whilst they are with him: if they serve and seek

him, he will be found of them, but if they forsake him he will cast them off for ever. The next argument to suppress arrogance and pride in the Gentiles, and to prevent their insulting over the fallen Jews, is taken from the hopes of the Jews' restoration: which the apostle proves to be both possible and probable. "They shall be grafted in, if they abide not in unbelief; for God is able to graft them in again." As if the apostle had said, "The same God that rejected them, is able to restore them, and re-ingraft them: the only obstacle is unbelief, and this God is also able to remove." Lastly, He shows the probability as well as the possibility of the Jews conversion; namely, because God had done that which was more unlikely already, to wit, ingrafting the Gentiles, who were wild olives, into the true olive, which was more difficult and unlikely, than to graft in the Jews again, which were natural branches. The argument runs thus: "If the Gentiles, which were a kind of wild olive branches, were grafted into a good olive tree (the church of God) which is contrary to nature, seeing men used to graft a good scion into a wild stock, and not a wild scion into a good stock; how much more shall the Jews, which are the natural branches of the good olive, be grafted again into their own olive-tree, to which they formerly belong? The one is according to the order of nature, but the other is against, and contrary to nature." Learn hence, How improbable and unlikely, how difficult and impossible soever, the conversion and calling of the Jews to the christian religion, may seem to us, it is neither contrary to right reason, nor true faith. The greatest obstacle in the way of the Jews' conversion to christianity, it is to be feared, lies in the wicked and scandalous lives of those that call themselves christians.

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,

26 And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Here the apostle fully proves, that the rejection of the Jews was neither total nor final; not total, because "blindness in part" only, "happened unto Israel:" That is, part of the Jews only are left in unbelief, and under the power of spiritual blindness; nor is their rejection final, but for a time only, namely, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; that is, till the Gentile churches be advanced to an honorable state and fulness. And then all the Israel of God, the faithful seed of Abraham, and the main body of the Jews, shall make up the catholic church, and be saved from their unbelief; according to that gracious promise, Isa. lix. 20, 21. "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob; and this is my covenant with them, my spirit shall not depart from thy seed, nor thy

seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." Learn hence, That there shall be a general calling of the Jews to the faith of the gospel before Christ's second coming, is not only possible and probable, but infallible, sure, certain, and that from the prophecies and predictions of the prophets of God; let us therefore believe it firmly, pray for it fervently, and live in the expectation of it continually.

28 As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sake.* but as touching the election, *they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

29 For the gifts and calling of God *are without repentance*

Here we have two farther arguments to prove the general conversion of the Jews: the first is taken from the dignity of the Jews, they being the ancient people of God, whose father Abraham he chose, and made his first covenant with him and his seed: and therefore, as to making the election of that nation to be an holy people to himself, they are beloved by God for their father's sake; that is, for the sake of Abraham their holy progenitor, who had the honor to be called the friend of God. Though grace descends not from parent to child, yet many times the children of godly parents are very large sharers in outward privileges and blessings for their gracious parents' sake. The Jews here are said to be loved of God for their father Abraham's sake, whilst, for their unbelief and contempt of the gospel, they had rendered themselves the deserved objects of God's hatred. The second argument is drawn from the immutability and unchangeable nature of God: "His gifts and calling are without repentance:" that is, although the Jews have rendered themselves unworthy of the favor of God, yet the covenant having been once made with their fathers, and they having had the honor to be his special and peculiar people, God will never repent of his kindness to them, nor of his covenant made with them; but will certainly restore them to their former privileges, and happy state: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Take the words relatively, and the note is this, "That the gifts and calling of God, whereby he was pleased to adopt the posterity of Abraham, and to engage himself by covenant to them, are inviolable, and such as shall never be reversed or repented of." Observe lastly, The sad and deplorable condition which the Jews are at present in and under; they are enemies to the gospel. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake:" That is, because you Gentiles receive the gospel, therefore the Jews reject it, and for that reason are rejected by God. But this happened well to the poor Gentiles; for upon the Jews' refusal, the gospel was brought the sooner to the Gentiles, and they were converted by it.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief;

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

Here we have the conclusion of the apostle's argument, to prove the conversion and calling of the Jews towards the end of the world. The argument is drawn from a comparison of equals: "If God after a long time of disobedience, received the Gentiles to mercy, he will also after a long time of infidelity, receive the Jews to mercy. If God hath called the Gentiles to his grace after a long idolatry, though God never promised to be their God, how much more will he recall his covenant-people from their infidelity in his own appointed time?" So that the argument is from the less to the greater: if the infidelity of the Jews was an occasion of mercy to the Gentiles, much more shall the mercy showed to the Gentiles be an occasion of mercy to the Jews; and consequently their present infidelity shall be no obstacle to their conversion afterward.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

That is, "Almighty God hath in wisdom and righteousness suffered both the Jews and Gentiles successively, for some time, to remain under the power of unbelief and disobedience, that so he might in his own time fulfil the great counsel of his goodness, in showing undeserved mercy unto all, both Jew and Gentile." Now from all the foregoing arguments for the calling of the Jews, summed up together in this chapter, we may collect and gather, that the conversion of the Jewish nation to the christian faith has good foundation in the holy scriptures, and has been the received doctrine of the church of Christ in all ages of the church.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Here the apostle concludes the chapter with an awful admiration at the depth of the abundant grace and goodness of God, in bearing with the infidelity of the Jews, and the obstinacy of the Gentiles; as also of his unsearchable wisdom in making first the rejection of the Jews a mean of calling the Gentiles, and then working upon the obstinate Jews by his mercy shown unto the Gentiles. By judgments here, some understand the decrees and determination of God's will; by ways the administration of his providence, in order to the execution of those decrees: both which are secret, unsearchable, and unfathomable. There are mysteries of providence, as well as mysteries of faith, and both of them transcend our human understanding.

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord: or who hath been his counselor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

As if the apostle had said, "No creature ever did, or ever can pierce into the mind of God, nor was ever called to be of his council. No creature ever did or can advise him, nor

can any creature challenge God, as if he were indebted to him. Whoever gave any thing to God, that he did not first receive from him? Or who can merit any thing at his hands, seeing he owes us nothing? And if so, who hath reason to complain that God deals hardly with the Jews, in rejecting them, and preferring the Gentiles before them! Surely Almighty God may dispense a favor to some, which he owes to none." Learn hence, That in those discriminating favors which God dispenses towards some of the children of men, no other reason can be assigned but his own good will and pleasure. This particularly appears in his ordering matters relating to the Jews and Gentiles, recorded in the foregoing chapter.

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. To whom be glory for ever. AMEN.

That is, "All things are of God, as the author and efficient cause; all things are through him, as the providential director, and preserving cause; and all things tend to him, as the ultimate end and final cause; therefore to him all praise, honor, and glory, ought for ever to be ascribed. Learn hence, That God is the first cause, and last end. He is the first cause; that is, he is the cause of all things besides himself, the fountain and original of all created beings; nothing was done before him, but all things created by him, and dependent upon him; and as he is the first cause, so he is the last end; that is, all things tend to him as their ultimate end; their design and aim was the illustration of God's glory, and the manifestation of his divine perfections. And if God be the first cause, let us with humility and thankfulness acknowledge him, admire and adore him, love and serve him, who is the author of our being, and the cause of all other beings. And if he be the last end, let us refer all our actions, to his glory; in all our natural actions, our civil actions, but especially in all our religious actions, let the glory of God be our supreme aim and ultimate end. For if we do not now live unto him, we can never expect hereafter to live with him.

CHAPTER XII.

Our apostle having finished the doctrinal part of his discourse, begins here to make application of it. In the former part of his epistle, he had copiously handled the doctrinal points of faith, justification, sanctification, &c. Now from hence to the end of the epistle, there is contained an exhortation to religious and moral duties, as an argument of their sincerity, and as an ornament to their profession.

I BESEECH you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's loving and courteous commendation, *brethren*: so he calls the believing Romans. They were brethren by place and nation, and brethren by religion

and profession; *Eodem sanguine Christi conglutinati*, cemented together by the blood of Christ, and by the bands of love. Observe, 2. The manner of the apostle's exhortation; it is by way of obsecration and entreaty, *I beseech you, brethren*. It imports great lenity and meekness. The apostle did not want authority to command, but uses such humility as to entreat. The minister's work and office is not only to be a teacher, but a beseecher. He must not barely propound and recommend the doctrine of the gospel to his people's understanding, but must endeavour to work upon their wills and affections to embrace and entertain them. The understanding is the leading, but the will the commanding faculty. Observe, 3. The exhortation itself: "present your bodies a living sacrifice." Present your bodies, that is, dedicate your persons, devote yourselves, your whole man, soul and body, to the service of God and his glory. Christians are priests, or a royal priesthood; they offer up themselves in sacrifice unto God, as a whole burnt-offering. Observe, 4. The properties of the christian sacrifice; it must be voluntary; *Present yourselves*. It must be a living sacrifice, an holy sacrifice, a reasonable sacrifice, otherwise it will find no acceptance with God. Observe, 5. The argument or motive which the apostle makes use of, to persuade persons to present and give up themselves to God and his service, and that is drawn from the mercies of God; "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." Learn thence, That the mercies of God revealed in the gospel, are the most proper, powerful, and effectual argument to persuade with, and prevail upon, sinners, that have not given up and devoted themselves to God, to do it; and those that have done it to do it more and more: "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present, &c."

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's dehortation, "Be not conformed to this world:" That is, do not fashion or accommodate yourselves to the corrupt principles and customs, to the sinful courses and practices of the men of the world." The christian is to walk singularly, and not after the world's guise: he must not cut the coat of his profession according to the fashion of the times, or the humor of the company he falls into. Observe, 2. An apostolical exhortation, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind:" that is, "be ye regenerated and changed in your whole man, beginning at the mind or understanding, by which the Spirit of God worketh upon the inferior faculties of the soul." Every converted person is truly and really changed, thoroughly sanctified and renewed, endowed with new dispositions and affections; yet this conversion and renovation is not a substantial, but a qualitative change, a change not in the substance of the faculties of the soul, but in the quality of those faculties. And the renewed christian is sanctified *totus* but not *totaliter*: he is sanctified thoroughly in all faculties, but not perfectly in all degrees. There is in a renewed man's understanding too much blindness and ignorance, in his will too great obstinacy and perverseness, in his affections

too much irregularity and sensuality. Yet such is the indulgence of the gospel, as to call him an holy person, a person transformed by the renewing of his mind. Observe, 3. The reason of the apostle's exhortation; "Be ye transformed, &c. that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;" that is, that ye may discern and approve what the will of God is under the gospel, which requires not what is ritually, but what is substantially good, and consequently always acceptable to him. Note here, that in opposition to the Levitical ceremonies and ritual injunctions, the apostle styles the gospel-institution, the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God; and as such, may we love and embrace it, and be found in the delightful practice of it.

3 For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

The apostle having exhorted to an holy life in general, verse the first, and to a spiritual renovation of mind, in order to it, verse the second, comes now to a close exhortation to more particular duties; the first of which is modesty and true humility of mind. This he recommends especially to such who bear any public office in the church, and had received some peculiar and especial gifts to fit and furnish them for the discharge of that office. St. Paul here particularly enjoins them, by virtue of his apostolic office, to watch against pride and haughtiness of mind; not to think themselves wiser or better than they were, but to think soberly and modestly of themselves, according to the truth, and to the degree of faith and wisdom given unto them of God: plainly intimating, that such as are exalted to a degree of eminency in the church above others, are in great danger of the sin of pride, which it is their duty to watch and pray against, and to be found in the exercise of that humility and lowliness of mind, which is so greatly ornamental to their persons and profession. "Let not any man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but let him think soberly."

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office;

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Here the apostle lays before us a special reason why the officers of the church should exercise humility towards, and employ their gifts and talents for the general good and benefit of the church: the argument is drawn from a comparison between the natural body and the mystical body.—"As in the natural body there are many members, and every member has its distinct office; the eye to see, the ear to hear, the hand to work, the foot to walk: in like manner, in the mystical body, the church of Christ, there are many

members; but each member must keep his own place, and not invade the duty, or usurp the office of another, but every one employs his own proper gift to the benefit and comfort of the whole, without disdaining or envying one another." Learn hence, 4. That the church of Christ is one body. 2. That though the body of the church be one, and the head one, yet the members are many, united to Christ their head by faith, and to one another by love. 3. That all believers, which are members of this body, have every one his particular gift, his several functions, his proper office, which they are duly to execute and perform, without encroaching upon others by proud curiosity, or busy meddling; but as all the members of the body labor jointly together for the preservation of the whole, so ought all the officers and members of the church to keep their distinct stations, and employ and improve regularly their several talents for the mutual edification and benefit of each other, without encroachment or intruding upon the officers of each other. God is a God of order, and hates disorder in his church.

6 Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith:

7 Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering*; or he that teacheth, on teaching:

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth *let him do it* with simplicity? he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing it has pleased God to appoint distinct officers in his church, and to furnish those officers with various degrees of gifts, and not to make all equal either to gifts or office, let every one in general faithfully execute his office, and keep within the limits of his calling, neither neglecting his own duty, nor invading another's; in particular, *let him that prophesieth*, that is, expoundeth the scriptures in the church, do it, *according to the proportion of faith*, or according to what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of our faith." We must not rack nor wrest the scriptures, to make them speak what we please, but what the prophets and apostles taught, whom we interpret; otherwise we do not expound according to the analogy and proportion of faith. "Let him that ministereth, teacheth, or exhorteth, attend upon that work with all diligence; and he that performs the office of a deacon, who are called *helps*, (1 Cor. xii. 28.) and is employed to relieve the poor out of the church's stock, and to take care of strangers, orphans, aged, sick, and impotent persons, *let him do it with simplicity*, that is, without partiality and respect of persons: and *with cheerfulness*, that is, with alacrity of heart, with gentleness in words, with pleasantness in countenance, bearing with the infirmities of the aged, with the loathsomeness of the sick and diseased, and administering with delight to the necessities of all that want." Now, from the whole, note, 1. That God of his free bounty has beautified his

church with divers offices and gifts. Note, 2. That those whom God has bestowed ministerial gifts upon, ought humbly and faithfully to improve them to the church's benefit and edification.

9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.*

10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.*

The foregoing exhortations respected church officers in particular; these that now follow concern all christians in general, and acquaint them with their duties in common conversation. He begins with the *grace and duty of love*, that being a radical grace, the root from which all other graces and duties spring and flow. This love to one another, the Holy Ghost requires that it be *without dissimulation*, that is sincere and unfeigned, not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and truth; also, that it be an affectionate and tender, as well as an unfeigned and sincere love. *Be kindly affectioned one to another*: The word signifies such an affectionate tenderness as a mother bears to the fruit of her womb, and as creatures bear to their young: and no wonder that such a fervent love is required, when laying down our lives for the brethren is commanded, 1 John iii. 16. Likewise, that our love to others do incline us to give preference unto others; really conceiving others to be more worthy of honor than ourselves, and rejoicing to see them placed in a more useful and honorable post than ourselves, Yet observe, Though our love must be hot towards our neighbour, it must not hinder us from abhorring that which is sinful and evil in our neighbour. "Love without dissimulation, and abhor that which is evil." When we love the persons, we must hate the vices of men. The love of our friends must not make us in love with their faults; nor must the hatred of men's vices draw us off from delighting in, and cleaving to, that which is good in any man: "Abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good."

11 *Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*

The next duty exhorted to is diligence and industry in all our duties both to God and man, but particularly in the duties of our calling. We must avoid the two extremes of slothfulness on the one hand, and excessive drossery on the other, in the management of our secular affairs and worldly business. But in the service of God we must be fervent, as in the service of the world we must not be slothful. What is done for the world, is best done with indifference; but what is done for God, is best done with warmth and fervency, or not done at all. Our most ardent affections and active powers must be employed in his service; for to be cold and careless therein, disparages his excellency, and will defeat our own expectation. We must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and may not be slothful in business serving the world.

12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

The apostle next directs the converted Romans how they should manage themselves under afflictions; namely, to endure them patiently, to rejoice in hope of present deliverance, or future happiness; and in order to both, to be much in the duty of prayer. Learn hence, That hope, patience, and prayer, are powerful supports under all afflictions, and will render them not only tolerable, but joyous. By patience we possess ourselves; by hope we possess God; by prayer we are enabled unto both.

13 Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality.

The next duty exhorted to, is that of charity and alms-giving to the poor members of Jesus Christ, especially when under persecution; showing hospitality towards them, and giving entertainment to them, when they seek it of us.—Learn, 1. That charity to all persons, but especially to the persecuted members of Jesus Christ, is a necessary and important duty. Learn, 2. That hospitality is an eminent part of christian charity: true hospitality, I mean, which is accompanied with prudence and sobriety. There is a wide difference between riotous housekeeping and true hospitality; the latter is always designed for the help of the poor, and particularly for the godly poor. There are great house-keepers who are not good housekeepers, because their house-keeping is for the great, rather than the good, not for the household of faith, especially not for the poor of that household. As to spirituals, God fills the hungry with good things, but sends the rich empty away; whereas, most men, as to corporals, fill the rich with their good things, with the fat and the sweet, but send the poor, if not empty away, yet relieved only with the sweepings of their table. This is not according to the precepts before us: “Distributing to the necessities of the saints, and given to hospitality.”

14 Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not.

The apostle having taught us our duty to our friends in the former verse, teacheth us our duty here towards our enemies. *Bless them that persecute you:* That is, pray for them, and wish well to them, whatever provocation you may have to the contrary. Learn hence, 1. That good men must make account of, and prepare for, persecution; either the persecution of the tongue, or of the hand, or both. Learn, 2. That it is their duty ever to bless, never to curse, their persecutors and opposers. *Bless but curse not.* Where note, That the apostle doubles the exhortation, *Bless your persecutors; Bless and curse not.* This doubling the exhortation, shows both the difficulty of the duty, how contrary it is to corrupt nature, and also the constancy of the duty, we must ever bless, and never curse; always wish well, never any ill to the worst of men. Take we great heed of giving way to secret wishes of hurt to our enemy. God forbid we should hurt ourselves by sinful passion, because others hurt us by slander and false accusation: we are naturally prone to speak ill of others, and to wish ill to others with delight: this sin persisted in, shuts out of heaven as well as murder.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

The next duty required, is christian sympathy and mutual

affection between brethren, both in prosperity and adversity, to rejoice in the one, and to mourn together in the other, as being members of the same body. Teaching us, that it is a christian's duty to rejoice in those good things, whether inward or outward, which befall his brethren, and also to mourn and lay to heart all those afflictions and sorrows whether inward or outward, which come upon them. But, Lord! how far are they from this duty, who instead of mourning for the sufferings of others, are glad at the calamity, rejoice at the downfall of others? Oh! help us to lay the troubles of others to heart, when we ourselves are freest and farthest from trouble: Let us *weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them, &c.* The gospel acquaints us with the pity of God towards us, and presseth us to pity one another.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

These words, *Be ye of the same mind one towards another*, are an exhortation to unity among christians. This is threefold, an unity of the head, or an unity of judgment and opinion; an unity of the heart, or an unity in love and affection; and an unity of the tongue, which is an unity of expression. Happy we! when in all these respects we are of the same mind one towards another. Observe next, The hinderance of mutual concord and unity among christians, and they are two: 1. *Pride, Mind not high things,* 2. *Arrogancy, Be not wise in your own conceits.* *Mind not high things:* that is, mind not preferment, nor riches, nor vain-glory, but be content with and thankful for, a middle state and condition in the world; which is far more eligible and desirable than a state of riches, plenty and abundance, as being less liable to temptations. And *be not wise in your own conceits;* that is, entertain humble thoughts of your own knowledge, think it not greater than it is; take heed of an over-weening opinion of your own wisdom, as if you wanted neither divine assistance and guidance, nor yet the advice and counsel of your brethren. Man is naturally a proud creature; but more proud of the endowments of his mind than those that adorn his body.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

By *evil* here, we are to understand wrongs and private injuries: by, *not recompensing them*, is meant not revenging them. Corrupt nature is very prone to return wrong for wrong, one ill turn for another; but christianity sets a nobler pattern before us, even the example of him, who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,” 1 Pet. ii. 23. “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Having exhorted them before to be careful of their conversations towards God, he now presses them to be watchful over their conversations before the world, that by honesty and innocency of life, they may cut off all occasion from the enemies of religion to speak evil of them, and their holy profession; that all their words and actions be justifiable and unexceptionable to that degree, that the heathens may be in love with christianity, by observing their lives and actions

to be holy and honest. Learn hence, That a christian must carefully look, not only to his conscience, but to his conversation; that his conscience be holy and upright in the sight of God, and his conversation modest and unblameable before men: the world cannot discern our hearts, but they can soon discover the errors of our lives, and will throw the dirt of our sins upon religion's face; therefore, we had need "provide things honest in the sight of all men."

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Observe here, 1. The duty directed and exhorted to, namely, peaceableness; *Live peaceably*, that is, be of a peaceable temper, and follow those things which make for peace. Observe, 2. The extent and latitude of this duty; *With all men live peaceably*; not with friends only, or with those of your own judgment and persuasion, but with men of disagreeing humors and interests, with men of different principles and apprehensions from you. Again, observe, 3. A double restriction and limitation with which the duty is bounded; first, *If it be possible*, implying, that there is a sort of men in the world who make peace impossible; but for others, if it may be enjoined upon honest terms, though upon hard terms, we must not stick at them, always remembering, that peace and truth are two precious things, which can never be bought too dear, if they be not purchased with sin and baseness. The second restriction follows, *As much as in you lieth*; now this respects our endeavours, not our success: if we follow peace with all men, though we cannot overtake it, yet we shall not miss of our reward in pursuing of it. Peace is a most important duty, a singular benefit and blessing, which every christian is bound to pursue and promote, and that with all men. *If it be possible, &c.*

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.

Observe here, How the apostle renews his exhortation to all christians to watch against the sin of private and personal revenge: he urged it before, ver. 17. he reinforces it here, ver. 19. thereby showing how prone our corrupt natures are to commit this sin, and how hard the contrary duty is to flesh and blood. The heathens reckoned revenge to be a part of justice, and ranked it amongst the number of their virtues; but the scriptures require, that instead of revenging an injury, we remit and forgive it. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*; it follows, *rather give place unto wrath*: What wrath? or whose wrath? *Ans.* Give place to your own wrath, say some interpreters; give way a little, and turn aside from the person you are angry with, and do not suffer your anger to hurry you away to revenge. Give place to the wrath of those that wrong you say others; decline their wrath, and give not word for word, which will but add fuel to the fire, and oil to the flame. But it seems best to understand it of God's wrath; leave the matter to God, he will right your cause; do not take God's work out of his hand, but suffer him to come in with his wrath upon your enemies, who wrong and injure you; rather give place to the wrath of God against them; for vengeance is his; and he will re-

pay it. Learn hence, that such, who having suffered wrong, do seek to revenge themselves, take revenging work out of God's hand; whereas, if they leave the matter with God, his justice will right them fully.

20 Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

As if the apostle had said, "Instead of revenge, render kindness, return courtesies for injuries, affability for affronts; *If thine enemy hunger, feed him.*" The words as some critics observe, signify to feed cheerfully and tenderly, as birds feed their young ones. "So doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." By coals of fire, 1. Some understand, an heart melting fire; as if the apostle had said, "By thy kindness thou wilt melt and mollify his spirits towards thee, as hardest metals are melted by coals of fire; it must be a very stony heart indeed, that this fire will not melt, a very disingenuous nature that meekness will not mollify: clemency will melt an enemy, and even force him by a sweet compulsion to become a friend, though of a rugged disposition." 2. By coals of fire heaped upon the head, others understand, a sin-punishing fire. *Thou shalt heap coals of fire* that is, the fire of divine vengeance upon his head, by making his malice and hatred against thee more inexcusable. Learn hence, 1. That to conquer and overcome an enemy by love and kindness, is a noble conquest, and a glorious victory, to melt him down, by obliging favors into a good affection. Learn, 2. That if any enemy, after such kind offices, will persevere in his enmity against us, the event will certainly be this; by our patience towards him, and forbearance of him, we shall engage the wrath of God against him, and heap coals of fire, that is, the divine vengeance upon him.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Learn hence, That every christian should not only take heed that he be not overcome of evil; but also labor and endeavour what in him lieth to overcome evil with good. *Quest.* What are we to understand here by evil. *Ans.* Any unkind or injurious dealings from others, any mischief or ill turn which our neighbour has done us. *Quest.* What is it to be overcome of evil? *Ans.* 1. When we dwell in our thoughts too much, too often, and too long upon the injuries and unkindnesses we have met with: this is, as if a man that was to take down a bitter pill, should be continually champing of it, and rolling it under his tongue. 2. We are overcome of evil, when we are brought over to commit the same evil, by studying to make spiteful returns in a way of revenge, for the injuries we have received. *Quest.* Wherein consist the duty and excellency of overcoming of evil with good? *Ans.* It renders us like to God, who does good to us daily, though we do evil against him continually; hereby we imitate God in one of the choicest perfections of his divine nature; hereby we overcome ourselves; hereby we overcome our enemies, and make them become our friends. *Quest.* How should we overcome evil with good? *Ans.* Ay doing good for evil, by returning courtesies for in-

aries, speaking well of others, although they speak hardly, yea very ill, of us.

CHAPTER XIII.

The apostle having treated of moral duties in the former chapter, treats of political duties in this, proving that magistracy is God's ordinance, for the good of human society, and enforcing the duty of subjection unto magistrates, in obedience to the commandment of God.

LET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God,

Observe here. 1. The title given to magistrates, they are *powers, the higher powers*, that is, persons invested with power, and placed in supreme authority over us. All mankind is not of one rank, doth not stand upon an equal level. Magistracy is an eminency or superiority of some persons above others. Observe, 2. The original fountain from whence all power is derived, and that is God himself; *there is no power but of God*; that is, all power is derived from God, and is to be used for God; the magistrate acts by his authority, and consequently is to act for his interest, honor and glory. It is agreeable to the will of God, that there should be such a thing as magistracy and government in the world; and it is his appointment that men should be governed by men, deriving the power and authority from him; "The powers that be are ordained of God." Observe, 3. The apostle's strict injunction for the subjection unto magistracy, as a divine ordinance; *Let every soul be subject*, that is, every person, be he of what rank, or what station he will, high or low, honorable or ignoble, rich or poor, clergy or laity, he must be subject to God's ordinance. Where note, that Christ is a friend to Cesar, and christianity no enemy to loyalty; the best christians are always the best subjects; none so true to their prince, as they that are most faithful to their God: obedience to magistrates is both the duty of christians, and the interest of christianity.

2. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The forementioned duty of subjection unto magistracy, insisted upon in the foregoing verse, the apostle urges and enforces upon all christians, by sundry arguments in this and the following verses: as namely, 1. From the sinfulness of resistance; "They resist the ordinance of God;" they make war upon God himself; he that rebelleth against his prince, is a rebel also to his God. 2. From the danger of resistance; "They shall receive to themselves damnation." That is, 1. Temporal judgment from the hand of the magistrate, to whom the sword is committed, as Korah, Absalom, and others did experience. 2. Eternal punishment from the hand of God, who will plead the cause, and vindicate the honor of his vice-

gerents, and representatives here upon earth, and cast those into hell, who pour contempt upon them, if sincere repentance by a timely interpose prevent it not.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

Here we have farther argument for subjection to rulers and governors, drawn from the end of the magistrate's office, which is to punish vice, and to promote virtue: *Rulers are not a terror to good works*; that is, they ought not, and they ordinarily are not: they were not ordained for that end, and it is not their place so to be, namely, a terror to the good, but to the bad only; for God giveth no authority against himself, or his own righteous laws, which require the punishing of the bad, and the rewarding of the good. Learn hence, 1. That magistrates, by virtue of their place, ought to be a terror, or exceeding terrible, to evil works and evil workers. Learn, 2. That magistrates are not terrible, but amiable to good men; they fear rulers, but it is with a fear of reverence, not with a tormenting, servile fear. "Do that which is good, and thou shalt not be afraid of the power."

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Here our apostle subjoins the reason, why a magistrate is not to be unduly dreaded and feared by his subjects who live well: for he is by his institution the minister of God to thee for good, if thou be a doer of that which is good. Learn hence, That the magistrate is the minister of God for the good of them over whom he is set, especially of them that are virtuous and good; he is a shield to the godly, a husband to the widow, a father to the orphan, a patron to the poor, and a refuge to the oppressed. Observe farther, how the magistrate is set forth with the ensign of terror to evil-doers; he has a sword put into his hand by God himself, a sword to wound, not a wooden dagger to scare offenders barely; and a sword not rusting in the scabbard, but drawn and whetted; he must show it and strike with it upon a just occasion, and make those feel it who are not awed with the sight of it; *He beareth not the sword in vain*. Observe again, though the magistrate is said to bear a sword, yet he is never called a sword, but a shield often; a shield is for defence, a sword for destruction, intimating that the magistrate's power should be rather executed in protecting than in punishing, rather in saving than destroying. The primary design of the magistracy's power is protection, not destruction; magistrates have swords, but they are shields, and not swords; they have a sword to cut off evil-doers; God help them to draw it upon atheism and blasphemy, upon vice and immorality: one hearty stroke of the magistrate's sword would stun error and vice more than a thousand ser-

mons. Observe lastly, The magistrate is said not to snatch or take the sword, but to bear the sword: he doth not wrest it out of the hand of another, but it is put into his hand by God himself: the commission to bear the sword is from God; the magistrate doth not hold his authority by virtue of the sword, but he holds the sword by virtue of his authority: when he draweth the sword, it is not merely backed with an arm of flesh, but with a warrant and commission signed by God himself. *He beareth the sword.*

5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Here the apostle doth again assert the necessity of subjection to the civil magistrate; seeing that magistracy is God's ordinance, for the good of human society; seeing that the sword in the magistrate's hand is backed and edged with God's authority, therefore there is a necessity of subjection unto magistracy and magistrates; and that for a double reason; for fear of wrath and punishment for man, and from a principle of conscience, in obedience to the command of God: *We must be subject, not only for wrath; that is, not only for fear of man's wrath, but for conscience' sake; that is, with respect to the command of God, which has made subjection our indispensable duty.*

6 For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing.

From the duty of subjection unto magistrates, the apostle proceeds to urge and enforce the duty and necessity of paying tribute to them, or allowing them an honorable maintenance, for and towards the support of the government which they sustain and bear. The payment of taxes and tribute to the supreme magistrate is necessary upon several accounts: 1. As it is an acknowledgment of the power which God hath set over us: 2. As it tends to the support of the government which we live under: 3. As it is a small recompence for the governor's continual care and industry, he attending; that is, watching perpetually, and taking pains continually, for procuring and maintaining the good and happiness of his subjects; and therefore both duty and obligation, both religion and gratitude, do bind and engage us to aid and assist him, and so far as it is in our power, to requite and reward him for his care of the common safety, and regard to the public good.

7 Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

A twofold duty towards magistrates is here laid down by our apostle, namely, maintenance, and reverence: 1. There is due unto them maintenance. Tribute and custom is payable to them for that purpose, and not without great reason and obligation: *for he is the minister of God for our good,* that is, an instrument under God to preserve our blessings to us: and farther, because such supplies are necessary to defray those vast expences, which they are constrained to be at,

for the security and welfare of their subjects. Taxes, tribute, and custom, are not so much gifts, as due debts to princes, which by the command of God are to be justly and cheerfully paid unto them, and which cannot, without sin and injustice, be denied to them, or purloined from them: to cheat our prince is as great a sin in the sight of God, as to rob our father, though few think it so: *Render tribute to whom tribute is due.* Again, 2. There is reverence as well as maintenance due to magistrates; *Render fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor is due.* Fear denotes inward reverence, and honor outward respect. Fear is the magistrate's due by reason of his authority, and honor by reason of his dignity. Here note, that the apostle is thus particular and express in asserting the rights of princes, and assigning the proper duties of subjects towards them, because the Jews held opinions which were destructive of all civil government; as namely, that they being the only people of God, God alone was to be owned as their Lord and Governor, and none under him, but such as should be immediately chosen by him; and as a consequent of this, they refused to pay tribute to Cesar, looking upon that as a token of subjection to him: therefore the apostle here presses the christians at Rome to show their freedom from, and opposition to, all such pernicious principles, and to give the world a convincing proof that christianity makes the best men, the best magistrates, the best subjects of any religion in the world.

8 ¶ Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Our apostle having finished his exhortation to duty towards our superiors, comes now to enforce the duties which we owe unto our neighbours; the first of which is, to render and pay to every one what is due unto him. Moral duties are mutual debts which we owe one another: one of which, namely, that of love, we can never fully discharge, but must be ever paying, yet always owing. *Owe nothing to any man, but love,* implying that must be always owing. The truth is, this debt of love is so far from a possibility of being paid on earth, that it is due in heaven to God, angels, and saints: *There abideth charity,* 1 Cor. xiii. 13. All other debts may be paid whilst we live, but this of love cannot be satisfied whilst we live. Observe, next, The argument, reason or motive, to excite unto this duty, and that is drawn from the excellency of this grace of love: *He that loveth hath fulfilled the law;* that is, he that loveth his neighbour as he should and ought to do, in deed and in truth, out of a pure heart fervently, he hath fulfilled the law, that is, the law relating to his neighbour; the duties of the second table are fulfilled by him.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neigh-

hour: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Two particulars are here observable, namely, a proposition asserted, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*; and this proposition proved by an induction and enumeration of particular duties belonging to the second table. Observe, 1. The proposition asserted and maintained by the apostle, ver. 8, 10, namely, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. But can the law be said to be fulfilled by us? if so, in what sense? *Ans.* By the law here, we are certainly to understand that branch of the moral law which respects our duty to our neighbour. All our duty to man is virtually comprehended in loving them as ourselves; as no man will hurt himself, so neither will he hurt his neighbour, if he loved him as himself: thus love is the complement or fulfilling of the law relating to our neighbour. The church of Rome would infer from hence, that a person may keep the law of God perfectly and without the least deficiency. But observe, He that loveth keepeth the law: how keepeth? Even as he loveth: if he loveth perfectly, he keepeth the law perfectly; but if his love be imperfect, (as is the best on this side heaven) then is his fulfilling of the law imperfect also. Perfect fulfilling of the law is what we should labor after, but whilst in an imperfect state we cannot attain unto: yet such is the grace of God in the gospel, as to account sincerity instead of perfection, and to esteem unfeigned love to our neighbour the fulfilling of the law, or all the duties of the second table. Observe, 2. This proposition is proved by an induction and enumeration of peculiar duties belonging to the second table: "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, nor bear false witness, nor covet;" where all injury is forbidden to be done to our neighbour, in his name, in his estate, marriage-right, &c. and this is called the fulfilling of the law. But how can that be? Is the law fulfilled by mere negatives, by doing no hurt to our neighbours? Is not doing them all the good we can required also? *Ans.* Yes, no doubt: when the apostle says, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, it is implied, that love doth all possible good to his neighbour, as well as worketh no ill; though the negatives only are mentioned, yet the affirmatives also are included.

11 ¶ And that, knowing the time, that now *it is high time to wake out of sleep*; for now *is our salvation nearer than when we believed*.

Here begins the last part of the chapter, which treats of our duty towards ourselves; namely, sobriety, temperance, mortification of sin, and all the works of darkness, such as rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, and the like: and the argument or motive which the apostle uses in this verse to excite and quicken the converted Romans to the last mentioned duties, is drawn from the consideration of their present state and condition; they were believers, the gospel light was risen upon them, and they were nearer salvation now than when they first believed: *Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed*. This by the way, is a meditation full of comfort to a gracious person; every breath he draws, draws him a degree nearer to perfect happiness, he is nearer heaven, nearer his reward, than when in the infancy of his faith; therefore let him gird up the loins

of his mind, and be more cheerful and more laborious in his Lord's work, Lord! how transporting is it to thy faithful ones to consider how small a matter is betwixt them and their complete salvation! no sooner is their breath gone, but the full desire of their souls is come; their salvation is near, very near, much nearer than when they first believed. But oh! what a meditation of terror is it to a wicked person! his damnation is nearer, and every hour nearer and nearer; there is but a puff of breath betwixt him and hell: ere long his last breath and his last hope will expire together. Lord! give sinners' hearts to consider, that a graceless man ere long will be a hopeless man; the state he was born in was sad, the state he is now in is worse, but the state he will shortly be in without conversion, will be unspeakably worst of all; his damnation is near, it slumbereth not.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light,

13 Let us walk honestly as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

Observe here, 1. The apostle puts the Romans in mind of their former state before conversion, when the *night* of heathenish ignorance and darkness was upon them, when they spent their time and strength in *rioting and drunkenness, in lasciviousness and wantonness*. Where note, The odious character wherewith sin is branded: it is *darkness, a work of darkness*: so styled because sin originally springs from darkness, because it naturally delights in darkness, because it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Observe, 2. How he puts them in mind of their present state and condition since the day-star of the gospel did dawn upon them: *The night is far spent, the day is at hand*; that is, the night of heathenish ignorance, blindness and darkness, is in great measure past and over, and the day of grace and salvation is come unto you; gospel light is among you, illuminating grace and saving knowledge is now found with you. Observe, 3. The duties enjoined answerable to the privileges enjoyed, and that is to walk as the children of day, soberly, righteously and godly, abstaining from all intemperance and excess in every kind, and being clothed with all christian virtues and graces, which are called *armor of light*: armor, because they defend us against the assaults of sin, satan, and the world, and all our spiritual enemies whatsoever; and armor of light, because such Christian graces are bright and shining in the eyes of the world. Learn hence, 1. That the enjoyment of gospel light lays a person or a people under special obligations to cast off the works of darkness. 2. That such as enjoy the light and liberty of the gospel, ought to walk as becometh the gospel which they do enjoy; that is, according to the precepts and commands of the gospel, answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the christian up to the expectation of: "this is to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light, &c."

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Observe here, The apostle doth not say as a moral philosopher would have said, "Instead of rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, put on temperance, put on sobriety, put on chastity, and so set a single virtue against a single vice; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, seek by faith union with him, that so you may derive virtue from him, to enable you unto holy walking before him. Set the doctrine and life of Christ continually before you; follow every instruction, and imitate all the parts of his holy conversation; even as the garment is commensurate to the body, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" May not the expression imply, 1. That the soul of man, since the fall, is in a naked state, destitute of those divine graces of the Holy Spirit, which were its original clothing in the day of undefiled innocence? 2. That Jesus Christ is our spiritual clothing? 1. In his righteousness, to pardon and justify us: he is our clothing, to cover the guilt of sin out of God's sight. 2. In his graces, to sanctify us, by which he cleanses us from our sins, pollution, and filthiness. 3. That Jesus Christ, in order to our spiritual clothing, must be put on by faith: an unapplied Christ justifies none, saves none. It was not sufficient under the law, that the blood of the sacrifice was shed, but it was also to be sprinkled, in order to the expiation of guilt. The personal application of Christ's blood by faith on our part, is as absolutely necessary to salvation, as is the shedding of his blood on his part, in order to our remission and salvation. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, It follows, And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Observe the apostle doth not say, *Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the necessities, and the necessary desires thereof:* But to fulfil the lusts or inordinate desires thereof. Then only is provision for the flesh sinful and unlawful, when it is sought, more to satisfy his appetite, and to gratify inordinate desires, than to strengthen and fit us for our duty to God and man. In this latter sense, to make provision for the flesh, is to furnish our enemy with arms and ammunition to fight against ourselves. Interpretatively, he makes provision for his lusts, that doth not provide against them; he feeds his lusts, that doth not starve them; he nourishes and strengthens his lusts, that doth not mortify and kill them: explicitly and directly, men provide for their lusts, by entertaining such thoughts in their minds, as do kindle, excite, and stir up lust; and when those thoughts are gratified with desires, and those desires accompanied with endeavours; but worst and saddest of all it is, when men's desires to gratify their lusts are turned into prayers unto God Almighty, in order to that end. Thus the apostle, James iv. 8. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Learn hence, 1. That a sober and moderate use of the creatures which God has given us, not barely for necessity, but delight, is allowable, and a commanded duty. Learn, 2. That to make use of the comforts of life, not to satisfy our natures, but to gratify our lusts and inordinate desires, is a perverting of God's intention, in bestowing the supports of life upon us, and a very heinous sin. Make we then no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

CHAPTER XIV,

The apostle having laid down those positive duties in the foregoing chapters, in which the life and spirit of christianity do so eminently consist, comes here in this chapter, to treat of things of an indifferent nature, neither commanded nor forbidden by any divine law; and to speak of the right use of our christian liberty. It seems some of the believing Jews at Rome apprehended, that the observation of the ceremonial law, as to meats and days, was yet to be continued. On the other hand, the believing Gentiles, being fully persuaded of their freedom by Christ, refused communion with the Jews that lived after that manner. Hereupon a great dissension arose between them, the Gentiles looking upon the Jews as superstitious, and the Jews censuring the Gentiles as profane. Now St. Paul comes with his bucket to quench this flame, which burnt so vehemently in the church, admonishing the believing Jews, not to condemn the believing Gentiles, and exhorting the believing Gentiles not to refuse communion with the believing Jews; and thus by a mutual forbearance of each other, to hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

HIM that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations.

Observe here, 1. The person described, whom the apostle recommends to their charity and forbearance; *Him that is weak in the faith*; Not him that is sick unto death through fundamental error, but one that is sound in the faith, though weak in judgment; men of honest hearts, but weak heads. Observe, 2. Here is an injunction of charity and christian forbearance towards these weak ones; *Receive them*, take them into your houses, yea, into your hearts; receive them into your society, into your communion, and let not difference in judgment cause any distance in affection. Observe, 3. The limitation of this injunction; *Receive him, but not to doubtful disputations*; that is, "Do not quarrel or contend with him about his opinions, or fill his head full of curious and intricate questions, or trouble him with doubtful disputes. Learn hence, That christians are to receive such as are weak in the faith, into their hearts by love, without troubling their heads with perplexing disputes. Weak christians cannot well judge of arguments: and practical piety, and christian love, will much sooner rectify the judgment of the weak, than fierce argumentations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3 ¶ Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him

which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him.

Here the apostle declares the ground of difference that was between them; namely, the difference of meats. One thought all meats to be lawful under the gospel; another, rather than eat any meats forbidden by the law, will eat only herbs. Where observe, How the church of God, in all ages, has been strangely divided about little and indifferent things. What jars and stirs were there between the eastern and western churches, about the observation of Easter? About celebrating the Lord's Supper with leavened or unleavened bread? And verily, the fatal evils which our hot contentions have occasioned amongst ourselves, only about indifferent rites and ceremonies, tears of blood are not sufficient to bewail. Observe next, The apostle's exhortation to the two contending parties, not to vilify or set at nought one another, condemning each other as humorous and scrupulous, much less as obstinate and wilful; but especially, not upon this occasion to separate from, or break communion with each other. Let not him that eateth all kinds of meats, despise him, that through weakness durst not eat of any. As if the apostle had said, "Whilst there is error in our understandings; weakness in our judgments, narrowness in our faculties, differences will arise in the church of God: but take care, that where there is compliance, that yet there may be peace: despise not, judge not one another." Observe, lastly, The reason offered by the apostle, why they should receive their weak brother; because *God hath received him*. God, that is most holy, and hateth sin, receiveth such; therefore, so must you, if you please God. Why should you refuse to hold communion with such who hold communion with God?

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Another reason is here produced, why we should not rashly censure or judge our brother differing in judgment from us about lesser things; namely, because he is God's servant, and it is God's sentence, and not ours which he must stand or fall by; and if these differences shall not hinder God's acceptance of him to salvation, why should they hinder us in accepting of him into our communion? To love, is our duty; to judge, is God's prerogative: let us be more in charity, and less in censure. Learn hence, That the scripture forbids us to judge one another, as having no grace, for the doing or not doing of those things, which are consistent with a present state of grace.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

The second case as to indifferent things, is about the observation of days. Many of the believing Jews could not be taken off from the solemnizing those feasts which were of God's own founding and instituting among the Jews. Another looked upon them truly as abrogated by Christ. Now, the apostle advises, that neither the one nor the other, neither he that regardeth, nor he that regardeth not those days, should be judged or hardly censured for so doing, because he acts therein according to the direction of his conscience. He that, according to his light, doth either eat or not eat such meats, keep or not keep such days, intends or designs it as an act of obedience to God: praying for, and giving thanks unto Almighty God for his acceptance. So then, if they both aim at the same end, and they ought not to condemn one another for each other's act. Learn hence, That persons, disagreeing with us, and differing from us in lesser things, from a real principle of conscience, firmly persuaded, that what they do, or refuse to do, is for the glory of God, and out of a sincere desire to please him, ought not to be judged by us, but left to the righteous judgment of the heart-searching God.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's,

Here our apostle proves what he had before asserted, that christians in their particular actions, have a special regard to the Lord and his honor, because they devote themselves, living and dying, to the service of him and his glory: *None of us, Christians, lives unto himself*, but we spend our lives in his service; neither do we die unto ourselves, nor when we please, but when he appoints: therefore, *living or dying*, we are his. From the words absolutely considered, we may learn, That the best evidence we can have that we are Christ's servants, is this, when we make our aim and scope, our design and care, to live and die unto Christ our Lord, and not unto ourselves. Quest. "But when may we be said to live unto the Lord, and to die unto the Lord?" Ans. When we do not frame our lives after our own wills, but according to the word and will of God, making that the rule and ground of all our actions; when the great end why we desire life, is to do service for Christ on earth, and to be fitted by him for the fruition of him in heaven. Finally, then, we live and die unto the Lord, when we are willing to be at the disposal of God, both for life and death; and

this as to a time, manner, and means; yea, all circumstances whatsoever, both of life and death. When a man is willing to lay down his life for the Lord, or at the call of the Lord, it is a certain evidence, that he liveth and dieth to the Lord.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

11 For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Three things are here observable: 1. That Jesus Christ, by virtue of his meritorious passion, and glorious resurrection, was constituted Lord of all things, and his power to judge all persons. "To this end Christ died, rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living; that is, be the judge and rewarder of all mankind. Observe, 2. That to this supreme and absolute Lord every one of us must give an account of our actions, and from him receive our final doom: "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Observe, 3. The argument which the apostle draws from hence to dissuade us from censuring and judging one another; and that is drawn from the consideration of the last and final judgment, which we are all hastening apace unto. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." As if the apostle had said, "Let there be a mutual forbearance among christians: do not rashly judge, and uncharitably censure one another, because in some little things you differ from each other. What though your brother cannot in conscience comply with your opinion or practice, must you presently accuse him of stomach, and condemn him for stubbornness, calling his non-compliance obstinacy, and humor, pride and singularity, which he calls *conscience towards God*? Remember the judge standeth at the door, and you must suddenly stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; *where every one of us must give an account of himself to God*. Where note, the universality of the subjects rendering this account, *every one of us*: The subject-matter of which the account must be rendered; and that is, *of ourselves*: As also the designation and description of the person unto whom this account must be rendered: and that is, to the all-seeing and heart-searching God; to God the Creator, but especially to Christ the Lord, the Redeemer, who is such a judge as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a judge as the riches of the wealthiest cannot bribe; such a judge as the subtilty of the wisest cannot delude; such a judge as there is no appealing from, no repealing of his sentence: "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, till the Lord cometh."

13 ¶ Let us not, therefore, judge one

another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him, *it is* unclean.

15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Observe here, 1. How the apostle advises persons to be very cautious in the use of their christian liberty: *Put not a stumbling block, or an occasion of falling in your brother's way*. Learn thence, That to use our christian liberty when it may be an occasion of sin, by laying a stumbling-block before others, although we do not use it with an intent or purpose to make them stumble, is very sinful. Observe, 2. The apostle's final determination concerning those meats, which some of the Jews scrupled as unclean, "I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is nothing unclean of itself." The difference and distinction of meats, as clean and unclean, was taken away by our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. That although the apostle pronounces that there is no meat unclean in itself, yet notwithstanding this, to him that esteemeth any thing unclean, to him, as to the use of it, it is unclean. Observe, 4. With what tenderness the apostle directs all christians to carry themselves towards their weaker brethren, even to the abridging themselves of their lawful liberty in the use of indifferent things, rather than give the weak an occasion of offence. *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat*, (though no meat be unclean in itself,) yet in eating thou dost amiss, for three reasons: 1. Because it is against the laws of charity so to act in things indifferent; If thy brother be grieved, now walkest thou uncharitably." 2. Because it is the way to occasion him to sin, and consequently to do what in us lies to bring destruction upon him, for whom Christ died: "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." 3. Because eating thus with offence to the weak; causeth christian liberty, purchased by Christ, to be evil spoken of before the world: *Let not then your good be evil spoken of*. The sum of the whole is this, to show how uncharitable, unsafe, and unchristian a thing it is to make such an undue use of our christian liberty, as may occasion our weak brother to fall or stumble.

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

That is, "The spiritual kingdom of God and Christ in the world, consisteth not in these little things of meat and drink, but in righteousness towards God and our neighbour; in peace, that is, in peaceableness of disposition in christian

love, concord, and unity; and in joy in the Holy Ghost, that is, in the joyful sense of the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. In these things christianity consists." Learn hence, That the essence of christianity, and the life of religion, is far from consisting in little and indifferent things; and therefore, for persons to lay a mighty stress upon them one way or the other, is neither wise nor safe. Learn, 2 That righteousness and holiness, charity and peaceableness, love and joy, and such like fruits of the Holy Spirit; these are the great things wherein christianity or the kingdom of Christ consists, and in which the life and soul of religion is found. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

He that in these things, that is, in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, serveth Christ, is acceptable to God: That is, this shows and evidences that he is a person accepted with God and approved of men, of wise, charitable, and good men; yea, the natural consciences of men in general will applaud and approve what is done by him, notwithstanding the forementioned difference in lesser things concerning meats and days. Learn hence, That the love and practice of religious duties, such as righteousness and peace, is a clear and strong argument of a person's acceptance with God. Learn, 2. That such as are for those things accepted by God, ought by no means, for differing from us in lesser things, to be disowned of us, and cast out of communion by us.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

This verse is an inference drawn from the foregoing discourse. "Seeing the kingdom of God, or our common christianity, doth not consist either in the doing or declining of these little indifferent things, let us by no means hazard the peace of the church, or break communion with such as in their sentiments differ from us; much less let us despise and set at nought each other, upon the account of those small, yet unhappy differences; but let us earnestly pursue the things that make for the common peace of all christians, and the things by which we may further each other's edification and salvation. Learn hence, That in case of any emergent differences among christians, it ought to be the joint care and endeavour of all and every one to pursue the things which make for peace, and that this peace be such as will consist with, and greatly help forward the good of the church: Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

That is, "For meat destroy not *thou* the work of God,

Do not *thou*, for so inconsiderable a matter as eating is, endanger the christianity of thy brother, or hazard the peace of the church, and cause any through scandal to fall off from their christian profession. If any of you say, that all meats are clean, and therefore lawful; in answer, they are certainly so in themselves, but yet it is your sin, if you use them to the scandal and offence of others, that are not satisfied in the lawfulness of them." It is most certainly the duty of christians to deny themselves the use of their christian liberty in some things, when by making use of it, they may endanger any of their brethren, by causing them to fall from their own steadfastness.

21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

It is not good; that is, it is not charitable to make use of any part of our christian liberty, when by so doing any weak christian is offended, discouraged, and driven from his profession, and brought to any kind of sin. And if it be a christian's obliged duty to forbear the use of indifferent things, when it is a scandal to the weak; how much more is it a duty to avoid obtruding and imposing such things, to the scandal, offence, and hurt of others?

22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Here the apostle answers an objection, Some might be ready to say, "That they had faith, that is, a firm and full persuasion, that it is lawful for them to eat those meats, which others judged to be sinful; and therefore it is necessary that they profess it, and own it, and assert their liberty." The apostle answers, "Hast thou more knowledge than he, to believe those things to be lawful, which he apprehends to be sinful? Keep thy knowledge and belief to thyself, to justify thy actions before God, but use it not to the hurt and prejudice of others; for he is a happy man, that when he knows a thing to be lawful, doth so use his liberty about it, as not to offend others, or condemn himself: for that is a sad kind of knowledge which is used to destroy others, and condemn ourselves. Such christians as have different sentiments from their brethren, as to the matters of indifferent things especially, ought to keep their judgment and opinion to themselves, and not to hazard the peace of the church by an imprudent publication: *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself.*

23 And he that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because he *eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.

That is, "He that doubteth whether he should eat or no, and yet eats, is condemned of himself, because he doth a thing when he is not satisfied of its lawfulness; for whatsoever is not done of faith, that is, with a persuasion that it is lawful, is to him that does it undoubtedly sinful. Whatever a man does, believing it to be a sin, is certainly a sin in him." Here observe, That an erring conscience binds us

to do nothing against it. A scrupulous conscience is a troublesome one, but it is better than a presumptuous conscience. As we must not nourish our scruples and doubtings, so neither must we act against our scruples and doubts. In short no man is to act contrary to his conscience; but then it is as much his duty to inform his conscience, as to follow his conscience. To act against conscience, is a very great sin; but a man may act according to his conscience, and yet be a very great sinner. St. Paul, when he was a bloody persecutor, tells us, he acted according to his conscience, Acts xxvi. 9. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Pray we then for a conscience rightly informed by the word of God; and that we may so follow the dictates and directions of it whilst we live, that it may neither reprove nor reproach us when we come to die. Amen.

CHAPTER XV.

Our apostle having spent the foregoing chapter in a general exhortation and direction to stronger christians, how they should carry themselves toward their weak brethren in the use of their christian liberty about indifferent things, advising them neither to be censorious in judging one another, nor yet to put a stumbling-block in the way of one another, to occasion their falling; in the former part of this chapter he proceeds upon the same argument, and prosecutes the same design, exhorting the stronger christians to bear with the infirmities of their weaker brethren; and this from the example of Jesus Christ. And accordingly he bespeaks them thus, ver. 1.

WE then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 ¶ Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Observe here, 1. A great doctrine asserted, and a special duty declared, namely, that the strong, that is, such as do thoroughly understand their christian liberty, should bear with the infirmities, the ignorance, frowardness, and scrupulousness of the weak, and also forbear the doing of that which may scandalize and hurt the souls of men, who have not the same measures of knowledge with ourselves; "the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Observe, 2. The universality of the duty; *We*, that is, not only all private christians, but all church governors: he puts himself into the number, that he may propose himself as an example of the following duty: *We*, that are the officers, the

pastors and governors of the church, like parents who bear with children in their waywardness, so must we bear, though not with heresies in doctrine, or enormities in practice, yet with such errors and mistakes in both, as proceed from ignorance or common infirmities. Observe, 3. A farther duty urged and enforced, namely not to please ourselves but others: "Let every one of us not please ourselves, but our neighbours;" that is, not please ourselves by insisting upon the use of our lawful liberty, but rather, for the sake of others, depart a little from our own right. Yet observe, 4. The limitation and restriction of this duty, "for his good to edification;" it is not simply and absolutely said, "Let every one please his neighbour." The heretic, the drunkard, and others, would like that well, to have every one speak and act as they do: but the rule is, to please every man "for his good to edification;" thus far we may please them, but no farther. Edification is the rule and scope, and boundary of all our complacency in, and complacency with others. Observe, 5. How the apostle urges and enforces this duty, from the example of Jesus Christ: "He pleased not himself," therefore such as profess faith in him, must study to be as he was: nothing was more remote from Christ when here on earth, than self-seeking, and self pleasing; he did not consult his own ease or satisfaction, but rather respected others benefit than his own: yea, he was so far from pleasing of himself, that he did willingly expose himself to all the reproaches and contumelies of men, in obedience to his Father's will; and was so tender of God the Father's honor, that all the reproaches which fell upon the one, affected and afflicted the other: "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me." Now from the whole we note, That christians ought to be very tender towards one another in the use of their lawful liberty: they must not do whatever they please in things of an indifferent nature, without showing any regard to others; much less should they please themselves in a proud reflecting upon their own knowledge, and in contemning those that have not so great a latitude and liberty as themselves: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities, &c.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope.

The apostle here informs us what is the general use of the holy scriptures, and what is the particular reason for which they were written; namely, 1. For instruction, "they were written for our learning;" all the precepts, promises, threatenings, rewards, and punishments, recorded in the scriptures are for our information, conviction, and direction. 2. They were written for our comfort and consolation also, "that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope," that is, that we through patience in bearing the like censures and reproaches, which we find the scripture-saints have borne before us, might have hope of being rewarded as they were for it. Learn hence, That the great end for which the holy scriptures were written, was the informing of our judgments, and the directing of our practice, that by the examples which we find there of the patience of holy men under sufferings, and of God's relieving and comforting them in their distresses, we might have hope, yea, confidence

and assurance, that God will also comfort and relieve us, under the like pleasures and burdens.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle concludes his foregoing exhortation, with *voive supplications, and fervent prayer*; the ministers of God must follow the word they deliver with prayer: they must not only wrestle with their people; but they must wrestle with God for and in behalf of their people, if they ever hope to overcome. Observe, 2. The prayer and supplication itself, and that is, for concord and unity among christians: "That they may with one mind and one mouth glorify God;" that in their christian assemblies they may all worship God after the same manner; and not one this way, and another that. Unity among christians in common conversation, but especially in church communion, is a very desirable mercy, and much to be prayed for, by the ministers of God. Observe, 3. How the apostle addresses himself in prayer to God for this mercy under a double title. 1. As a God of patience, "The God of patience grant you to be like minded;" intimating, 1. What great need there is of patience, in order to maintain love and unity among christians: and, 2. That God must be applied to in prayer, who is the author of it, to produce and work this grace of patience, in order unto peace and unity among christians: "The God of patience grant you to be like-minded." The unity of the saints greatly depends upon the exercise of patience one towards another; and that they might attain it, he begs the God of patience to give it. 3. Our apostle joins with this another title, namely, "the God of consolation;" wherein he points them to that abundant comfort, which would result to themselves from such a blessed unity, continued and maintained by the mutual exercises of patience and forbearance one towards another: "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another." Observe, 4. The pattern and example which he lays before them to excite and quicken them to this duty, namely, the example of Christ himself; "according to Christ Jesus," that is, according to the example of Christ Jesus: as if the apostle had said, "Let us consider how the Lord Jesus bears with us, how many thousand infirmities and failings doth he find in the best of us, yet he is pleased to maintain communion with us; and shall not we after his example do the like, that thereby God may be eminently glorified by us?" Observe, 5. How God is called the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 6. 1. As he begat him by an eternal and ineffable generation. 2. As he was man, so he created him, St. Luke i. 35. 3. As Mediator, so he appointed him to, and qualified him for that office. And eternally magnified be omnipotent love, that the comfort of this compellation redounds to us! for, as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so he is in him our Father also, our merciful, our gracious and loving Father: may we never demean ourselves towards him as dutiful and obedient children.

7 ¶ Wherefore receive ye one another,

as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Here our apostle concludes the argument which he had hitherto insisted upon in this and the former chapter, namely, that all christians, both strong and weak, should mutually forbear one another, and that both Jew and Gentile should receive each other into fellowship and communion, without contention about things of an indifferent nature: "Wherefore receive ye one another," And, to enforce this exhortation, he propounds the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Receive one another, as Christ also received us;" that is, after the example of Christ, who puts no difference betwixt Jew and Gentile, but receives both, and bears with the infirmities of both: which action in Christ, and the imitation of it in us, will much redound to the glory of God; his declarative and manifestative glory being much promoted by this concord and union with and among all his members, of what denomination soever they are, whether believing Jews or Gentiles. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ has given full and ample demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people. 2. That this love of Christ towards all his children and people ought to be improved by them, as an argument to love one another: "Receive one another, as Christ received us:" 3. That christians receiving, embracing, and loving one another, and bearing with one another's weaknesses and infirmities, according to Christ's example and command, will contribute exceedingly to the honor and glory of Almighty God, and to the abundant consolation and satisfaction of each other: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

8 Now I say, that Jesus Christ was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11 And again, Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles; and laud him all ye people.

12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.

The apostle had in the foregoing verse, propounded the example of Christ in receiving both Jew and Gentile to his grace and favor, as an argument to persuade all christians to receive one another: now, in the verses before us, he declares how and after what manner Christ received both Jews and Gentiles. As for the Jews, first, whom he calls *the circumcision*, the apostle telleth us, That Jesus was their

minister; that is, he was circumcised like them, conversed generally with them, and exercised his ministry among them, according to the many promises which God had made to the Jewish patriarchs; and thus he showed his love and mercy towards the Jews in the days of his flesh. Then, secondly, as to the Gentiles he affirms, that according to the several prophecies and promises in the Old Testament, they were called and received to mercy by our Lord Jesus Christ, the partition-wall being by him broken down, and Jew and Gentile become one sheepfold, under one shepherd. Now, from the truth and faithfulness of Christ towards the Jews; and from his love and tenderness, mercy and compassion towards the Gentiles; and from his divine indulgence towards both, the apostle very fitly draws this inference and conclusion, That all christians, how differing sever from one another in their judgments and opinions as to lesser things, ought to receive one another into fellowship and christian communion: and instead of biting and devouring one another, be once at length so wise and happy, as to hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

13 Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle closes his exhortation to brotherly concord and unity with a pithy and pathetic prayer; his example herein is instructive. Observe, 2. The title or appellation which he gives unto God in prayer: *The God of hope*: sometimes he styles him the God of grace, sometimes the God of peace, sometimes the God of patience, here the God of hope; he being so objectively, the only object of our common hope: and also effectively, as he is the author and producer of hope in us. Observe, 3. The mercies he prays for, 1. That they may "be filled with all joy and peace in believing," that their hearts may overflow with peace from God, and one towards another, and with all that joy which results from both. 2. That "they may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; where, by *hope*, understand the good hoped for, namely, heaven and eternal life, a firm expectation of which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Learn, 1. That God is the object of a christian's hope, and if so, the sin of despair is a most unreasonable sin: for why should any despair of his mercy, who is the God of hope, who commands us to hope in his mercy, and takes pleasure in them that do so; Ps. cxlvii. 11. Learn, 2. That the grace of hope, together with joy and peace in believing, are wrought in the christian's heart through the power of the Holy Ghost, that is, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, enlightening the understanding, inclining the will, rectifying the affections, and reducing all the rebellious powers and faculties of the soul (in concurrence with our endeavours) under the government and dominion of reason and religion.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another,

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God.

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have, therefore, whereof, I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

Our apostle being now about to conclude his epistle to the church at Rome, excuses himself that he had written so largely, and with such freedom to them, believing that they abounded in grace and knowledge, and were very fit and able to instruct and direct one another; however he thought fit to write unto them, having had the honor conferred upon him by Christ, to be called to the apostolical office, and particularly to be the ambassador of Christ to the Gentiles; most passionately desiring that he might present and offer them unto God, as an acceptable sacrifice through the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost; and that his success in the conversion of the Gentiles would be matter of abundant glorifying to him. Here observe, 1. How the apostle, in preparing the Gentiles for the obedience of the gospel compares himself to a Levitical priest, conversant about his sacrifice, and fitting it to be offered up to God. 2. That the Gentiles dedicated by the apostle's ministry to the service of God, were the apostle's sacrifice and oblation. 3. That the Holy Spirit is a libamen poured on this sacrifice; by which it is sanctified and rendered acceptable unto God. 4. That such an oblation, or offering up of a people in this manner unto God, is matter of rejoicing, yea, matter of glorying, to the ministers of Jesus Christ; I have therefore, whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ."

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed.

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God: so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

21 But, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and

they that have not heard, shall understand.

Observe here, 1. The indefatigable industry and pains of the holy apostle, in order to the conversion of the Gentiles: "From Jerusalem round about to Illyricum he fully preached the gospel of Christ." This, according to Parcus' computation, was little less than a thousand miles. The industry of the apostles in planting and propagating the gospel of Christ, was almost incredible. Lord, what pains did they take? What hazards did they run? What difficulties did they contest and contend with, in that great work? Observe, 2. That although their industry was great, yet their success was greater than their industry, and beyond all human expectation. This appears by the vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space: "From Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum." Within thirty years after our Saviour's death, the gospel was not only diffused through the greatest part of the Roman empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. Observe, 3. That the gospel or doctrine of Jesus had likewise a wonderful power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men: the apostle tells us, that the Gentiles who were converted to christianity, *were obedient by word and deed*: upon the change of their religion, followed the change of their conversation, and whole course of life. Observe, 4. The reason of all this wonderful success which St. Paul and other apostles had in preaching the gospel; and that was the extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost, in enabling them to work miracles for the confirmation of the gospel, ver. 19. "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." Such was the miraculous power of healing diseases, of casting out devils! of inflicting corporeal punishment upon scandalous persons! all of which did serve in general for the confirmation of the gospel, and did in particular support the honor and authority of the apostles, and supply the want of the magistrate's power, which the christians could not expect whilst the Roman emperors continued Heathen: not that all these miraculous powers were given to every one of the apostles, or that they, which had them could exercise them at all times, or whenever they pleased; but only as was most expedient for the use and benefit of the church. Observe, 5. That the apostle, in preaching the gospel, chose to go to such dark and blind places as never heard of the gospel before, rather than amongst them where Christ had been named, that so he might lay the foundation of christianity himself, and not build upon another man's foundation: and likewise that in his ministry, the prophecy of Esaias might be fulfilled, chap. lii. 15. "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard, shall understand."

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now, having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you:

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: For I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you;

if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

The apostle having in the former verses, excused himself for dealing so plainly in his writings with them, doth here apologize for his not coming amongst them, affirming, that the true reason why he did not visit Rome, was this: He looked upon planting of churches as more necessary than watering of them, and the preaching of Christ where he had never been named, to be the most needful work. Now at Rome there had before been a church planted, and elders ordained to build upon that foundation; for this reason he had hitherto declined coming to Rome; but now, *having no more place in these parts*, that is, having no more churches to plant hereabouts, he signifies both his inclinations and fixed resolutions to visit them at Rome, as he took his journey into Spain, and to stay some time with them, that they might be mutually filled and satisfied with, and refreshed by, each other's company. Here note, 1. That the Romans were very early converted and called to the christian faith, soon after Christ's ascension; for the twentieth year after it, did Paul write this epistle. But he had a desire of seeing the Romans many years before he wrote unto them, and therefore many years before they were converted to the faith. Note, 2. That our journeying from one place to another, is not according to our purpose, but God's disposal. The apostle, no doubt, intended to go into Spain when he wrote this; but God over-ruled the matter beyond the apostle's expectation. The travels of the apostles from place to place, in order to the planting and propagating of the christian faith, were under the special influence and direction of the Holy Ghost, Acts xvi. 7. "They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Note, 3. The great end why the apostle was so desirous of the sight and enjoyment of the christians at Rome: it was that he might be refreshed, nay, *filled with their company*. Lord, how desirable is the communion of saints, and how beneficial the society of sincere and serious christians! Their company in filling (not empty, vain and frothy, as the company of most is, but) administering both grace and comfort to them that copy it: "I desire to see you in my journey, that I may be filled with your company."

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them *verily*: and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29 And I am sure that when I come

unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Here the apostle acquaints them with his present intended journey to Jerusalem, as also with the occasion of it; namely, to carry the charitable contributions to the Greek churches in Macedonia and Achaia, into Judea, and up to the poor saints at Jerusalem, whose necessities required it, and unto whom they were in a sort indebted for it; "the Gentiles having been made partakers of their spiritual things, (receiving the gospel from Judea) they are obliged in gratitude to minister to them in carnal things. He farther assures them, that as soon as he had finished his journey and performed this charitable office, he would come to them, and that in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. Note here, 1. The title given to the poor christians at Jerusalem: They are called *saints*; "I go to Jerusalem to administer to the saints' necessities." Saints they were by baptismal dedication, by visible profession, and many, yea most of them, it is to be hoped by inward sanctification also. Note, 2. That poverty and sanctity are not inconsistent; the saints at Jerusalem are poor, but God provided a purveyor for them; he stirs up the apostle, and the hearts of the Macedonians, to administer to the necessities of these poor saints. Note, 3. How the saints in one church did succour and relieve the poor christians in another; these in Macedonia and Achaia send relief into Judea, and to the poor saints which were at Jerusalem: teaching us, that it is our obliged duty to extend our charity to the churches abroad and beyond the seas, when their wants and necessities require it, and our capacities enable us unto it. Note, 4. The nature of this charity declared; it was a free and cheerful contribution performed with much pleasure: *it pleased them to make a contribution*; it was not extorted or squeezed from them, but given with cheerfulness by them: contributions must not be compulsions, but voluntary obligations. Note, 5. How this charity is called fruit; *When I have sealed this fruit*: because it was the fruit of their faith, liberality, and love: because as fruit, it would redound both to the benefit of the giver and receiver. Charity and alms are fruit redounding to account in the great day of account. Note, 6. The great integrity and fidelity of the apostle in securing of this charity: "when I have sealed, or secured, unto them this fruit." The church's charity is a sealed treasure, not to be diminished and embezzled, but applied to the uses to which it is devoted. Note, lastly, the assurance which he gives them, that when he comes among them, he shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace unto them: that is, with a full impartment of spiritual gifts and gospel blessings, much knowledge, grace and comfort.

30 Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea: and that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints.

32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Here in the close of the epistle, our apostle most affectionately recommends himself to the prayers of the christian Romans unto whom he wrote: *I beseech you, brethren, strive, &c.* Where observe, 1. The apostle's courteous compellation, *brethren*. There is a threefold brotherhood, which the scripture takes notice of: 1. between Christ and believers: Heb. ii. 11. "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." 2. Betwixt believers themselves, they are brethren by grace: 1 Pet. ii. 17. *Love the brotherhood*; that is, the collective body of believers. 3. Betwixt the ministers of Christ and their beloved people, there is also a brotherhood, Rev. i. 19. *I John your brother*: teaching the ministers of the gospel to carry it towards their people with love and gentleness, and the people to make reciprocal returns of love and affection. Observe, 2. The manner of the apostle's request: it is by way of supplication and entreaty: *I beseech you brethren*. Though as an apostle he might have enjoined them, yet for love's sake he rather entreats them. Observe, 3. The request itself, that they strive together in their prayers for him. The original word signifies to strive together as wrestlers do, who exert all their power and might in that bodily exercise. Observe, 4. Our apostle's sincerity, and holy ingenuity in this request which he makes unto them; he desires them to *strive with them* in their prayers to God for him: he doth not with some, beg the prayers of others, and neglect to pray for himself, but is willing to draw with them in the same yoke. Observe, 5. A double argument which the apostles make use of, to enforce his supplication and request: 1. for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, for the sake of him who is so dear both to you and me. 2. For the love of the Spirit; that is, if the grace of love be wrought in you by the Holy Spirit of God, show it by your fervent prayer for all saints in general, and for myself a minister of Jesus Christ in particular. Observe, 6. The particulars concerning which he desires their supplications: 1. For preservation in his journey to Judea; that the unbelieving Jews, which were prejudiced against him, might have no power to hurt him. 2. That his person, and his performance for the poor saints at Jerusalem, might find acceptance with the christian Jews, to whom he was not over acceptable; he therefore begs their prayers, that the believing Jews at Jerusalem might be reconciled both to the believing Gentiles that sent this alms, and also to himself that brought it; "That my service for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." 3. That he might have a prosperous journey to them by the will of God. Where note, How much it is our duty always, and in all things, to refer ourselves, our intentions and actions, to the pleasure and providence, to the wisdom and will of God. And observe, lastly, the special reason why he was so desirous to visit and come unto them, that he might be refreshed with them, and by them; that the company and conversation of each other may be to their mutual refreshment and satisfaction: "that I may come unto you with joy, by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI,

This chapter, which closes our apostle's epistle to the Romans, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of some particular persons: according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labor of love for the interest of Christ and his church.

I COMMEND unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

The first person here mentioned is Phebe: who, going upon some occasion to Rome, St. Paul is supposed to have sent this epistle to the Romans by her: "I commend, says he, to your care and affectionate regard, Phebe, our sister in the faith, who served the church at Cenchrea," in the quality of a deaconess, as some think, or as others, who spent her time in receiving and harbouring poor christians that were driven out of their own country, and who had been a succourer and supporter of the apostle himself. He exhorts them to receive her in the Lord; that is, with christian love for the Lord's sake, and to be assistant and helpful to her in her outward affairs and business. Learn hence, what honor God puts upon the female sex, in making use of some of them to be assistants of the apostles, and taking care that their offices of love and service for and towards the ministers and members of Christ, should not be forgotten, but had and kept in everlasting remembrance. The services which Phebe did, are here recorded, to posterity transmitted, and to our imitation recommended.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus;

4 (Who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.)

5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.—

The first persons at Rome, whom St. Paul saluteth by name, are Priscilla and Aquila. The woman is named before her husband, and shows that they were all one in Christ Jesus, in whom is neither male nor female.—Here, by the way, it appears how weakly the papists argue for St. Peter's primacy, because placed first in the catalogue of the apostles. By the same argument, the woman is the head of the man, because here named before the man. Observe, 2, The honorable title which St. Paul puts upon these two persons, Aquila and Priscilla; he calls them his helpers in Christ Jesus. They were his assistants in propagating

the gospel by private instruction, though not by public preaching, Acts xviii. 26. Observe, 3. The christian courage which was found with this holy woman Priscilla, and her husband Aquila: "They laid down their own necks for the apostles; that is, exposed themselves to the hazard of their own lives for his preservation. Observe, 4. The thankful remembrance which the apostle and all the churches of the Gentiles had of this their great and noble service, in hazarding their own lives for his: "to whom I give thanks, and all the churches of the Gentiles." Because St. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and his preservation redounded to the benefit of them all; therefore were the churches of the Gentiles so sensible of, and thankful for, the apostle's preservation. Observe lastly, the salvation sent to the church that was in their house. By which some understand their household, the christian family, which he calls a church, because of the pious order, and religious worship which was there observed. O happy houses! and thrice happy householders! whose families are little churches for piety and devotion. Others understand by the church in their house, the number of christians which used there to assemble for religious worship. Be it the one or the other, our apostle forgets not to send kind and christian salutations to them.

—Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.

6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us,

7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me,

Three persons are here saluted by name: the first, Epenetus, whom he calls the first-fruits of Achaia; that is, the first person that embraced christianity, or the faith of Christ, in the region of Achaia: the second is Mary, a common name, but the person here intended was of special note, having bestowed much pains upon, and done many good offices for, the preachers of the gospel: the third is Andronicus, noted for his sufferings and services among the apostles, as also for his early embracing the christian faith. He was in Christ before me: that is, converted to christianity before myself. Learn hence, 1. That seniority in grace is a very great honor: and to be in Christ before others is a transcendent prerogative. Learn, 2. That God will have the good works of all his saints, and the services especially which are done to his ministers and ambassadors by any of his people, to be applauded, valued, and recorded. Mary's labor bestowed on the apostle, is here mentioned with respect.

8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.

9 Salute Urbane our helper in Christ and Stachys my beloved.

10 Salute Apelles, approved in Christ.

Salute them which are of Aristobolus' household.

11 Salute Herodian my kinsman. Greet them that be of the *household* of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12 Salute Tryphena, and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.

13 Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine,

14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15 Salute Philologos, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Here observe, 1. How the apostle salutes the christians at Rome, not in general, but particularly, and by name, that they might be convinced how particularly mindful he was of them. And as he mentions them by name in the salutations, it is not improbable, but that he might mention them also by name in his supplications and private addresses to God. No doubt he bore them, and all converted by him, upon his heart, whenever he went in and out before the Lord. A spiritual father can never be forgetful of his spiritual children. Observe, 2. The persons saluted by the apostle are not men of fame in Rome, noted for their dignity and greatness, or for their wealth and riches, but for their piety and goodness, for laboring in the Lord, and for laboring much in the Lord, for being in Christ, approved in Christ, and helpers in Christ; that is, assistants in propagating the gospel of Christ, and serviceable to those whose work and office it was so to do. It is religion that renders persons renowned, and no persons deserve so well to be remembered by us, as those that are most persevering and laborious in their services for God. Observe, 3. Here are several women, as well as men, remembered and saluted, and their services for Christ and his ministers recorded. God will have none of his faithful servants forgotten, nor any of their good deeds buried in oblivion. Observe, 4. That in all this roll of salutations, there is no mention made of St. Peter's name. Had he now been at Rome, as the papists will have him, and bishop of that see, it had been morally impossible for our apostle to have forgotten him in his salutations, when so many of his inferiors were remembered by him.

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Observe here, How the apostle proceeds from greeting the saints at Rome himself, to persuade them to salute one another. There had been much dissension among them about meats and days; he therefore craves of them for the

future to embrace each other with cordial love, and affectionate kindness; and, as a token and symbol of it, to salute one another with an holy kiss, the usual expression of friendship in those times. The primitive christians, at the end of their prayers, before the celebration of the sacrament, did salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and cup were brought forth; and some observe, that it was done by the men apart and the women apart. But this custom being afterwards abused, was gradually laid aside. That which is lawful in its use, and innocent in its own nature, may and ought to be laid aside, when it becomes matter of scandal and just offence.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle takes his leave and farewell of these Romans, with an admonition to them, to take heed of persons that were erroneous in doctrine, and scandalous in practice. It is probable, he means, either Jews who pleaded the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the Mosaic rites, as necessary to the salvation of the Gentiles; or the Gnostics, to whom the following characters do well agree. Whoever they were, they were dangerous seducers, and to be avoided. Observe, 2. The character which our apostle gives of these persons; "They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Note, The seducers are always self-seekers; they are designing men: they aim at themselves, under a pretence of acting for Christ and his glory. "They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." Observe, 3. The arts and methods which they use to delude and deceive: "By good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple." Seducers have smooth and glossy tongues: and innocent harmless men are misled by their fine pretences, and fair fair speeches: and thus they impose upon the simple. Observe, 4. The double advice which the apostle gives, in order to their being preserved and secured from the poison and contagion of these seducers; namely, to mark them, and avoid them. 1. To mark them: the word signifies such a marking, as a watch-man useth when he standeth upon a tower to descry an enemy, which is performed with great accuracy. 2. To avoid them as a sound person would shun him that has the plague upon him. Where note, The apostle advises to mark them, in order to the declining of them, not destroying of them; to cut them off by excommunication, not to cut their throats, or burn their bodies for heresy. "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them." Observe, 5, The persons whom this exhortation concerns, who they are that should judge of the doctrines of seducers; they are the common people, the Romans, the saints or christians at Rome, to whom he was now writing; to them the apostle allows a judgment of discretion, a power to try and examine the doctrines delivered by persons pretending

to infallible inspiration: "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned." Christians are by no means to be led by their teachers blind-fold, but ought to see with their own eyes, to take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial, to examine the doctrines they are taught, and to observe and mark the teachers of them "I beseech you," says our apostle, "mark them."

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad, therefore, on your behalf; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

As if the apostle had said, "I do not accuse you, but advise and warn you only: I acknowledge that you, the Christians at Rome, are famous for your obedience to the apostolical doctrine, and that you walk in faith and love, in unity and concord, to the credit of the gospel, and to the honor of your holy religion. But I would have you know, that you are not wholly out of danger of being infected by these Judaizers: I wish you therefore wisdom to escape their snares; the Lord make you wise as well as zealous, that you may discern that which is good, and decline that which is evil." Learn hence, That the holiest, best and wisest of Christians, must look upon themselves as secure from the snares of seducers, but stand in need of all the cautions and warnings, of all the advice and counsel of their spiritual guides, in order to their preservation from the poison of their principles, and the contagion of their example.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. AMEN.

These words may be considered either relatively, or absolutely, if relatively, or with relation to the context, then by Satan is to be understood seducers and false teachers, whom he had warned the Romans of, in the preceding verses: "Mark them which cause divisions, &c." Learn hence, 1. That all corrupters of divine truths, and troublers of the church's peace, are Satan's instruments: *God shall bruise Satan*, that is, Satan in his instruments, *under your feet*. Learn, 2. That divine evangelical truth shall be finally victorious: no weapon formed against it shall prosper; the head of error shall fall low at last at the feet of truth. Seducers may bluster for a time, but shall be bruised at last; the God of peace shall bruise Satan shortly. Consider the words absolutely, and we have a victory proclaimed; the author of that victory declared, the God of peace; the enemy conquered, Satan; the conquest or manner of conquering, by bruising; the time of the conquest, not presently, but shortly. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Learn, 1. That the reconciler of the world should be the subduer of Satan; and in subduing Satan he conquers all his instruments; he saith not, God shall bruise seducers and heretics under your feet; but Satan, and in him, all that belongs unto him; as the fall of the general puts the whole army to the rout. Learn, 2. That Almighty

God in his own time, will make believers complete conquerors over Satan, and all their spiritual enemies. Note, 3. That it is by virtue of Christ's conquest over Satan, that believers become conquerors; for the promise here refers to the original promise, Gen. iii. 15. That Christ, the seed of the woman, shall break the serpent's head. So then it is by virtue of that act of Jesus Christ, bruising the serpent's head, yea, breaking it, that Satan is bruised under our feet. As Christ bruised him under his own feet, so in his own time will he bruise him under our feet. The personal as well as the representative seed of the woman, shall break the serpent's head. Remember, poor tempted Christian, for thy comfort, the God of peace will tread Satan under thy feet shortly; thou shalt set thy foot on the neck of thy enemy; and when once thy foot is over the threshold of glory, thou shalt cast back a smiling look, and say, "Now Satan, do thy worst: through grace I am where thou shalt never come"

21 Timotheus, my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

22 I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord,

23 Gaius, mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus, a brother.

Our apostle had in the former part of the chapter, saluted divers persons himself; here he sends the salutation of those that were with him to the saints or Christians at Rome: hereby showing that mutual love and amity, that happy concord and unity, which is and ought to be between all the sincere disciples and followers of Jesus, when, though not in body, yet in mind, they should be present with one another, and though distant in place, yet undivided in affection. The two principal persons here sending joint salutations with the apostle to these Romans, were Timothy and Gaius. The former St. Paul calls his work-fellow or fellow-labourer: "Timotheus my work-fellow." Where note, The great humility of the apostle in dignifying so young a man as Timothy then was, with this title. What greater dignity than to be a fellow-worker with the apostle, in planting and propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ? The latter was Gaius, whom the apostle calls "his host, and the host of the whole church;" that is a person employed by the church of Corinth to entertain Christian strangers. To perform the meanest offices of love and service for the persecuted or distressed saints and servants of Jesus Christ, to entertain them in our houses, yea, to wash their feet, is an honorable and acceptable service.

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. AMEN.

Here again our apostle, from the abundance of his affectionate heart towards them, repeats his benediction of them, that the mercy, grace and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ may abide upon, and evermore continue with them.—Where note, The fountain and original spring from whence all grace doth rise and flow; namely, from Jesus Christ;

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is so called, because he purchased it for us, because he applies it to us.

25 Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began ;

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith.)

27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Our apostle here concludes his excellent epistle with a solemn doxology or thanksgiving to God ; in which he first describes God, and then ascribes eternal glory to him. He describes him, both by his power and by his wisdom. By his power first : "To him that is able to establish you according to my gospel ; that is, to establish you in grace and truth, in the faith and holiness, and to keep you from falling into sin and error. Such is our weakness, and satan's power, that unless God confirm and establish us, we shall

soon run into sin and danger. Observe farther, The instrumental means which God makes use of, for his people's establishment, and that is the gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the gospel which Christ and his apostles taught and delivered. This is called a mystery, kept secret since the world began, and now made manifest for the obedience of the faith ; that is, that it may be believed and obeyed. The second attribute in the description of God, is his wisdom : he is called the wise, the holy wise God ; not to exclude the Son and Holy Ghost, but the wisdom of the creature only : he is only wise originally, his wisdom is of himself, yea, his wisdom is himself : the wisdom of God is not a quality separable from himself, but is his very essence and nature. He is only wise, because he is incomparably wise ; there is none that for wisdom can compare with him. He has wisdom in such a degree and eminency, that the very angels are chargeable with folly before him. In a word, he is only wise, because all wisdom is derived from him : all the wisdom of angels and men is but a ray from his light, a drop from his ocean. And if so, then let the wisdom of God, in all his dealings with us and ours be admired and adored by us ; for all his works of providence are as orderly and perfect as his works of creation, though we perceive it not.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever.—AMEN.

THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO THE

CORINTHIANS.

That this epistle was written by St. Paul to the church of Corinth, was never doubted by the church of God. Corinth was the eye of Greece, a very opulent and wealthy city, but infamous for pride and luxury, for wantonness and uncleanness ; yet God had much people in this city, in order to whose conversion to christianity, this apostle continued preaching amongst them a year and six months : and such a special blessing did accompany his endeavours, that this new planted church became one of the most famous and eminent churches for all manner of spiritual gifts throughout the christian world.

The occasion of writing this Epistle was an unhappy schism that arose in the church of Corinth by the people's preferring one preacher before another. Instead of being thankful to God for

the endowments of all his ministers, and endeavouring to reap the benefit and advantage of all their mutual labors, they vainly gloried in men, some crying up Paul, others Apollos, &c. Hereupon St. Paul sent this Epistle as a bucket to quench this fire, which had threatened the destruction of this flourishing church.

And observable it is, with what freedom and impartiality the apostle proceeds in the management of this epistle: he sharply reproves both their erroneous opinions and vicious practices; he wisely rebukes them for their schisms and divisions, for their confusion and disorders in public assemblies, for their horrid profanation of the Lord's Supper, for their toleration of incest, for going to law before Heathen magistrates: he asserts the ministers' maintenance, the excellence of spiritual gifts, the nature and necessity of charity; and by multiplied arguments, confirms the doctrine of the resurrection.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

3 Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's asserting his commission, for the work of the ministry, to be from God: he was called to be an apostle by the will of God: he did not thrust himself into that high and honorable employment, but was chosen, called, and sent by God. Such as enterprize the sacred function without a regular call and commission, may expect a blast instead of a blessing. Observe, 2. The double object of St. Paul's salutation in this epistle; he first salutes the church of Corinth in particular, and then all the churches of Christ in general; "To all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Where note, That they were not real saints, no, nor all visible saints (but called to be both) whom he calls the church. Many secretly vile and scandalously profane persons were found amongst them: yet the apostle salutes them as the church of God; "To the church of God at Corinth." Learn hence, That there may be a mixture of profane and scandalous persons with real saints in the church of God here on earth; there may be, I say: I mean, *de facto*, there have been and there will be, not *de jure*, that there ought to be such a mixture; yet, if so, this doth not unchurch the assembly in which they are; they are the disease of the church, but not its death; such corruptious and blemishes cannot consist with the well-being, but may consist with the being of particular churches. Ob-

serve, 3. The salutation itself, "grace and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Where note, 1. A double blessing desired, *grace and peace*; grace is of all blessings the richest, and peace is of all comforts the sweetest. Note, 2. A double spring discovered, from whence this double blessing flows, God and Christ; God as the original source and fountain of all good in himself; and Christ, as the donor and dispenser of all good to us. Note, 3. The order of the words, first grace, then peace; there can be no peace without grace, and no grace but there will be peace; there can be no peace but from God, no peace from God but as a father; no peace from God as a father, but as our father; and he cannot comfortably be said to be our father, but through our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That all that grace and peace which believers share in, and are made partakers of, is derived from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.

7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

As if the apostle had said, "I am very thankful to God for his grace and favour bestowed upon you through Jesus

Christ, in and by the preaching of the gospel, and particularly for the gift of tongues, and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to you, whereby the divinity of the gospel (called here "the testimony of Christ, because it testifies of Christ") was attested and confirmed." He farther tells them, that he was firmly persuaded, that God would confirm them unto the end, causing them to persevere unblameable in holiness, till the coming of Christ to deliver his faithful servants, and remarkably to destroy his crucifiers; because of the faithfulness of God, who having "called them to the fellowship of his Son, and to partake of his invaluable benefits, will never leave them, but accomplish the whole pleasure of his will in them. Observe here, 1. That the apostle, in the third verse, prayed affectionately for the grace of God to be bestowed upon the Corinthians; in the fourth verse he thanks God abundantly for the grace they had already received; and no man has such supplies of grace, but he stands in need of farther influences: and there is no such way to attain more grace, as to be thankful for what we have already received. Observe, 2. To whom the apostle returns his thanks for all that grace the Corinthians had received, even to the God of all grace: "I thank my God for the grace which is given you." All grace depends upon God, as to its being and production, as to its exercise and operation, as to its growth and augmentation, as to its evidence and manifestation, as to its perseverance and preservation: he is both the author and finisher of our faith: both seed, increment, and perfection, the beginnings, increasings and finishings of grace, are all from God the Father, but by and through our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his blood purchased grace for us, and by his Spirit produceth it in us. Observe, 3. That believers, in the first ages of the christian church, received not only sanctifying graces, but the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gifts of tongues and miracles. Observe, 4. That they obtained these gifts by Jesus Christ, and through faith in him: Observe, 5. That by these gifts "the testimony of Christ was confirmed," that is, the doctrine of the gospel, testifying that Jesus was the true Messiah, by his being raised from the dead. Observe, 6. That by these gifts, and by this earnest of the spirit, they had encouragement to expect and wait for the approach and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 7. "Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

10 ¶ Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

These words are a pathetic exhortation to a most important duty: in which observe, 1. the duty itself directed and exhorted to, and that is, unity and unanimity among christians: this is threefold, the unity of the head, of the heart, and of the tongue: the unity of the head, and that is an unity in judgment and opinion; the unity of the heart is an unity in love and affection; and the unity of the tongue is an unity in language and expression, when we all speak the same things, and with one mouth, as well as with one mind, glorify God. Observe, 2. The powerful arguments here en-

forcing this duty. The first is an apostolical observation, "I beseech you:" He that had authority to command, has the meekness to entreat, and in a supplicatory way to beseech. The second is, the nearness of the relation, "I beseech you, brethren;" an endearing expression, and full of affection; they were brethren by place and nation, and brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, professing the same religion, animated by the same spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. The third argument is, the name he beseeches in, and that is Christ's; "I beseech you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, "I adjure you for his sake, and his authority, by all that he has done, suffered, and purchased for you. If you have any reverence for his authority, as a sovereign, if you have any regard for his undertaking as a Saviour, look that there be no divisions among you, "but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Observe, 3. That so exceedingly was the apostle's heart set upon this duty, that in both his epistles to the Corinthians, he presses them very earnestly to the love and practice of it; here, in his first epistle and first chapter, and in his second epistle and last chapter; *Be of one mind, live in peace, &c.* From whence note, that the apostle makes this exhortation to unity among christians the *alpha* of his first epistle, and the *omega* of his last; it is the first duty which he commends to their consideration in the former epistle, and the last which he recommends to their care and practice in the latter epistle; intimating thereby unto us, that this unity in judgment and affection is the first and last thing to be respected among christians, as being both the beginning and perfection of christianity.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them, *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you.

12 ¶ Now, this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I, of Apollos; and I, of Cephas; and I, of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Observe here, 1. The apostle declares a reason why in the foregoing verse he pressed his exhortation to love and unity with so much fervour and vehemency, namely, because he had received information, that there were contentions and sidings, divisions and parties amongst them, to the great scandal of christianity, which was so newly planted amongst them. Whence learn, That divisions and factions do quickly creep into the best and purest churches. This church of Corinth was a garden newly planted by St. Paul; yet notwithstanding all his care and personal inspection, these ill weeds of division and dissension grew apace; it was not while men slept that these tares were sown, but while the officers of the church were both awake and watchful. Observe, 2. What was the cause of these divisions and dissensions that were found among them; it was having men's

persons in admiration, factiously crying up one minister above another, naming themselves the followers of this and that man, setting up teachers one against another, and even Christ against his ministers. Learn hence, That although it is the people's duty to have a great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, yet must not their respect degenerate into a sinful admiration of their persons; for the factious affecting of one minister above another, is both sinful and dangerous; it occasions enmity and dissension among ministers themselves, and their people also, when the gifts and abilities of one are cried up in contempt of others. Observe, 3. That these Corinthians did not only sinfully admire the persons of their teachers, but also set up their teachers as heads of several parties, sinfully resting upon them, and glorying in them. Learn thence, That it is not barely lawful, but very dangerous and exceeding sinful for persons to call themselves by the name of any men, though ever so eminent, so as to build or pin their faith upon them; we are not believers in Paul or Peter, but in Christ; there is but one head of the church, and that is Christ, and he is not divided: his disciples we are in whose name we are baptized, and that is not in the name of any man, but in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To build therefore our faith upon any man, is to make him our Saviour, and put him in Christ's room and place.

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15 Lest any should say, that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Observe here, 1. That though baptizing were God's ordinance, and St. Paul, as Christ's minister, had a commission and sufficient authority to baptize, yet the providence of God so ordered it, that he baptized very few, lest any should say he baptized in his own name. Observe, 2. That among those few he baptized, here is a whole household mentioned, "the household of Stephanas." Where learn, That as Abraham, and others under the Old Testament, were to bring their household into covenant with God by circumcision, so did those that had households under the New Testament, endeavour to bring their whole families into God's covenant by baptism. The gaoler and his house, Lydia and her house, Stephanas and his household, are all baptized. Observe, 3. The comparison here made betwixt baptizing and preaching, and the preference given to one before the other; "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach;" that is, rather to preach than baptize; this was his great business, his principal work; though baptizing was within his commission, yet it was not that, but preaching the gospel, to convert souls to Christ, that he was called after such a wonderful manner, and endued with such extraordinary gifts for the performance of. It is neither wise nor safe to cry up one ordinance

of God above another, but to have them all in estimation, and none more than the preaching of the gospel, which is one principal part of our commission. Observe, 4. The manner after which Christ sent St. Paul to preach the gospel; "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect;" that is, not attracting and drawing men to the faith by the power of human eloquence, lest the doctrine of Christ should be rendered suspected by such a pompous way of preaching. Plain truths, without art and varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue. The way and manner of St. Paul's preaching was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. With what brevity, without darkness, with what gravity, without affectation, with what eloquence, without meretricious ornament, were St. Paul's discourses so solidly instructing men in their great and necessary duties of the gospel, and furnishing them with arguments and motives to a good life: and this in such a plain and familiar manner, that the success and prevalency of his preaching appeared to be of God, and not of man.

18 ¶ For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Observe here, 1. The character and description given of the preaching of the gospel; it is called, "the preaching of the cross," that is, of a crucified Saviour; it represents him who died upon the cross, as the proper object of our faith and hope, of our affiance and trust. Observe, 2. The low and mean esteem which the philosophers and wise men among the heathens had of the doctrine of the cross, and of the preaching of the gospel: they esteemed it foolishness: the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness." So esteemed, 1. In regard of the subject of it; it is the doctrine of the cross, that is of a crucified and despised Saviour; it acquaints us, that the eternal God in the fulness of time, became a mortal man; that life became subject to death, and blessing subject to a curse: all which are such appearing contradictions, that natural reason is very prone to scorn and deride them. 2 The wisdom of the world or the wise men among the Gentiles, did esteem the preaching of the gospel foolishness, in regard of the manner of it; because the gospel doth nakedly and barely propound some doctrines of faith, and positively requires our assent to them, from the evidence of the things themselves, and from the authority of the principal speaker, God himself. The mysteries of the christian religion, though not contrary to reason, yet are above our comprehension; notwithstanding

which they do not only require our assent, but also challenge the obedience and adoration of our faith. Now the wisdom of the world is not satisfied with God's *Ανοδος* *αγν.* with God's authority in asserting; but requires that every doctrine of faith, and every mystery of the gospel, be made so plain and obvious, so clear and perspicuous, that their shallow reason may be able fully to comprehend it; for these reasons "is the preaching of the cross, to them that perish, foolishness." Observe, 3. What efficacy and virtue the gospel is of unto believers; *unto us which are saved*, says the apostle, *it is the power of God*; that is, a powerful instrument in God's hand, for men's conversion and salvation; the word preached is the organ or instrument through which the vital power of the spirit is conveyed into the souls of sinners, how much soever it is contemned and despised in the world. Observe, 4. How the apostle upbraids the pride and folly of the learned philosophers and reputed wise men among the heathens, who though they excelled in natural wisdom, yet despised evangelical truths, making reason their supreme rule, and philosophy their highest principle: "Where," says the apostle, "is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" That is, where is the wisdom now of the wisest philosophers among the Gentiles? where is the wisdom of the *scribe*, or the interpreter of the law among the Jews? *Where is the disputer of this world*, or the curious searcher into the depths and secrets of nature? Let them show so many brought by all their wisdom, learning, and eloquence, to the knowledge of God, and to the practice of their duty, as the preaching of a crucified Christ hath done; yea, all their natural wisdom is mere folly, in comparison of the glorious effects which the preaching of the gospel has produced.

21 For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Observe here, 1. That the frame of this world, or the work of creation, is here called *the wisdom of God*; The name of the cause is given to the effect, because divine wisdom shines so clearly forth in the work of creation; the beautiful frame of heaven and earth doth discover the several excellencies and perfections which are in God, and amongst the rest his admirable and unerring wisdom. Observe, 2. What is here affirmed concerning the most wise and learned men among the heathens, namely, that with all their *wisdom they knew not God*; that is, they did not own and acknowledge him, serve and glorify him, as they should and ought to have done: *The world by wisdom knew not God*, that is, they knew him confusedly, but not distinctly; they knew in general, that a God here was, but knew not particularly who the true God was; they knew him notionally, but not practically: their knowledge had no influence upon their hearts or lives, they knew him as essentially considered in himself, but knew him not relatively, as considered in Christ, they knew not *Immanuel*, God with us, and becoming a Mediator for us, him they did not know. Learn hence, That the greatest wits of the world, having no more but the common light of nature, and the advantage of human accomplishments are oft-times exceedingly prone to seek us to the spiritual and saving knowledge of God and Christ; human wisdom and divine know-

ledge, as they are distinct in their nature, so are they separable in their subject: let those who have both, bless God with eternal thanksgivings. Observe, 3. God's gracious supply of that defect which the world labored under; when by all their wisdom, collected from the book of the creature, they could not arrive at the right knowledge of the true God, then "it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Where note, 1. The persons described whom the wisdom of God thinks fit to save *them that believe*, them exclusively, and none but them. Note, 2. The great instrumental means which the wisdom of God ordained in order to the believer's salvation, namely, the preaching of the gospel; "It pleased God by preaching to save them that believe." Note, 3. The mean and low opinion, the vile and base esteem which the world have of this venerable ordinance of God, the preaching of the gospel they think fit to style it foolishness; *the foolishness of preaching*. Note, 4. The moving, impelling, and impulsive cause of this gracious dispensation, to wit, the preaching of the gospel in order to men's salvation; and that is the good will and pleasure of a gracious God: "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Observe here, 1. How both Jews and Gentiles conspired together in their contempt and rejection of the gospel: *The Jews require a sign*; that is, besides all the miracles and the resurrection of Christ, the Jews require some sign from heaven, to prove that Christ was sent from God, so unreasonable and obstinate was their infidelity, that all the miracles of our Saviour's life, death, and resurrection, could not remove it: *And the Greeks seek after wisdom*; that is, they look for profound wisdom, eminent learning, and deep philosophy in the gospel; and scorn it because they find not there what they expected: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Observe, 2. The apostle's peremptory resolution to preach Christ crucified, though he were to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But how was *Christ a stumbling-block to the Jews*? *Ans.* In regard of his poverty and sufferings, the meanness and misery of his condition in the world. They expected that their Messiah should be a victorious prince, one that should rescue them from their enemies: instead of which, they find this Jesus to be overcome by his enemies; that he had no power to defend himself, much less to deliver them; that he was deserted by God whom he called his Father, forsaken by his followers, whom he styled disciples, scourged with rods, crowned with thorns, ignominiously treated, shamefully cru-

cified; this was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and continues so to be. But how was *Christ to the Greeks foolishness*? *Ans.* The Gentiles despised the gospel of Christ, as an absurd, ridiculous, and ill-contrived fable: for what in appearance could be more unbecoming God, and injurious to his perfections, than to take the frail garment of flesh, to be torn and trampled upon? They concluded the incarnation impossible, that a being infinitely perfect should unite with a nature so inferior to itself; and rejected the doctrine of our Saviour's death, as an impiety contemptuous to God; they could not reconcile servitude with sovereignty, punishment with innocence, the lowest of human miseries, with the highest of divine honors; and accordingly they esteemed it foolishness, to expect eternal life from him that was put to death: and that he should bring them to the highest glory, who suffered himself in the lowest weakness. Thus was the *preaching of Christ crucified to the generality of the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* But observe, 3. It was not thus unto all, there was a number of both converted and saved by the doctrine of the cross, unto whom *Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Here note, 1. That Christ was the power of God; Isaiah styles him the mighty God, chap ix. 6. Works of mighty power were performed by him, as the works of creation, Col. i. 16. "By him were all things created in heaven and in the earth." The work of providence, Heb. i. 3. "He upholdeth all things by the strength of his power." The work of redemption, Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The curse and wrath of God was a burden that would have broke the back of angels; none could stand under it but Christ, and not he neither, as mere man, but as supported by the infinite power of his God-head. Note 2. Christ is the wisdom of God: also his divine nature had a fulness of infinite and uncreated wisdom found with it; also his human nature had a fulness of infused and created wisdom found in it; and the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, was a design of admirable wisdom. He that turns his back upon Christ, rejects the wisdom of God, and renders his ruin both dreadful and certain; they must perish eternally by the hand of strict justice, who will not be saved according to the methods of divine wisdom, which are to save us from hell by saving us from our sins. Observe, 4. The reason assigned why the preaching of Christ crucified, became the power of God unto salvation; *because the weakness of God is stronger than men*; that is, the ordinances and institutions of God, though they seem weak and foolish in the eye of the world, yet are more efficacious and powerful than all the wisdom of worldly men. Learn hence, That the ordinances and institutions of God, and particularly, the preaching of the gospel, though despised by the men of the world, yet by the power of God have glorious operations, and produce wonderful effects: *The weakness of God is stronger than men*; that is, the weakest instruments which God uses, are stronger in their effects, than the strongest which men can use: *And the foolishness of God is wiser than men*; not that there is either foolishness or weakness in God; but that which men account foolishness and weakness, and deride as such, doth yet overcome all their admired wisdom and strength; and if the wisdom of man cannot match the foolishness of God, how shall it vie and contend with the wisdom of God? No wisdom or power of man can stand before the foolishness and weakness, much less before the wisdom and power of God: The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are;

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Observe here, 1. The singular favor which our apostle calls upon the Corinthians to eye and view, namely, their effectual vocation and calling out of heathenism to the profession of christianity, *you see your calling, brethren.* Such as are exalted by God in any kind, ought to call to mind their former meanness; but those that are persuasively called by God out of a state of nature, ought frequently to observe and consider the worth and weight of that mercy, and the freeness of that divine favor; *Brethren see,* and take notice of *your calling.* Observe, 2. That God has in all ages called some of all ranks and degrees of men, of the wise and great, the rich and noble, to the knowledge of himself, and his Son: "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called: he doth not say not any, but not many, lest the world should think that christians were deceived through their simplicity and weakness; one rich Joseph of Arimathea, one honorable Nicodemus, one Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, but not many men of might and power: men of strong reason, and sharpness of wit, are too proud and stout to stoop to the simplicity of the gospel, and the humbling, self-denying terms of it; yet some of the wise and mighty are called, lest any thing in man should seem too hard for the grace of God; but not many, lest worth and worthiness in us should be thought the motive that rules God. Men of greatest fame and renown in the world, have been the fiercest enemies against Christ and christianity. Galen, the chief physician; Porphyry, a chief philosopher; Lucian, a chief orator; with many others, were all professed enemies of the christian religion. Wherefore observe, 3. That although God called some of the wise, rich and noble, among the Jews and Gentiles, to espouse christianity; yet the far greater number of those that hear his voice, and obey his call, are poor and mean, and in the world's esteem, weak and foolish, base and despicable; "God hath chosen foolish things to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the mighty." This was verified in the choice which God made of the apostles, who first planted christianity in the world, and though illiterate fishermen, confuted and confounded the wisest among the philosophers; and also in the choice God made of the primitive christians, who first entertained the gospel, who were a poor despised company, James ii. 5. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith,

and heirs of the kingdom." This choice Christ thanks his Father for. Matt. xi. 25. and the wisdom of God therein, deserves our highest admiration: because thereby, 1. God plainly showed, that christianity needed no worldly props to support it. As it was the first planted and propagated by weak and contemptible means and instruments, so is it still upheld and supported without human policy or riches: God can out-wit wise men by fools, and overpower mighty men by those that are weak; witness the apostles and primitive christians. 2. God by his choice of the weak and foolish, of the base and despised, does pour contempt upon those things which are most admired among men, namely, the internal endowments of the mind, strong reason and sharpness of wit: and the external gifts of providence, nobility of birth, riches and honors. Lord! what shame and confusion of-face will cover the noble and honorable, the great and mighty, the rich and wealthy, in the coming world, when they shall see those poor christians, whom they despised for their poverty, scorned for their meanness of parts as unworthy to come into their presence, highly exalted in the favor of God, and proclaimed the heirs of his kingdom! for as here God has more rent and better paid him (as the great landlord of the world) for many smoky cottages, than from divers great palaces, where persons wallow in plenty, and forget God; so will God own his faithful, though despised servants, at the great day, and make it evident to angels and men, that he "accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor;" but every one that here feared him, and wrought righteousness, shall be accepted of him, and rewarded by him.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Our apostle had, in the foregoing verses, acquainted the Corinthians how low and despicable their outward condition was in this world; he tells them the world looked upon them as *weak* and *foolish*, and as such, despised and disdained them, but as a superabundant recompence for the despicable meanness of their outward condition, he tells them what they are in Christ Jesus, how rich they are as christians; that Christ is made unto them, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. Observe here, 1. An enumeration of the believing christian's privileges, received by virtue of his interest in Christ and union with him; and they are, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: to relieve us against our ignorance and blindness, he is *our wisdom*, the fountain of divine illumination, enabling us to see both our sin and danger: to discharge us from the burden of our guilt, and obnoxiousness to divine wrath, he is *our righteousness*, the author of justification, procuring for us remission of sin, and acceptance with God; to free us from the pollution and power of sin, he is *our sanctification*, purging us by his Spirit, as well as pardoning by his blood, coming both by water and blood into our souls; and to set us at liberty from captivity and thralldom to sin and satan, and the law, he is made *our redemption*, that is, the blessed

author of a beloved redemption, not from Egyptian bondage or Babylonish captivity, but from the dominion of sin and servitude to satan, from the wrath of God, from the curse of the law, from the danger and dread of death. Learn hence, that God hath stored up in Christ all that we want, a suitable and full supply for every need, and made it communicable to us: he is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption, our all in all, our all in the want of all. Observe, 2. The method, way, and manner, by and after which believers come to be invested with, and made partakers of, these glorious privileges: *Christ of God is made unto us*: This denotes, 1. that Christ, with all his benefits, becomes ours by a special and effectual application; he *is made unto us*. 2. That this application of Christ is the work of God, and not of man; *of God he is made unto us*. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the precious fruits and invaluable benefits of his death, became ours by God's special and effectual application. Observe, 3. The reason here assigned why the whole economy of grace is put into the hand of Christ, why all is communicated by him, and derived from him, namely, that all the saints' glorying may be in him, and not in themselves: "That no flesh should glory in his presence, but as it is written, Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord," ver. 29, 31. Infinite wisdom and sovereign pleasure has centered all grace in Christ; it has pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, and the fulness that is in him is a ministerial fulness; it dwells in him on purpose to dispense to us, according as our exigencies do require, and our faith deserves; for "of him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

CHAPTER II.

AND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

Our apostle had in the foregoing chapter declared how Christ had sent him to preach the gospel in the plainness and simplicity of it, *not with the wisdom of words*, ver. 17. that is, not in a pompous and flourishing way and manner of preaching, mingling the simplicity of the gospel with human wisdom: accordingly, in this verse he tells them, that when, pursuant to his commission, he came and preached to them at Corinth, he *came not with excellency of speech*; that is, he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains, or philosophical niceties, to please their wanton wits, but so mildly to inform their judgments with the great and necessary duties of the gospel, and to furnish them with the strongest arguments and motives for a good life. This is preaching: but had he come with human wisdom, this would have detracted, 1. from the excellency of the gospel, which like the sun shines best with its own beams; scripture-eloquence is most piercing and demonstrative, and convinceth a man by its own evidence: human wisdom charms the ear, but this strikes the conscience. 2. It would have detracted from the glory of God, which is more honored by the plainness and

simplicity of the gospel, than by the luxuriances of wit, or the most admired oratory in the world; all human wisdom must be denied, when it comes in competition with, or stands in opposition to the doctrine of the gospel. Observe farther, The title given to the gospel, which he preached amongst them in so much plainness and simplicity: he styles it the *testimony of God*. Where note, That the testimony of the apostles concerning Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, is called the *testimony of God*, because God testified and bare witness to the truth of these doctrines by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. ii. 4

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

That is, "I determined not to discover to you, or display before you, the eloquence and wisdom of the Greeks, or to give you any other knowledge but that of a crucified Saviour, which, alas! is to them foolishness." Yet must not these words be understood absolutely, but comparatively; not as if the apostle did absolutely despise or condemn all other study and knowledge, much less vilify true philosophy, logic, or oratory; for all knowledge is useful to him that knows how to refer it to right ends, and God has made nothing knowable in vain; but that all other knowledge, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is insignificant and ineffectual. Note here, 1. The subject matter of St. Paul's study and preaching, it was Jesus Christ; not Jewish traditions, not the Gentiles' philosophy, but him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Note, 2. The special relation in which our apostle chose to study and preach Jesus Christ, and that was *as crucified*; Christ above all other subjects, and Christ crucified above all other considerations, because Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; human wisdom despised the sufferings of Jesus Christ, but the apostle made them the subject of his study, and the scope of his preaching. Learn hence, 1. That as all of Christ, so more especially his death, in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the principal subject of a christian's study and knowledge. Learn 2. That as there is no doctrine more excellent in itself, so none more necessary to be preached than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. O! let ministers then preach, and by preaching, prepare their people to receive the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And let both ministers and people count all things but dross, in comparison of that excellency which is in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Observe here; 1. How the apostle declares that his person was suitable to his preaching, both plain, neither pompous: 2 Cor. x. 10. he tells us, "That his bodily presence was weak and mean, and his speech contemptible." Tradition tells us, that Paul (according as his name signifies) was a man of a very little stature, his voice small, and wanting that presence which some others had. Observe, 2. Some pain that the apostle was in, fearing lest the infirmity of his flesh should render him as a minister despicable in the eyes of any, or the course of the gospel be hindered and obstructed by his

bodily infirmities: for this was he with them *in fear and much trembling*. Nothing doth so much affect and afflict the ministers of Christ, as an apprehension and fear, lest any thing in or from themselves should obstruct or hinder the success of the gospel which they teach: it is sad when our people take occasion, either from our poverty or mean appearance, to despise our message, or from any natural imperfections found with us: but much sadder, when such moral blemishes are found with us as do render us the occasion of our own contempt, and the cause of our ministry's unsuccessfulness.

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Here our apostle goes on, declaring after what manner he did, and did not, preach the gospel of Christ to the Corinthians. Note, 1. How he did not preach unto them: he tells us that *his preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom*; that is, his preaching was not garnished with human eloquence, did not consist in rhetorical proofs, was not accompanied with the witty insinuations of artificial learning, which pleases the ear, but affects not the heart; therefore the apostles did not, like rhetoricians and orators, polish their discourses with an affected curiosity and exactness of language, but although they came in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech; our apostle's preaching at Corinth, was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable: with what brevity, without darkness; with what gravity, without affectation; with what natural eloquence, without meretricious ornament, were St. Paul's discourses! A minister's words ought not to be *inflantia*, but *inflammantia*, not high-swelling, but heart-inflaming words. Note, 2. How the apostle did preach unto the Corinthians; namely, *in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*; that is, the doctrine which he preached was accompanied with, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, to convince them that Jesus was risen from the dead, and was made Lord of all, whom therefore they ought to believe and obey: he did not go about to bewitch men with eloquence, nor to entangle their minds by subtle reasonings, but he offered to men a sensible proof and demonstration of the truth of what he delivered, in those strange and miraculous operations to which he was enabled by the Holy Ghost. This demonstration of the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the word, we are not now to expect; but the ministry of the word is still attended with a divine power of the Spirit, enlightening the understanding and persuading the conscience; which may be called a demonstration of the Spirit, because the evidence of truth is no longer disputed or contradicted, but the understanding assents to the word as true, and the will embraces it as good. Note, 3. The reason assigned by the apostle, why he preached the gospel in and after this plain and inartificial manner, namely, "that their faith shall not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;" that is, that your faith or

belief of the gospel should not seem to be obtained by human wisdom and eloquence, but be ascribed to a divine power, influencing such weak means as my plain preaching was amongst you. It is the praise of Omnipotency to work by improbabilities; God delights to do great things by weak and unlikely means, knowing that the weakness of the instrument redounds to the greater honour of himself, the principal agent. Human faith is an assent to any thing credible, as credible upon the fallible testimony of the man it is founded upon, and resolved into the authority of the speaker: But divine faith is an assent to any thing credible, as credible upon the infallible testimony of God, and is grounded on, and resolved into, the evidence of divine revelation. Upon this foot stood the Corinthians' faith, *not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.*

Our apostle here proceeds in discoursing to the Corinthians of the excellency of his ministry amongst them, to obviate the contempt which some might cast upon it for want of human eloquence, sublimity of learning, and accurateness of speech: as if the apostle had said, "Though the wise men of the world account me a fool, and my preaching foolishness, yet I speak the highest wisdom among them that are perfect, or fully instructed in the principles of the Christian faith." Although the discourses of the ablest ministers of the gospel seem jejune and dry to carnal hearts, yet they have an excellency of wisdom and depth of judgment in them, which spiritual and judicious Christians do own and acknowledge. Here observe, 1. The title which the apostle gives to the gospel of Christ, which he preached: He styles it "the wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world was:" *The wisdom of God*, because it makes men truly wise, wise to salvation, directing us to use the best means in order to the best and highest end; and *the hidden mysterious wisdom of God*, because it lay hid in the secret counsels of God from all eternity, and afterwards lay hid under the Jewish types, but is now revealed by the ministry of Christ and his holy apostles: revealed in due time to our glory, that is, to be the means of our happiness and glory. The gracious purpose and design of God in the recovery of a lost world to happiness and glory, by the death and sufferings of his dear and only Son, was so mysterious and surprising, that it could never have entered the thoughts of men or angels had not God himself discovered it by the revelation of the gospel. Observe, 2. The comparison which the apostle makes betwixt the wisdom of the gospel and the wisdom of this world: *the wisdom of this world, and of the princes of this world, comes to nought.* By the wisdom of the world, understand the wisdom of the Heathen Gentile world, the learning of their admired philosophers, all which *comes to nought*; that is, it

is of no significancy at all in order to the best and highest end, the salvation of the soul. Christianity or the knowledge of the gospel, is the best knowledge, the truest and highest wisdom; it is the best knowledge, because it contains the knowledge of God and our duty, which is the most excellent, the most necessary, and the most useful knowledge; and it is the truest wisdom, because it is to be wise for ourselves, and to be wise as to our chief interest; it propounds to us the noblest end, to wit, the glory of God, and our souls' salvation; and it directs us to use the best, the surest, and wisest means for the certain obtaining of that end.

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

That is, which divine wisdom, neither Caiphas, nor Herod, nor Pontius Pilate, nor any of the Jewish or Gentile rulers, did understand. Where note, The apostle calls the learned Rabbies, The admired philosophers among the Heathens, the celebrated doctors among the Jews' *princes*, but presently adds a diminutive term, which darkens all their glory: he styles them *the princes of this world*, utterly unacquainted with the wisdom of the other world. Observe farther, What a clear and full proof the apostle gives of their ignorance of this divine wisdom which the gospel reveals: *Had they known it*, that is, practically known it, so as to believe it, to be influenced and persuaded by it, *they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* Note here, 1. A royal title given to Christ, *The Lord of Glory.* There belongs to him, 1. An essential glory, as God, which is unspeakable, yea inconceivable, Phil. ii. 6. *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; that is, to have a peerage or equality with his Father in glory. 2. A mediatorial glory, as head of the church, which consists in that fulness of grace which is inherent in him, and in that dignity and authority which is put upon him. 3. A passive glory (as some divines call it) or a glory which shall to all eternity be given to him by his redeemed ones, by saints and angels, upon the account of his mediatorial work, Rev. v. 12. *Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory and honour, and worship*, for he hath redeemed us, &c.—Note, 2. The indignity offered to his glorious person, *they crucified him*, they nailed him to an ignominious cross, and put him to death, as the vilest criminal, as the greatest malefactor. Note, 3. The cause of this indignity, and that was ignorance: *Had they known, they would not have crucified*, &c. that is, had the princes of this world known, either who Christ was, or the work which he came about, they would not have crucified him, but adored him. But was their ignorance of Christ a sufficient excuse for crucifying of him? In no wise, because it was not an invincible, but a wilful ignorance: They had sufficient means of instruction, by which they might have come to the knowledge of him, and of their duty to him; but they closed their eyes, and would not see.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

These words, *Eye hath not seen, &c.* do not immediately respect the happiness of heaven, and a future state, though very often they are so applied, but they are primarily spoken of the gospel state, and of the blessings to be enjoyed by them that love God here: From whence a good argument may be drawn to prove the inconceivable happiness of the saints hereafter. Though they have felt and tasted joys unspeakable and full of glory, in the actings of their faith and love upon God at present, yet all that they have seen and heard, all that they have tasted and felt in the way to heaven, falls infinitely short of the perfection and blessedness of that place and state. Lord, how will thy immediate presence, when we come into it, be a great surprise to those of us that have now the greatest acquaintance with it! Observe farther, The care and kindness of God towards his servants, in revealing to them by his Spirit, those great and good things prepared for them which surpass man's understanding. Though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," yet God has revealed them to us by his Spirit." There is a twofold revelation of the happiness of a future state. *Revelatio fidei*, and *revelatio visionis*, a revelation of faith, and a revelation by vision and sight; the former, believers have by the help of the Holy Spirit in this life, as *pilatores*; the latter they shall ere long enjoy in heaven, as *comprehensors*, where they shall see as they are seen, and know as they are known. Observe, lastly, That the Holy Spirit, which thus revealeth hidden counsels to man, and searcheth the deep things of God, is omniscient, and really God. Mark, 1. *He searcheth deep things*; he is not only acquainted with, and privy to the surface and outside of things, but searcheth things to the bottom. And, 2. He searcheth not only the deep things of man, as of kings and princes, whose hearts are a great deep, but the deep things of God; therefore the Spirit is God; for as the apostle argues, ver. 11. "No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man, that is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God," or be that is with God, in God, yea, God himself, as intimate with him as the soul is in the body. If the spirit that is in man were not man, it could never know the deep things of man; and if the Spirit of God were not God, he could never search and know the deepest things of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,

but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Observe here, 1. The apostle declares what spirit they had not received, namely, the spirit of the world; *We have not received the spirit of the world*; that is, the spirit which suggests worldly wisdom, and savours only worldly things, which acts and influences only worldly men. In the whole generation of worldly men, there is the same worldly spirit, and this spirit of the world is an earthly spirit; it is a low, a little, and narrow spirit: Earthly things, which are present and visible, such a soul gazes after, and grasps hard; but future and invisible things, which are far off, and out of sight, are neither believed nor sought after. Observe, 2. The apostle declares what spirit they had received, namely, *the Spirit which is of God*; and of what use that Holy Spirit is unto them: It teaches them to know the things which are freely given them of God; that is, the Holy Spirit sheweth us, both what God is, and what the things of God are; we are enlightened with the knowledge of that grace and goodness of God which is discovered to us in the gospel; we know both divine mysteries and divine mercies, both what God hath done for us, and that he hath wrought in us, which are the things that are freely given us of God. Observe, 3. The apostle declares, how he preached these spiritual things after a spiritual manner, *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; that is, not in the words, and after the manner now counted by the Gentile philosophers to be learned and wise, but in the very words, and after the very manner which the Spirit of God teacheth us. Where learn, That the holy apostles spake and writ by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as well as the prophets of old time, and delivered nothing as from God, but what God revealed to them by his Holy Spirit; and accordingly, some interpret those words, *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*; that is, say they, comparing the things which were writ by the Spirit in and under the Old Testament, with what is now revealed to us under the New.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Observe here, 1. The subject spoken of, the natural man; *not sapientior*, the sensual, but *animior*, the animal man, who acts only by the principles of human reason, and worldly wisdom; who, though well furnished with intellectual and moral improvements, is yet destitute of the enlightening Spirit, and the renewing grace of God. Observe, 2. What is here affirmed of the natural man, with reference to spiritual things. 1. That he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. 2. That he cannot know them. Where note, That it is not said, that he knoweth not the things of God, but *the things of the Spirit of God*; for there are some things of God, which a natural man may know, but *the things of the Spirit of God*, as truths purely evangelical, these he receiveth not, neither in his understanding, nor his

will. Note further, It is not barely said that he doth not, but that he cannot know them. Natural reason alone, by what helps soever assisted and improved, is altogether insufficient, without spiritual illumination, to apprehend supernatural and evangelical truth; not but that the Spirit of God, in the work of illumination and conversion, makes use of our reason; that flower of the soul is not blasted, but more open by the blowing of the blessed Spirit. Christianity doth not command us to throw away our reason, but to subjugate it; not to deny or disown our reason, but to captivate it to the obedience of faith: But the sense of the apostle is, that a person of the most exquisite natural accomplishments, and one that has improved his reason to the highest pitch, cannot behold evangelical mysteries in their proper light, or embrace them in their verity and beauty, without the superadded aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit. Observe, 3. The reasons declared, why the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, *Because they are foolishness unto him*; that is, he accounts them foolishness when propounded to him, because he doth not see them proved from principles of natural reason, and by philosophical deductions, which is the only wisdom that he seeks after. The reason also is added, *why he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned*; that is, the natural man cannot know divine things by that wisdom which he alone will be conducted by; and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned; for being mysteries, they are not knowable by human reason, but by spiritual revelation. And if the wisdom of the world, that is, the learned and wisest men in the world, were thus unable, by the sharpest light of reason, to discover evangelical mysteries. Lord! how en-dearing are our obligations for the benefit of supernatural revelation, whereby the hidden wisdom of God is made known unto us?

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

As if the apostle had said, "Although the natural man who acteth only by the principles of human reason, receiveth not the things of the Spirit, nor can know them by any study of his own, because they are spiritually discerned; yet he that is spiritual, that is, who hath the revelation and illumination of the Spirit of God, judgeth, or discerneth, and trieth all things, that is all spiritual matters; yet he himself is judged of no man, that is, discerned by none who hath no higher principle, than that of nature to discern things by." Learn hence, That such Christians as are enlightened and renewed with, guided and conducted by, the Holy Spirit of God, are the only proper judges of spiritual matters, able to understand their duty, and to discern between good and evil. *He that is spiritual, judgeth all things.*

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

That is, "What man, without divine revelation and spiritual illumination, ever knew or understood the mind of God so well, as to be able to instruct, direct, and inform the spiritual man about it? But we who are spiritual, have

the mind of Christ, and so are able to discern and direct, to guide and instruct others about it." Learn hence, That none are fit and sufficient to interpret the mind of God unto others, who are not acquainted with it themselves: *We have the mind of Christ*, saith the apostle of himself and his fellow-labourers in the gospel: His meaning is not only this, that they had the mind of Christ written in a book, but that they had a clear understanding of it, and so were fitted to interpret it to others. There is no such knowledge, as the knowledge of experience, no teaching like unto experimental teaching.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle having, in the first chapter of this epistle, reproved the Corinthians for their contentions and divisions, for the factions and parties, which were found amongst them; in this chapter, he returns to his former argument, and shews what a scandal their dissensions were to religion, and a reproach unto themselves.

AND I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

As if the apostle had said, "My brethren, although I speak the highest wisdom amongst them that are perfect, yet could not I speak to you as unto spiritual persons, but as unto carnal, because the works of the flesh are found with you, and at the best you are but babes in Christ." Learn hence, That even amongst those who are the true and real members of the visible church, some are spiritual, some are carnal, some are men, some are babes. The apostle doth not call them absolutely carnal, as if they were wholly given up to the works of the flesh; but comparatively so, having too much carnality and corruption in them, savouring too much of the flesh, though for the main truly pious: and therefore he uses the word *as*, for mitigation sake: I could not speak unto you but as unto carnal.

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

With milk, that is, with easy and common truths; not with the mysterious part of gospel-knowledge; with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not with the higher doctrine of Christianity, which neither then, nor now, are ye able to bear. Learn hence, That it is great prudence and wisdom in the ministers of Christ to instruct people in the first principles of religion, in order to their regular advancing higher in Christianity. Ministers are spiritual nurses; they first must feed with milk, then with meat, otherwise they will not nourish, but destroy.

3 ¶ For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife,

and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

That is, "Ye are in a great measure carnal; for your envy, strife, and divisions, prove you to be so, and that you live according to the corrupt nature of man." They had the seed and root of grace abiding, and yet the relics of corruption remaining in them. There is a vast difference between weak grace, and no grace: between the presence of sin, and the power of sin. But how could the apostle here call the Corinthians carnal, and babes in Christ, when in chap. 1. ver. 5. he affirmed, and they were *enriched with all knowledge and utterance*? *Ans.* That might be true as to some particular persons amongst them, who had those extraordinary gifts of tongues and miracles given them for the confirmation of the gospel; and yet what is here said, be true as to the generality of them, that they had too much carnality and unmortified corruption remaining in them: *Ye are yet carnal.* Observe next, What proof he gives of it, namely, ocular demonstration; for, says he, there are among you *envying, strife, and divisions.* Envy, as the root, bears strife, and strife breeds divisions and factions. Envy is a pestilent lust, yea, a devilish lust: it makes another's good our grief. The devil envies God and man their happiness; he rejoices at the destruction of sinners, though he has no advantage by it; nay, though it increaseth his torment, because they were tempted by him to sin. There is nothing so like the devil as an envious man, with his cloven foot, to make division wherever he comes. Learn hence, 1. That envy is the cause and companion of strife. Learn, 2. That strife and contention, differences and divisions, are often found in the churches of Christ, and among particular Christians. Learn, 3. That so far as these prevail in and among any, it evidences that they are carnal, and walk as men.

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

That is, one saith, in opposition to another, I am the disciple of Paul; and another, I follow Apollos: and thus, probably, they call themselves after the names of their admired preachers, factiously crying up one minister above another. Hence learn, That although it be a people's duty to have a great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, yet must not their respect degenerate into a sinful admiration of their persons: for the factious affecting of one minister above another, is both sinful and dangerous. When the gift and abilities of one minister cried up to the contempt of others, it occasions enmity and dissention amongst ministers themselves and their people also: *Are ye not carnal, when one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos*? It is added, chap. i. 13. *And I of Christ*: That is, they factiously said they were of, or for Christ, in opposition to his ministers. They pretended to the immediate teachings of Christ, and had no need of the ministry, either of Paul or Apollos. Learn hence, That although Christ only is to be relied upon, as head of his church, yet it is not his will we should despise his ministry, or condemn his ministers under that pretence.

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apol-

los, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

As if the apostle had said, "Neither Paul nor Apollos were the authors of your faith, but only ministerial helpers of it, as God is pleased to furnish them with gifts, and to give a blessing to their ministerial endeavours." Your ministers give out to you as God gives in to them: and therefore you ought not factiously to boast of their gifts, nor to make parties upon that account. Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the word is the instituted mean and instrumental cause, which God hath appointed for working faith in the hearts of men. 2. That God has furnished his ministers with variety of gifts and abilities; all which he makes use of, in order to that end. 3. That, therefore, the ministers of Christ ought neither to be deified nor nullified, neither to be cried up, nor trodden down; we are not efficient causes, but only instrumental means of faith. Render, therefore, unto God the glory of the author, and unto ministers the honour of the instrument. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?"

6 I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

I planted: That is, I first preached the gospel among you, and first instructed you in the principles of Christ: I converted you to Christ. After me came Apollos, and watered the seed which I had sown; but God it was, and God alone, that caused the seed which I sowed, and Apollos watered, to fructify and increase. Learn, 1. That it is an act of discriminating grace and favour in God, to send out his ministers to plant the gospel amongst a people that never before heard of it. 2. That it is an act of farther favour and grace in God, to follow a people with a succession of ministers, in order to the watering of the seed formerly sown amongst them. Learn, 3. That all that ministers can do, is but to plant and water; they cannot give increase, nor procure the success of their ministerial endeavours. Blessed be God, that he doth not require the success of our labours at our hands. Woe unto us, should we say, "Either reconcile my people to me, or I will never be reconciled unto you. Diligence and endeavour is our's, the blessing and success is God's: He will never blame us for not doing his work."

7 So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

The sense is, "Neither is he that planteth to be esteemed as any thing, nor he that watereth as any thing, but the glory of all must be ascribed to God that giveth the increase." Yet must we understand the apostle speaking thus not absolutely, but comparatively: "They are not any thing, that is not any thing of themselves alone, without the concurrence of the Spirit; what excellent gifts soever they have, they cannot of themselves make the word they preach effectual." Lord! how many souls do find both ministry and ministers to be nothing as to them? If it be any thing to purpose to any soul, it is God, and not his ministers, that make it so. The best and ablest ministry is nothing to

any saving purpose, without God's power giving the increase.

8 Now he that planteth, and he that watereth, are one: and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.

*He that planteth and he that watereth are one: that is, in their design and scope, in the aim and end of their ministry: therefore, they should not be factiously divided, either among themselves, or by their hearers. Although there is a variety and diversity in the gifts of Christ's ministers, yet the intent and design of their ministry being one, they all ought to agree as one. They should be one in doctrine, and one in affection, aiming at one and the same mark; namely, the glory of God and men's salvation, as they are one in their office, institution and end. It follows, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Thence learn, That every man, especially every minister, is sure to receive a proportionable reward hereafter, according to his labour and working for God here. Learn, 2. The appropriation and distinction of this reward: *He shall receive his own reward*; implying that there are degrees of reward and glory in heaven, according as men have laboured more or less for God here on earth: According to this gradual diversity shall be gradual degrees of glory. Learn, 3. The measure and rule of this reward; according to his labour, not according to his success; according to his industry, not according to the fruit of his ministry: If he labours faithfully, God will reward him proportionably, though few or none have believed his report.*

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Observe here, 1. The honourable title put upon the ministers of God; they are labourers, or workers together with God. But in what sense are they so? *Ans.* Not so by any power of their own, to produce any spiritual effect, as if they without God could work faith and repentance in the hearts of sinners; but they work only by an external application of the ministry of the word, and the means of grace to the souls of men. They are under-labourers to God, and God honours them by working by them, and working with them, for the conversion of men. Observe, 2. The honourable relation in which the church stands to God: The church and people of God, are his husbandry, and his building: *Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* Which phrase implies, 1. Power and goodness in making them so: A building is not of itself, nor is a field clothed with goodly corn of itself. 2. It implies dominion and absolute sovereignty: The master is the orderer of the house, and the husbandman the disposer of his ground. 3. It denotes propriety and interest, that we are not our own, but God's. The house is the owner's, not its own. God is theirs, and all that God has is theirs also.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise-master-builder I have laid the foundation, and

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another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Observe here, 1. The character which St. Paul assumes to himself, namely, that of a master-builder, yea, of a wise master-builder. But was it not vain-glorious in the apostle thus to describe himself? Is not Christ the great and wise master-builder of his church? Yes, undoubtedly: But the apostles were instruments in his hand, which he honoured with success; for which reason, St. Paul thus speaks. Learn hence, That in some cases it is not vain-glory, but a necessary duty, for the ministers of Christ to magnify their work and office received from Christ. Observe, 2. The special work performed by St. Paul, the wise-master-builder, *he laid the foundation*: that is, he first acquainted them with the rudiments and fundamental principles of the Christian religion, which they had never heard of before. Learn thence, that it is a special part of divine wisdom in a minister to lay at first a good foundation of scripture knowledge in the minds and understandings of his people. Unless we have a knowing people, we are not like to have a gracious people. All our sermons will be dashed to pieces upon the rock of our people's ignorance, if they be not well catechised and instructed in the fundamentals of Christianity. Observe, 3. How very careful our apostle is to ascribe all his strength, his assistance and success as a master-builder to the grace of God: *According to the grace of God given to me.* Learn thence, That it is the property of every godly man, much more of every gracious minister, to attribute all that good which is either received or done by him, to the grace of God. What man ever received more grace from God, or did more service for God, than St. Paul? And so enlarged is he upon all occasions in magnifying the grace of God, that he is never satisfied in exalting of it; *Not I, but the grace of God that was with me, &c.* Observe, 4. The cautionary direction given by St. Paul to all succeeding ministers of Christ, to take heed that they lay no other foundation than what was laid by him: and that they build suitably upon that foundation; *Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.* Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are to take especial care that they preach no other doctrine than what Christ and his apostles preached, and laid as the foundation of Christianity; and that they do not build upon that foundation any doctrine which may endanger their own or their people's salvation: I have laid the foundation, and let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

That is, no other true foundation can any man lay, than that which is already laid by me; namely, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and faith in him. The ministers of Christ ought to lay no other foundation than Christ: They are to lead their people to, and build them upon, no other rock but Christ. All threatenings, promises, commands, duties, privileges, are to be preached, and pressed with respect to Jesus Christ; he is to be laid as the only foundation in respect of knowledge, in respect of faith, in respect of justification, in respect of intercession and acceptance with God. The minister's great work is to set Christ forth in all

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his glorious fulness, to represent him in all his offices, as a glorious object for the eye of our faith to look into, and fix upon.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

In these words the apostle speaks of two sorts of preachers under the metaphor of builders. 1. Some that are sound and orthodox, who hold the foundation, and build upon it gold, silver, and precious stones; that is, such sincere and wholesome doctrine as will bear the touch-stone and trial. 2. Others that are unsound and erroneous, who hold indeed the foundation of Christianity, but build upon it such doctrines as will not bear the trial, expressed by wood, hay, and stubble, which are not proof against the fire. Learn hence, 1. That the doctrine of Christ and the truths of the gospel, are very excellent, and exceeding precious; compared to gold, silver, and precious stones, for their usefulness and preciousness. Learn, 2. That all errors and falsehoods in religion, all erroneous and false doctrines, though not fundamental, are yet no better than hay or stubble, vain and unprofitable, vile and contemptible. Observe, 3. As a two-fold builder described, so a two-fold event declared. Some men's works, that is, their doctrines and practices, will abide the fire, others will be burnt up, and suffer loss; where, by the fire, understand the word and Spirit of God. A probatory, not a purgatory fire, is here intended; because it is said to burn not the person, but the action, and every action too of every man. Now the popish purgatory fire ties not all persons, some are exempted as martyrs; and not all actions neither, but wicked ones only; whereas this fire shall try every man's work. The meaning is, that the light of God's word and Spirit will manifest the verity or vanity, the soundness or falseness of doctrines delivered by all preachers. Sound doctrines, that, like good metal will endure the furnace, shall be rewarded; but such doctrines as will not endure the trial, shall miss of the reward. Learn hence, 1. That all the ways and works of wickedness in general, and all hidden and secret ways of false doctrine in particular, God will one day reveal and make manifest; "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it." Learn, 2. That the true and sincere doctrine of the gospel is firm and durable, and such as will abide the closest trial; yea, and will grow more illustrious and glorious thereby. Learn, 3. That men may hold the foundation, and maintain the fundamentals of Christianity, and yet may

so superstruct upon it, and superadd so many things unto it, whereby they may greatly endanger their own and others' salvation: *They shall be saved, yet so as by fire*; that is, with great difficulty, having exposed themselves to the utmost hazard and danger. The speech is proverbial, and signifies both the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it; intimating, that errors in judgment endanger a person's salvation, as well as ungodliness in practice. He that has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as well afraid of erroneous principles, as he is of debauched practices: For error is as damnable as vice: The one is an open road, the other a by-path to hell and destruction.

16 ¶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Our apostle here, in the judgment of some interpreters, makes use of a farther argument to convince the Corinthians of the evil of their divisions. They are the church and temple of God, themselves not to be profaned by divisions: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?* as if the apostle had said, "You Corinthians, by being converted to Christianity, are become a christian church, an holy temple, in which the Spirit of God doth dwell, and where the Spirit of division ought not to dwell; for if any man defile the temple of God by dividing the church into factions and parties, him will God destroy; for the temple of the Lord is holy, and not to be profane, by your dividing lusts, which temple ye are." Learn hence, 1. That the people of God, met together to worship him, are the church or spiritual temple of God. 2. That the Spirit of God dwells in the church, or temple of God: and this dwelling implies propriety, familiarity, authority, residency, and fixedness of abode. Learn 3. That such as defile the holy temple of God, either by factious divisions, or erroneous doctrines, do provoke God to destroy them; that is, to punish them with temporal destruction, and, without repentance, with eternal damnation: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

18 ¶ Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Observe here, 1. A word of caution; *Let no man deceive*

himself. Self-deceit is the ground of all other deceit. Whatever deceit is abroad, it begins at home. A deceitful heart will not spare so much as itself; although this self-deceit be most unnatural and monstrous, most fatal and pernicious. Observe, 2. A word of exhortation, *If any man seem to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise*: that is, "If any man seems to be wise in the wisdom and learning of this world, let him embrace the doctrine of Christ, which the world calls foolishness, and so become a fool to them, that he may be wise according to the wisdom of God." Learn hence, That all human and worldly wisdom cometh far short of, and is but a mere shadow and appearance, compared with the wisdom of God manifested in the gospel. Observe, 3. A word of enforcement: *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* It is so in God's opinion and estimation; he accounts it so. If we compare wit with grace, learning with religion, a rational head with a gracious heart, the latter infinitely transcends the former in the account of God. All the admired wisdom of worldly men, is nothing but contemptible folly in the esteem of God. The world's wise man, is God's fool. Observe, 4. A double testimony which the apostle produces out of the Old Testament to prove his assertion, that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. The first is out of Job v. 13. *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.* Learn hence, That no wisdom or craftiness of man can stand before the wisdom and power of God. The second testimony is taken out of Psalm xciv. 11. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain;" that is, the choicest and best thoughts of the wisest man are vain, yea, vanity.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men:
For all things are yours:

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Here the apostle closes his discourse with an inference not to glory in any teacher whatsoever, either in Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, seeing they were all theirs; that is, all the apostles and ministers of Christ, from the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the least, and all their ministerial gifts and labours, are all obtained and appointed by God for their use and service: *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.* Learn hence, That all ministers, and ministerial abilities, are wholly for the church's service, and spiritual advantage: all their power is for the church's preservation, all their gifts are for the church's edification. Their message is for the church's comfort and consolation: Thus all things in and belonging to the church, are ours. Next he mentions the things of the world as ours. *Or the world*; that is, all the good things in the world are ours, houses, lands, honours, friends, relations, so far as God sees them good for us. But are there not many that are Christ's, who want houses and friends, and other comforts; how then can they be said to have them? *Ans.* 1. They have all things eminently and transcendently in God and Christ, by whom they have a title to all things, Rev. xxi. 7. 2. They have all things virtually, in that contentment and sa-

tisfaction of mind which they do enjoy. 3. They have all things eventually; they have the good of all things, when they have not the actual possession of all things, their very wants, in the event, work for good. *Or life*; this is our's two ways: The comfort of life is ours, and the end of life is ours, with the true use of it; for the sincere Christian only lives to purpose, by answering the great end of life, which is the promoting God's glory, and securing his own salvation. *Or death*; that which is in itself so terrible is for the believer's advantage, their friend, their privilege, their passage to heaven, their deliverer from sin, the perfecter of their grace; when we come at heaven, and not till then, we shall fully understand what this meaneth, *Death is ours.* *Or things present*; that is, all the events of providence which befall us, whether prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, riches or poverty, they are all sanctified to us, and are instrumental for the sanctifying of us. They are covenant-blessings, and dispensed in love to us. *Or things to come*; that is, all future things which may befall us in this world, and in the world to come, shall be to our abundant advantage, whether they be merciful or good things, or grievous and sad things: particularly, death is to come, but to die is gain: Christ's death was the death of death; he has disarmed death of its sting: the believer fears not its dart; it is not an hurting, but an healing serpent: There is no venom or malignity in it: but that which was before in the number of threatenings, is now brought within the compass of the gospel-promises; all things are ours, life or death, things present, and things to come. *And ye are Christ's*: that is, not Paul's or Apollos' disciples or servants, but only Christ's, therefore glory only in him. Consecrate all to the service of Christ, and resign up all to the will of Christ; ye are Christ's by donation, ye are Christ's by redemption, ye are Christ's by conquest; ye are therefore to glory in him and in him only. *And Christ is God's*: that is, as you are Christ's, and for his glory; so Christ, as Mediator, is God's, and for his glory. He is God's servant, to do his will, to execute his pleasure: He was begotten of his Father before all time: He received his doctrine from the Father in the fulness of time: He sought not his own, but his Father's glory, in the doctrine which he preached, in the miracles which he wrought; but lived in an entire resignation to his Father's pleasure. Lord! how will it shame us, thy servants, to follow thy servant Christ, and to be called by his name, if we seek not his glory, and exalt not his will, and live not to his praise, who died for us and rose again.

CHAP. IV.

There are two extremes which persons are very apt to run into, with reverence to the ministers of Christ; namely, to extol, admire, and even idolize some; and to depress, undervalue, and even vilify others. To cure the former evil, was the great design and endeavour of St. Paul in the foregoing chapter: To prevent the latter, and to preserve that due honour, and keep up that just esteem which is payable to all ministers of Christ, it is the design and

scope of the apostle in the chapter before us : and accordingly, thus he speaks :

LET a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

As if the apostle had said, " Although I warned you in the foregoing chapter, against an undue esteem of your pastors, and against a factious preference of some before others, to the great scandal of religion, and the prejudice of the gospel; yet I speak not this to draw you off from paying that due honour and deserved respect which belongs to their character: but I desire you to account them all, neither more nor less, but as *ministers of Christ*, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Here observe, 1. A double character given of an evangelical pastor. He is, 1. *A minister of Christ*; that is, a person deputed by the command, and invested with the authority of Christ, to administer in holy things, to preach the word, administer the sacraments, execute church-censures; being in all things an example to the flock: And the people are to account the office and work of the ministry, as a divine institution and appointment of Christ in his church: Whoever slights or opposes the ministry, flies in the face of Christ himself. 2. He is a *steward of the mysteries of God*; and that in a twofold respect. 1. He is a steward of the truths of God. 2. Of the ordinances of God. Of the truths of God he is a steward, to open and explain them for the spiritual edification of all Christians, and to defend and maintain them against the opposition of all adversaries; God's steward must not suffer villain to destroy the provision of God's household. He is a steward of the ordinances of God also; which he is obliged to dispense in all faithfulness to his congregation: 1 Pet. iv. 10. "As every man hath received the gifts, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Observe, 2. As the ministers of Christ are described, they are stewards; so the qualifications of a steward is declared, and that is faithfulness: *It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*. What ground is there for trust, when there is no truth! Now this faithfulness in our stewardship, includes, 1. Purity of intention: A pure end in all our services will give us abundance of comfort at the end of our service. 2. Sincerity and integrity of heart: A faithful minister is a sincere hearted minister, who preaches his sermons first to himself, and then to his hearers. 3. Ministerial diligence: A slothful minister can never be a faithful steward: We must study the truths of God to paleness, preach them to faintness, maintain and defend them with steadfastness: We look for happiness from God, as long as he is in heaven, and he expects faithfulness from us as long as we are upon earth. 4. Faithfulness in stewardship, includes impartiality in all the administrations of Christ's house: We must take the same care of, manifest the same love unto, attend with the same diligence upon, the poorest and meanest in our congregations, as we do the rich, the great, and the honourable: For all our souls are of one price, and rated at one value in our Lord's book. Oh! let us take care we

be impartial stewards; for we must shortly give an account of our stewardship before an impartial God.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own-self.

Not as if the apostle was unconcerned, whether the Corinthians had a good esteem of him or not; or were regardless of his reputation among men: but the meaning is, he did not much value himself upon the opinion and judgment which any persons had of him; knowing that his case would not be finally determined by any man's judgment, nor yet by his own. Therefore, says he, *I judge not myself*; that is, definitively, so as to acquiesce in that judgment: For I may be deceived in my judgment of myself, therefore I leave myself to the judgment of God. It is a singular support to all the members, but especially the ministers of Jesus Christ, that they and their actions have a more righteous judge to be examined and tried by, than either the world or themselves: The world's judgment may falsely condemn them, their own judgment may flatter and deceive them; but the judgment of God will deal impartially with them.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

These words are not to be understood absolutely and universally, but relatively, and respectfully; not as if the apostle knew no sin in himself, (for he went groaning under a body of sin to his grave) but with respect to his ministry; his conscience cleared him of all unfaithfulness and neglect of duty: *Though I know nothing of unfaithfulness by myself, yet am I not thereby justified* at God's tribunal, *for he that judgeth me is the Lord*. Note here, 1. St Paul's justification of himself before men, *he knew nothing by himself*; that is, in general, his conscience did not accuse him of any gross prevaricating with God, and in particular did not charge him with any negligence or unfaithfulness, in respect of his office; he had not been an unfaithful steward of divine mysteries, nor guilty of any crimes that his adversaries could charge him with. Note, 2. His disclaiming all justification thereby in the sight of God; *yet am I not thereby justified*; his sincerity did comfort him, but could not justify him:—The righteousness of the holiest and best of men, is not pleadable before the righteous and holy God for justification. The reason given why the apostle did not, durst not, plead his own righteousness before God for justification; *For he that judgeth me is the Lord*; as if he had said, "Were I to appear at man's bar, I doubt not but to come off well enough, for none knows me so well as myself; but I have to do with an heart-searching God, who knows me better than myself; and when God comes to look over my work, he will spy that which the most eagle-eyed person cannot spy. Therefore, there is no standing for me, a creature, before God, in any creature-purity. Angelical perfection is imperfect in his sight. Angels, though they have not the least spot of sin in their natures, yet are they chargeable with folly; their nature being potentially sinful; and the heavens themselves are not clear in God's sight."

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Our apostle's design in these words, is not to condemn all judgment of persons, words or actions, or to oblige us to suspend our judging till the day of judgment; but only forbids rash-censuring, unadvised, uncertain, and unseasonable judging of the hearts, and final states of men. We may judge what appeareth, but not what is hidden and unseen; for the judging of hidden things is referred to him from whom nothing is hidden. Learn hence, That to take upon us to judge the heart, or to judge that which doth not appear, is to assume the office, and to take upon us the place of God; only he that is invisible can look into that which is invisible. Observe farther, The person spoken of, "who makes manifest the counsels of the heart, and brings to light the hidden things of darkness; it is Jesus Christ: Judge nothing till the Lord come," the Lord Jesus Christ. A strong argument to prove the divinity of our blessed Saviour: He that has knowledge of the heart, of the secrets of the hearts of all men, and has all these subject to his judgment, is undoubtedly God. But Christ ascribes all this knowledge to himself, Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one according to his works;" therefore he is essentially and really God. Observe, lastly, What will be the issue and consequence of our Lord's knowing and judging the secrets of men; *Then shall every one have praise of God*; that is, every one shall have praise, that is praise-worthy; every good man, though now dispraised and despised, though censured and condemned, though loaded with scandals and false reports, yet then every righteous man shall have praise from Christ the righteous Judge.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Here the apostle prosecutes his former argument afresh, that neither the Corinthians, nor any other Christian, should so overvalue and magnify some ministers of the gospel, as to undervalue and despise others, making men of eminency the heads of factions and parties; but that they esteem all ministers as instruments only in Christ's hand, doing nothing of themselves, but assisted by the grace and strength of God, to whom, therefore, the success and entire praise of all their labours is due. This is to think of them according to what is written, chap. iii. 6, 8. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?" Learn hence, That it is too usual, when people have a very great and high esteem of the ministers of Christ, to overvalue themselves by reason of their relation to them and dependence upon them; and whilst they honour and magnify some, to vilify and disesteem others. This is the fault which all along our apostle has

been condemning since he began this epistle, and he has not yet done with it: for thus he proceeds:

7 ¶ For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as thou hadst not received it?

As if the apostle had said, "Who is it that maketh one minister to differ from, and excel another? Is it not God? If so, then, let those ministers that have received the greatest gifts from God, whom the inspiration of the Almighty hath made most wise and understanding, be most humble themselves; and let none take occasion from hence, to despise others who have received less." Learn hence, That ministers of great abilities, eminent for gifts and graces, are in great danger of being puffed up themselves, and their people also too prone to glory in them: There is a temptation in good things, yea, in the best things, to pride; the best men on earth may be overheated by what they have received from heaven; and Satan may take occasion, even from our raptures in spirit, to puff us up with spiritual pride: therefore our apostle puts forth his soul-humbling and pride-mortifying expostulation, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? Who made thee to differ?" There is nothing wherein one minister, or indeed one man, differeth, or is distinguished from another, or wherein he excelleth another, but it is given him from God; it is God, and not himself, that makes him to differ; it is an high degree of pride for any man to say, *Ego discrevi meipsum*, I of myself have made myself to differ.

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

9 For I think, that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were men appointed to death: For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

These words are looked upon by interpreters as an ironical reproof given by St. Paul to the Corinthians, in which, with an holy derision, he rebukes the overweening and high opinion which they had of their present attainments and spiritual perfections. *Now ye are full, &c.* As if he had said, "Now you think yourselves so full and rich in all kinds of knowledge, that you despise your spiritual fathers, myself and Apollos, who first converted you to the faith: we are looked upon as dull fellows, not worthy to be named in the same day with your new-admired teachers. You advance yourselves as much above us, as a king above his own subjects. I wish with all my heart your happiness were real, that we might be sharers in it; but verily I fear that you are

only puffed up with notions; I fear ye have little except in conceit, and there you have a great deal too much. Learn hence, That spiritual pride, that is, boasting of, and glorying in the gifts, graces, or privileges which are conferred upon us, is a sin which the devil strongly tempts, and professors are extremely prone to the practice and commission of. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich." Observe next, As the flourishing condition of the Corinthians is ironically described, so the afflicted and persecuted condition of the apostles is plainly declared: "We are a spectacle to the world, and appointed to death." The original word is, We are set as upon a theatre or stage, in public view; heaven, earth, and hell are spectators; God, angels, and men, wait to see the glorious triumphs of our faith and fortitude. What a great solemnity is there at the sufferings of a saint! Bloody persecutors are for making all the members, especially all the ministers of Christ, a spectacle to the world; an allusion to the Roman spectacles, who carried those persons about for a sight that were to fight with wild beasts; and if they escaped, were only reserved for slaughter another day: Thus the apostles in their martyrdom conflicted with all sorts of misery, and with death itself at last. Observe, lastly, How the false professors of christianity branded the apostles with folly, for exposing themselves thus to sufferings and death for the sake of Christ: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but we are wise in Christ; that is, in your account we are fools, because we run so many hazards for the sake of Christ; but you are wise in your profession of Christ, because you have an art to profess him, and yet enjoy outward prosperity with him. The wisdom of suffering Christians, in hazarding all for Christ, and laying down their lives in the cause of Christ, has been always accounted weakness and folly by the men of the world: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ."

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;

12 And labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scourings of all things unto this day.

Observe here, 1. The several kinds of sufferings which the holy apostles were exposed to, and exercised with, namely, hunger and want, poverty and reproach, persecution and death. They suffered in their bodies by hunger and nakedness, and stripes; in their names by scandals and reproaches, being accounted the *filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*. The word, say some, signifies that dirt and filth which scavengers do rake together in the streets, and to carry the dunghill. Others think it an allusion to the sacrifices which the heathens used for the lustration of a city, who when their city was under any great calamity, chose out some very base, vile, any nasty person, and burnt him in a ditch, and cast his ashes into the sea, as a sacrifice unto Neptune, saying, "Be thou a purgation for us." Such

a base and vile esteem had the world of the holy apostles and messengers of Christ. Lord! to see such a man as St. Paul going up and down the world with a naked back and empty belly, without an house of settled abode to hide his head in; one that did more service for God in a day, than perhaps we have done him in all our days; can we, the ministers of Christ, complain of hard usage from the world, when we consider what this great apostle suffered in the world? Observe, 2. The duration and continuance of the apostles' sufferings, *even unto this day, and unto this present hour*. It was not only at their first entrance upon the apostolical office, when all the world was set against Christianity, that they met with this usage, but all along, from the first hour they began to preach the gospel, even unto this hour, did they meet with opposition and persecution. As long as there is a devil in hell, and wicked men upon the earth, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution: But surely the dregs of this cup have in all ages been reserved for the ministers of Christ Jesus; as if to preach were nothing else but to stir up the rage, and be blotted with the obloquies of men. Observe, 3. The holy and humble behaviour, the meek and patient carriage and demeanour of the apostles, under all this load and burden of reproach and scorn, disgrace and shame, persecution and ill-usage: *Being reviled, we bless*. When we meet with opprobrious words, we are so far from rendering evil for evil, or railing for reviling that we speak well of, and wish well to, the persons that are thus injurious to us: *Being persecuted by them, we suffer it patiently from them: Being defamed by any of them, we entreat God for them, to pity and pardon them; and we entreat them to pity themselves*. To publish invectives against those, though the worst of men, who reproach and persecute us, is a modern piece of zeal which the blessed apostles and holy sufferers in the primitive times were little acquainted with, but perfect strangers to.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but, as my beloved sons, I warn you.

15 ¶ For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye, not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Observe here, 1. The holy ingenuity of the apostle discovered in the sharp reproofs given to the Corinthians: It was to warn them of their duty, not to reproach them for their crimes; "I write not these things to shame, but warn you." The ministers of God take for greater pleasure in exhorting people to be good, than in complaining of their badness. Observe, 2. The relation which St. Paul stood in to the Corinthians; he was their spiritual father, and they his children. He first converted them to Christianity, by his ministry amongst them. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." *In Christ Jesus*; that is, by the gracious influence of the Spirit of Christ, accompanying my preaching, I have turned you from idols to serve the living and true God. Hence it is, that I have such an endeared affection for you, and challenge a deserved respect from you. Learn from hence, That persons may and ought to have a great value

for, and bear a tender respect towards, those ministers whom God hath honoured, by making them instruments of their first conversion, and bringing home to Christ. These are in a proper sense their spiritual fathers: and verily there is no greater love, no stronger affection betwixt any relations upon earth, than between the ministers of Christ, and such of their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to bring home to God. Observe, 3. The apostle having asserted his relation to them, that of a spiritual father, challenges from them their duty of obedient children: namely, to follow him in the steps of holiness, and sincere obedience; "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Lord! what holiness of life, and exactness of conversation, ought to be found with the ministers of Christ, seeing they are to be patterns as well as preachers; and their people not only to be their hearers, but their followers! We are to tread out before them the steps which they are to take towards heaven; and it will be found at the great day as dangerous to have misled them by our example, as by our doctrine. Happy those ministers that can safely say to their people, *Be ye followers of us.*

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

No sooner had St. Paul planted a church in Corinth, but by the envy and malice of Satan, most notorious disorders, and scandalous abuses crept into it. To obviate which great and growing mischief, he writes them his mind in this epistle. But lest this method should prove ineffectual, because writing at a distance is not so moving as conferring face to face, he sends Timotheus unto them, to excite and persuade them to their duty, by bringing to their remembrance his ways which were in Christ, both what he had formerly taught, and did yet continue to teach in every church: "I have sent unto you Timotheus, my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord." Here note, 1. The messenger sent to them, described by his name, *Timotheus*, or Timothy; by his relation, *his beloved son*: that is, his son in the faith, his spiritual son, possibly converted, undoubtedly instructed by him in the principles of Christianity. He is farther described by his zeal and diligence in the work of the gospel: *Faithful in the Lord*; that is, faithful in the work of the Lord. A noble character of a gospel-minister, faithful to God, faithful to souls, faithful in his intentions, faithful in his endeavours, faithful in all the administrations of Christ's house, faithful and affectionate towards the poor of the flock, remembering that all souls are rated at one value in his Master's book; faithful in public preaching, faithful in private inspection. Happy are the people who have such faithful persons for their spiritual guides and pastors. Note, 2. The message and errand Timothy was sent upon; namely, to acquaint the Corinthians with St. Paul's doctrine and practice, and to excite and persuade them to their duty, by bringing his ways to their remembrance. Where observe, That St. Paul had led so holy and unblameable a conversation in every place where he had lived, that he is neither afraid nor ashamed that his course of life should be discovered and made known

to all the world. A great example for our imitation, to walk before God and our people with such care and caution, with such heedfulness and circumspection, that we need not blush, when either our doctrine or practice are published before all the churches of Jesus Christ. Timothy shall acquaint you *with my ways, and with what I teach every where in every church.*

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Observe here, 1. The advantage which the height and haughtiness of some envious teachers took, upon St. Paul's absence from Corinth; they entertained low and contemptuous thoughts of him, and vaunted that he durst not come before them, nor stand among them. Observe, 2. St. Paul's positive resolution to come again to Corinth with God's permission, with the reason for that resolution: "I will come and know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power;" that is, I will certainly come and try your boasting envious teachers, not by their plausible words, and fine talk, discovering who hath the smoothest tongue; but I will examine the power; that is, first their authority to preach; and next what power and efficacy there is in their preaching; and lastly, what power and influence their preaching has upon their own practice; I will find out what real good they have done among you, after all their ostentatious braggings. Behold here, the true and great end of episcopal visitation, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" that is, Christianity doth not consist in talking, but in doing; not in vaunting, but performing great things. But by power, here may be understood, a power of working miracles for confirming and propagating the gospel, which the apostles had, but these teachers at Corinth had not. To convince men at first of the truth of Christianity, the dead were raised, the devils cast out, and many mighty wonders wrought by the apostles; by all which the gospel-doctrine was planted, propagated, established, and confirmed. The kingdom of God, or the gospel-church, was not raised at first, or carried on since, by the wisdom of words, by the charms of popular eloquence, and rhetorical flourishes, but by a plain way, and familiar manner of preaching the doctrines of the gospel, attested by miracles, and accompanied with works of divine efficacy and power. Thus the kingdom of God was not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

As if the apostle had said, "Come I will among you, to regulate disorders, and to rectify abuses: Now, chuse you how I shall come; whether in the milder way of kindness, love, and meekness towards you, or exercising the power God had given me, of inflicting corporal punishments on

offenders, by delivering them to Satan as God's executioner upon their bodies." Note here, 1. A power which the apostle intimates himself to have in the Christian church; namely, the power of the rod, that is, a power of inflicting the severest of corporal punishments, even death itself, upon notorious offenders. Thus Elymas, the sorcerer, was smitten with blindness by St. Paul, Acts xiii. Annanias and Sapphira, struck dead by St. Peter, Acts v. Hymenæus and Philetus delivered unto Satan, 1. Tim. i. 20. It was usual with God in the earlier days of his gospel, to give Satan leave to seize the bodies of such as were for their obstinate perseverance in sin, cut off from the communion of the church; who plagued them with diseases, and sometimes with death, which is called *the destruction of the flesh*, 1 Cor. v. 5. Note, 2. The necessary reason for investing such a power, so great a power as this, in the apostle; because then there being no civil power of the magistrate on his side, had he been destitute of this extraordinary power, to punish bold and hardened transgressors, he could never have vindicated Christianity from contempt, much less have conciliated any tolerable respect either to himself or it. People would have despised his person, and made a mock of his new religion; whereas finding him clothed with this power, great fear fell upon the church, yea, on as many as heard these things, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, Acts v. Note, 3. How loath and unwilling the apostle was to exercise this power of his, *and to come unto them with a rod*, desiring rather to use fair and gentle methods, and to come unto them in love, and in the spirit of meekness. His paternal tenderness and fatherly affection, prompted him to menace and threaten punishment, but only to the end that he might not execute and inflict it, provided they would be but obliged by kindness, and reclaimed by candid usage. Note, 4. That the apostle was sometimes forced, out of mere pity, to take his rod into his hand, to use sharpness, though with great reluctance; scourging them, to shew his compassion to them. In like manner must ecclesiastical rulers, to the end of the world, in order to maintain the church's purity and peace, by church censures, chastise that vice which doth deface the one, and those divisions that do disturb the other.

CHAP. V.

The apostle in this chapter, doth sharply rebuke the church at Corinth for their great negligence in punishing scandalous offenders, directing to excommunication, as the proper remedy for redressing such offences, and declaring the end and intention of that ecclesiastical censure to be the destruction of sin, and the salvation of the sinner. For thus he writes,

IT is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Observe here, 1. The persons, or the people blamed. The famous church of Corinth has fornication, nay incest charged upon her. Heinous sins may creep into the best and purest churches, yet doth not a church presently cease to be a true church; nor are Christians presently to separate from the communion of a church, because heinous crimes and scandalous offences are found in it. This church of Corinth was a true church, and it was schismatical to separate from her communion, although erroneous principles and scandalous practices were found amongst the members of it. Observe, 2. The crime charged upon them; namely, that fornication was found amongst them, yea the highest degree of fornication, to wit, incest. By the general name of fornication, all uncleanness is forbidden, all unlawful conjunctions and sinful mixtures are condemned. By incest, is to be understood the uncleanness of a person with some near relation, as a mother, a sister, &c. Observe, 3. The crime of incest is not barely expressed, but amplified and aggravated by its heinousness, *such as was not named amongst the Gentiles*. Not but that many of the more brutish Gentiles were guilty of this sin, but the more civilized amongst the Gentiles did, by the light of nature, detest and abhor it, condemn and forbid it. Lord! how sad is it, that what is not so much as named among the Heathens, should be practised amongst Christians; whereas such sins ought not to be so much as named among Christians, which are practised among the Heathens. Observe, 4. The notoriousness of the crime; *It is commonly reported*: the fame, or rather the infamy of the fact spread far and near; the sin became so public, that it could not be coloured, much less concealed. All sin is a work of darkness. Uncleanness, particularly, delights in darkness; therefore the notoriety of the act bespoke the impudence of the agent. Ah, sad day! when men declare *their sin like Sodom*, they *hide it not*. When both shame and fear are cast off, sin hath an hard forehead, a brazen brow.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Here note, 1. The fault charged upon the church, they did not censure this offender, therefore the apostle censures them. The tolerating of scandalous sins, in particular members of the churches, is a thing very displeasing to Christ, and offensive to his ministers. Note, 2. As they did not censure the offenders, so neither did they mourn for the offence, as they should and ought to have done. Learn, That the falls of particular members of churches are a just cause of mourning to the whole church: As members of the same body, we should sympathize with one another; what the natural members do, the mystical members ought to do. Note, 3. The cause of both, why they did neither censure the offender, nor mourn for the offence; *they were puffed up*; partly with pride of their own gifts, and partly with vain glory, upon account of the admired teachers. Now, this pride hindered their sorrow; a proud man is seldom a compassionate man: True humility will teach us to lament and bewail others' frailty. *Ye are puffed up, and have not mourned*: The original word to *mourn*, seems to refer to a custom in the primitive times, when Christians put on so-

lemly mourning attire, and bewailed excommunicated persons as those that are dead. These Corinthians being puffed up with pride, were so far from their compassionate mourning over this incestuous person, that they rather rejoiced at it, and insulted over that party to whom this person belonged. So prone are persons to rejoice at the downfall of others, either by sin or by affliction.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present; concerning him that hath so done this deed;

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

As if the apostle had said, "Although I am absent from you in body, yet in mind and consent I am present with you, and also by my discerning spirit, by which I am enabled to discern things done at a distance; and accordingly, by the authority and power given me by our Lord Jesus Christ, I have already determined, that when you are solemnly gathered together in the name of Christ, and have my spirit concurring with you, and the power of Christ confirming the sentence pronounced by you, that you deliver this incestuous person unto Satan, by casting him out of the church, and leaving him to God's executioner, to inflict destructive punishment on his body, to bring him to repentance, for the saving of his soul. Here note, 1. The censure and sentence pronounced, excommunication, which consisteth of two parts: 1. Private, in a separation from the communion of saints. 2. Positive, which is here expressed by delivering unto Satan, who had then a power over the excommunicated person's body, to torment it with diseases: which power, though now ceased, yet the Christian church has at this day, a power to exclude enormous offenders from the ordinary means of grace and salvation, and to expose them to the malice and temptations of their grand adversary the devil by depriving them of church communion, which is a more dreadful punishment than persons are sensible of. Note, 2. The person inflicting this censure, St. Paul: *I have judged already*: he pronounced it judicially and requires the Corinthians, to denounce it solemnly. *I have judged already*: implying, that he did not determine rashly and suddenly, but advisedly as became a judge. And mark, They must denounce solemnly what he had determined judicially, and this in the face of the whole church, *when ye are gathered together*; that is, in the presence of the chief pastor, and all his flock at Corinth. A public crime must have a public doom, that others may hear and fear: Yet remark, the congregation or church were witnesses of the censure, but they did not judge and determine it. The apostle did that. The power of the keys is in the hands of the church, only, *quoad xpm* *quoad sinum*: That the church may have the be-

nefit of them, not the managing of them, for that is committed to the pastors only, as appears, Matt. xvi. John xx. Note, 3. The solemn and awful manner, in which the censure and excommunication was and ought to be pronounced. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*: that is, having first, in a solemn manner, called upon the Lord Jesus Christ for his direction and benediction: or in the name of our Lord Jesus: that is, according to the command of Christ, by the power and authority of Christ, and with an eye to the glory of Christ. This should be the manner, and these should be the ends in denouncing church censures: And then Christ will be at the consistory, and his co-operation will make good the censure, as his commission was our warrant to pronounce it; and then the penitent may and ought to dread the sentence, as coming out of Christ's own mouth, and to be inflicted by Christ's own hand. Note, 4. The miserable case and state which the person that is duly excommunicated is in. He is then delivered unto Satan, as God's executioner, to inflict severe punishments on the person's body, now cast out of God's special protection, deprived of the church's communion, and exposed to the temptations and snares of our grand adversary, Satan. St. Austin, in his time, declared, that it was then thought *gravius quam gladio feriri*, much more grievous to be excommunicated, than to be beheaded. But, Lord, where are the persons, at this day, who tremble when their sins have brought them into this miserable case and state? Note, 5. That persons ought not to be in this severe and solemn manner proceeded against, but for notorious scandalous sins. To denounce this awful censure upon every slight and trivial occasion, is to prostitute one of the most venerable ordinances of Christ to contempt and scorn. Note, 6. The greatest and special end for which this ordinance of excommunication was instituted by Christ in his church, and executed by his apostles; namely, to recover the fallen person by repentance, and to be a warning to others. The reforming, and not the ruining of men, was the intention of this ordinance: The censure is not mortal, but medicinal. It is, 1. For the destruction of the flesh, so lascivious in him; for the mortifying his lusts, by afflicting him with grief and sorrow. 2. For the saving of his spirit, that is, his soul, that this may be recovered out of the snare of the devil. Lastly, The time is expressed, when the penitent person shall find the benefit of this painful ordinance; namely, *in the day of the Lord Jesus*: not but that a penitent in this life, shall find some ease in his conscience, and satisfaction in his spirit; but the full benefit of ecclesiastical censure is reserved to the day of the Lord, The day of judgment: Then will Christ manifest to the church triumphant, the good effect of the power of the keys, which he hath committed to his ministers, to be exercised publicly in the church militant: He will then reveal how all stand bound in heaven, whom his church never loosed on earth; and all whom his church hath loosed on earth, shall then appear to be loosed in heaven.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.—

As if the apostle had said, "You Corinthians are prone to pride yourselves in the numbers of wise and wealthy men, that are found among you; you glory that Corinth is the eye of Greece, and Greece the eye of the world; but what do you glory in this for? When you have such a scandalous person among you (the incestuous man) who is a blot and blemish to your whole society, know ye not, that as a little leaven leaveneth and soureth the whole lump; so such a member, continued among you, will defile the whole body or society of Christians with you? Therefore *purge out this old leaven* (cast this scandalous person out of your communion) *that ye may be a new leaven* (your whole church an holy society) *as ye are unleavened*; that is, forasmuch as ye are, by your profession of Christianity, obliged to be unleavened, that is, separated from sin and sinners." Learn hence, 1. That all sin, in general, but the sin of uncleanness in particular, is as leaven in regard of its spreading and diffusive nature: *Old leaven* it is here called, because the Corinthians had been long infamous for this sin of uncleanness, even to a proverb. Observe next, That the apostle having used this similitude of leaven, he pursues it, in allusion to the Jewish custom, before the celebration of the passover, who were to cast all leaven out of their houses with detestation and cursing, upon penalty of being cut off from the congregation of Israel. Thus the holy profession of Christianity obliges every one of us to cut off every notorious sinner from our society, every lust from our hearts, every member of the old Adam, that we may be a new lump, answering our holy and heavenly calling.

—For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Observe here, The apostle's reason, why the old leaven of uncleanness and malicious wickedness should be put away by us; namely, because *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*. We should therefore be as careful to put away sinful leaven out of our hearts, as the Jews were to cast the material leaven out of their houses. Learn hence, 1. That Christ is our passover, or paschal lamb; in allusion to which, he is often called *a lamb* in the New Testament: We do not find him expressed in the New Testament by the name of any other animals, which typified him, but only this of a lamb, this being more significant of his innocency and sufficiency, than any other. St. John i. 29. He is called God's lamb: here he is called our passover, or paschal lamb: God's, in regard of the author; ours, in regard to the end; God's, in regard of designation; ours, in regard of acceptance. Learn, 2. That Christ is our sacrifice. A sacrifice was necessary for a sinful creature to atone divine displeasure: A sacrifice for sin, must be pure and sinless; no such sacrifice could be found but the eternal Son of God; for whatever any creature could do or suffer, had been but a debt or duty, and that could never have made compensation or satisfaction for a debt or rebellion. Learn, 3. That Christ was a sacrifice for us, not for himself; for being perfectly sinless, he needed no sacrifice. Now, the notion of all sa-

crifices, both among Jews and Heathens, was this, That they were substituted in the room and place of the offender, to appease an offended Deity, and exempt the guilty person from punishment. Accordingly our sins were imputed to Christ, and he died under the imputed guilt of them, as a reputed sinner; for we cannot conceive how divine justice should inflict the punishment upon Christ, had it not first considered him under guilt. The weight of all our sin was laid upon his innocent shoulders: our guilt became his by a voluntary susception of the punishment: and consequently, the sufferings of this sacrifice are imputed to us. He took our sins upon himself, as if he had actually sinned; and gave us the benefit of his suffering, as if we had actually suffered and satisfied. Observe, next, The inference drawn by the apostle from Christ's dying as a sacrifice for us. *Therefore let us keep the feast*: not an anniversary, or yearly, but a daily feast, even all the days of our Christian life; let the whole of our lives be as the Jewish feast of passover was, free from leaven, from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and full of sincerity and uprightness, both towards God and man. Learn hence, the duty of every particular and individual Christian; seeing Christ has died as a sacrifice for his sin, his duty is to live unto Christ, by living up to the rule which Christ has given him, abhorring all malice, abandoning all wickedness, acting all that sincerity towards God, and exercising that truth and uprightness towards man, which will be an ornament to our profession whilst we are upon earth, and will bring us at length to the fruition of God in heaven.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators.

10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

11 But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one, no not so eat,

Here our apostle tells them, that he had writ to them in this or some other epistle, before he was fully acquainted with their affairs, not to company with fornicators; that is, to shun all intimacy and familiarity with infidels; but he did not mean or intend that they should have no converse or commerce with them because they lived among unbelievers, and could not go out of the world. But now, since, he heard of the miscarriage of this incestuous person, who was certainly a Christian, and probably a doctor or teacher among them; he warns them to avoid all brotherly intimacy and familiarity with scandalous Christians, lest the church be thought to favour such: *with such an one*, says he, *no, not to eat*; admit not such to your own table, much less to Christ's. Learn from hence, 1. That all unnecessary society and intimate familiarity with scandalous professors, ought to be avoided, that religion may not be thought to favour them,

and the church may not suffer by them. Learn, 2. That as it ought to be the church's care to purge out such, and separate them from her communion; so it is every private Christian's duty to avoid that familiarity with them, which is in their power, even that which lieth in friendly eating with them. Learn, 3. If civil eating with scandalous professors of religion, be forbidden at our own table: much less ought any church to permit and suffer them a religious eating at the Lord's table, which was never spread for such guests.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

As if the apostle had said, "My jurisdiction extendeth not to Heathens, I have nothing to do to judge and censure them that are without the church; but such as are within the pale of the church, your own members, who own your jurisdiction, these you have an undoubted right and power to judge, leaving the other to the judgment of God: therefore I advise, nay charge you, *To put away from yourselves that wicked person*, by excommunicating and banishing him from your communion." As banishment is a civil excommunication, so excommunication is a spiritual banishment: Magistrates must drive malefactors out of civil societies, and church officers must expel enormous offenders out of their religious societies; for they who are unfit for civil converse, are much more unfit for spiritual communion. The last words, *Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*, help us clearly to understand the former precept, ver. 7. *Purge out the old leaven, &c.* that they are not in their first and proper sense to be interpreted of particular persons purging out their lusts, and mortifying their corruptions, though that be a very necessary duty; but it is to be understood of every Christian church's duty to purge out from among them, all flagitious and enormous offenders.

*Cuncta prius tentanda, sed immedicabile vulnus
Ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur.*

CHAP. VI.

The holy apostle having in the former chapter taxed the Corinthians, for their great negligence in not judging the incestuous person in a case ecclesiastical; in this chapter he blames them for their too great forwardness in going to judgment in a matter civil and political.

These Corinthians, who were converted by the apostle to the Christian faith, went to law with and impleaded one another before Heathen judges; whereas they ought to have submitted their differences to be heard before, and decided

by the saints, that is, their brethren and fellow Christians.

Now this mighty scandal to Christianity, our apostle upbraids them with, and sharply reproves them for, in this chapter, in which he thus bespeaks them:

DARE any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world, and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life.

Observe here, 1. That it was not simply and absolutely their going to law which the apostle condemns, but their impleading one another at Pagan tribunal, and before Heathen judges; *The law is good if used lawfully*; but the best thing may be abused; so is oft the lawful itself: Most evident it is, that the apostle, who was offended at their using the law before Infidels, allows it before Christians, as the first verse implies. Observe, 2. The title given to the Corinthian converts, they are all called saints: because they were all so by outward profession, and many of them so by inward sanctification. Whence learn, 1. That all those who take upon them the profession of Christianity, are obliged to be saints, and may be so called, being such by visible profession. 2. That the true and real Christian is a true and real saint: his heart is inwardly renewed and sanctified, his life thoroughly reformed and changed. Observe, 3. The several errors enumerated by our apostle, in the Corinthians going to law. 1. In regard of the adversary. *Brother going to law with brother*; not Infidel with Infidel, nor Infidel with Christian; but Christian with Christian, brother with brother: which seems both unnatural and unchristian. 2. In regard of the judges chosen to decide and umpire their controversies; they were Infidels and unbelievers, not saints: If brother will go to law with brother, let them make choice of Christian judges; but for Christians to refuse Christians, and to chuse to be judged by Infidels was highly scandalous. What will Heathens say, when Christians are together by the ears, and Infidels live in unity? Observe, 4. The great argument used by the apostle to dissuade them from this practice: he argues *a major ad minus*, from the greater to the less. The saints shall judge the world, the wicked world: yea, the apostate angels in another world: Are they not fit then to judge and determine trivial matters between man and man, between one Christian and another, here in this world? Learn hence, That the saints, as assessors with Christ, and approvers of his righteous judgment, shall at the great day judge the wicked world, and the apostate angels. Oh ye wicked world! you that now revile and scorn, that injure and wrong the saints and servants of the most high God, know, that they shall one day be your

judges. O ye saints! who shall be judges of the world, know that our time of judging in this world, is not yet; do not anticipate your work, nor antedate your commission; *Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord comes.*

4 If then ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man amongst you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

It must be still observed, That the apostle doth not go about to abolish the use of secular judgments, or condemn going to law; but only reproveth the abuses that were found among them therein: *Brother going to law with Brother*; that is, one Christian with another: And this is not before a Christian, but an Heathen magistrate; by means whereof the Gentiles became acquainted with the covetousness, ambition, and revenge, which was among Christians, to the dishonour of God and the discredit of the gospel. More particularly, the apostle farther censures and reproveth them, first, for going to law about trifles, and small matters: *Are ye unworthy to judge the least matters?* Should Christians thus implead one another before Infidels for mere trifles? It seems it has been an ancient and too common fault, that every petty difference has pestered the tribunal. Secondly, For the manner of their impleading and persecuting one another: It was with heat and passion, with impatience and impetuous anger: Going to law is one of those duties which is difficultly managed without sin; it is an hard matter for a man to right his estate, and not wrong his soul. Thirdly, He reproveth them, because they did not chuse rather to put up some wrongs than right themselves by going to law: *Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Teaching us that something should not only be hazarded, but parted with for peace-sake. Peace is a jewel worth our buying at a dearer rate than most men are willing to give for it; and a peaceable Christian will put up many injuries patiently, rather than use extremity, referring his cause to him that judgeth righteously; who very often in this life repays us what we part with for peace-sake twice over: Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth. Fourthly, The apostle blames them for their precipitation and haste, in going to law one with another; the law should have been their last refuge after trial of all other means: First they should have referred it to their brethren; if they

could not end it, then the law was open: But instead of this, as soon as any difference arose, they sent presently for a writ to the Heathenish courts of judicature. Fifthly, He blames the ignorance which was found amongst them, that there was no wise person found with them which could compromise and compose differences, before they went too far: Ver. 5. "I speak it to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you that is able to judge between his brethren?" As if he had said, "What, will ye all stand and look on these unkind bickerings? and is there not one among you, that has so much skill as to quiet and compose them? I am really ashamed of it." Sixthly, He rebukes their slothfulness, together with their ignorance, that they were lazy as well as unskilful, and unwilling to interpose for the composing of their brethrens' differences: A little pains, timely taken by us, may prevent abundance of strife and dissention between contending brethren. These are the principal faults which the apostle condemns in these Corinthians going to law; it is not the action, of the thing itself, but the circumstances attending it, and the mismanagement of it, that is here condemned; which being rectified, law is no doubt lawful, whatever some erroneous persons have affirmed to the contrary.

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's positive assertion, and categorical proposition, "That the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God;" where, by unrighteousness, is meant injustice and injuriousness towards our neighbour, as appears by the context, which speaks of defrauding; unrighteousness will as certainly shut out of heaven as ungodliness. Observe next, The large catalogue of sins which the apostle reckons up, that will shut persons out of heaven; uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate love of this world, drunkenness, &c. For the confirmation of this proposition, he proceedeth to this enumeration of the several sins destructive of salvation: which are not to be understood copulatively, but disjunctively; not as if he only who is guilty of all these shall miss of heaven, but he that lives in any one of these unrepented of: If he doth not forsake his wicked course of life he shall never see the kingdom of God; whoever allows and tolerates himself in any one sin, is certainly in a state of damnation. Lord, how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust? And how many thousand of impenitently wicked souls are sentenced to hell, by this one scripture? Observe, lastly, The caution or cautionary direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians, not to deceive themselves with a contrary expectation; (though one would think men could hardly be deceived in so plain a case) as if their bare profession of Christianity would save them, whilst they allowed themselves to live in the practice of any of the aforementioned wickedness: *Be not deceived.* Learn thence,

That men are very prone to deceive themselves in this, that though they live wickedly, yet they shall die happily, and go to heaven gloriously. They have such unlimited apprehensions of the pardoning grace and mercy of God, that they bound it not to faith and repentance, and an holy life ; never considering whether they are qualified subjects or no, for that grace and mercy. God is a merciful God, says the wicked man, therefore I shall not go to hell ; God is a merciful God, saith the devil, therefore I hope to come out of hell : No, say you, that doth not follow, for God has decreed and declared the contrary. And has he not decreed and determined, has he not said and sworn, that the impenitent sinner shall never enter into his rest ? Be not then deceived, O sinner ; whilst thou continuest unreformed, thou canst not "inherit the kingdom of God."

11 And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God

Here we have another argument which our apostle uses to dissuade them from all gross wickedness in general, and from such unchristian behaviour, one towards another, as he had before reproved, in particular ; namely, that great and mighty change which had been wrought upon several of them by means of their conversion to the Christian religion, or the faith of Christ : *Such were some of you ; but ye are now washed.* As if the apostle had said, "You are no longer swine, but sheep, and therefore must not wallow in the mire of sin, as you formerly did." Note here, 1. The black and filthy condition of a sinner, before conversion ; the apostle had reckoned up the vilest and worst of sins that could be mentioned ; and then says, *Such were some of you.* The original word is in the neuter, not in the masculine gender : not *erói*, such persons, but *tauta*, such sins ; as emphatically demonstrating their wickedness, that they were not so much *peccatores*, sinners, as *ipae peccata*, the very sins themselves. Learn hence, That the converting grace of God is sometimes vouchsafed to the vilest and worst of men ; and where it is vouchsafed, makes a very great and mighty change. Note, 2. The particular expressions by which this change is represented ; *Ye are washed*, sacramentally washed in baptism ; *Ye are sanctified*, purified in your hearts and natures, by the sanctifying influences of divine grace ; *Ye are justified*, that is, acquitted from guilt and approved as righteous. Note, 3. The means by which this change was wrought and effected in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God : *In the name of our Lord Jesus* ; That is, through the merits, and for the mediation of the Lord Jesus, and by faith therein : *And by the Spirit of our God* ; that is, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. 1. Here we have the defiling nature of sin supposed ; all men by nature are polluted and defiled, and stand in need of washing. 2. Our Lord Jesus Christ will not disdain or refuse to justify by his blood, and sanctify by his Spirit, the greatest sinners, and the filthiest souls, that apply unto him by faith, for pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace : *Such were you, but ye are washed* : 3. Though justification and sanctification are distinct and different in their nature, yet are they always inseparable in their subject : No person is justified but he that is sanctified ; Christ justifies none by his blood whom he doth

not sanctify by his Spirit. Though justification and sanctification are not the same thing, yet are they always found in the same person : By the former, there is a relative change in our condition ; by the latter, a real change in our conversation.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient : all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats : but God shall destroy both it and them.—

Our apostle still proceeds in the reprehensory part of his epistle, and begins here to reprove the growing heresy of the Gnostics and Nicolaitans among them, who allowed the eating of things sacrificed to idols, and fornication, as things indifferent. The apostle grants that all indifferent things are lawful, and may be used first, when they are expedient, that is, when they may be used without hurting ourselves, and others : And secondly, when they do not get such a dominion over us, as to enslave us to an intemperate use of them : He instances particularly in meats ; and grants, that it is lawful to use any kind of meat, because God hath ordained it for the good of man's nature ; meats are ordained for the belly, and the belly at present ordained for the reception of meats ; but as God will destroy meats, so will he destroy the belly also, as to the use it now hath ; for the resurrection, men shall neither hunger nor thirst any more. Learn hence, That Christianity doth not barely restrain us from the doing of what is unlawful, but from doing what is inexpedient also ; an action in itself lawful, may by circumstances become sinful, and it is both wise and safe to forbear the use of our Christian liberty, when it becomes an occasion of offence unto our neighbour.

— Now the body is not for fornication but for the Lord ; and the Lord for the body.

From this verse to the end of the chapter our apostle labours by sundry arguments, to convince the Corinthians of the exceeding sinfulness of the sin of fornication : partly because they reckoned it amongst the number of indifferent things, and also because the Corinthians, before their conversion to Christianity, were so notoriously addicted to this sin, that they consecrated a temple to Venus, at which a multitude of virgins prostituted themselves ; for which reason St. Paul makes use of a six-fold argument here, to prevent the Corinthians' relapse into sin of fornication after their conversion, which they had been so notoriously guilty of before conversion. The first argument is in the words before us, "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord ; and the Lord for the body." As if he had said, "You put the body to a use for which it was never intended : the belly was made for meats, but the body was not made for fornication, but for the Lord ; that is, for the Lord's use and service ; and the Lord is for the body, that is, for the good and salvation of the body." Whence note. That such is the wonderful goodness of God towards us his creatures, that look in

whatsoever we are for him, he is for us ; as our bodies are for the Lord's service as well as our souls, so the Lord is for the good of our bodies as well as our souls ; and therefore our bodies ought to be employed for his glory in every thing ; This is the apostle's first argument against fornication.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own power.

Here a second argument against fornication is taken from the body's resurrection : Our bodies are to be raised, therefore not to be defiled ; to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body in heaven, therefore not to be defiled with lust here on earth : As if the apostle had said, " Were your bodies to be finally lost in the dust, then were it no great matter how you used them, or abused them ; but as God hath raised up Christ's body, so he will raise up your body ; and seeing your body is the garment which your soul is to wear to all eternity in heaven, keep it pure and undefiled here in earth."

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot ? God forbid.

A third argument here follows : " Our bodies are the members of Christ, as well as our souls ; that is, the union is made between Christ and us, consisting of soul and body both. Now shall we dispose of our bodies, the members of Christ, to so base an use ? shall our bodies, which are joined to Christ, ever condescend to so base a conjunction, as that of being joined to an harlot ? God forbid that such an indignity be done by us."

16 What ! know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body ? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

The sense is, " That as wedlock makes man and wife one body lawfully, so fornication makes the man and the harlot one body sinfully : All the difference is in the morality of the act, but the species or kind of act is the same ; thus the fornicator and the harlot are one flesh ; but he that is joined to the Lord : namely, by faith and love, hath a nearer and more noble union, than that of flesh, for he is one spirit with Christ, not essentially and substantially one, but mystically and spiritually : Christ and the sincere believer are led and guided, acted and influenced by the same Spirit, therefore take heed what you do, for in making your bodies the members of an harlot, you dissolve the union betwixt Christ and them." Learn from hence. How closely and intimately believers are united unto Jesus Christ : they are nearer than one flesh, they are one spirit with him, they have one Father, one house, one home, one heart, one interest, one acquaintance : Happy they who are thus joined to the Lord, for they are one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body : but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Flee fornication. Note here, 1. The apostle's advice to escape fornication, and that is, to flee it, namely, by shunning all occasions of it, all temptations leading to it, all incentives and provocations of it, not suffering our eye to wander, or our thoughts to muse, much less to dwell upon any unlawful or ensnaring object. *Flee fornication.* Note, 2. The argument the apostle uses to *flee fornication*, because other sins are without the body, but this against the body. *Quest.* But how is the apostle understood, when he says, all other sins are without the body ? *Ans.* Thus, though all other outward sins, as drunkenness, murder, theft, &c. have the body as an instrument for committing them, yet in this sin of uncleanness, the body is not only the instrument, but the object also ; for the unclean person doth not only sin with his body, but he sins against his body : Uncleanness leaves that blot and brand of ignominy and baseness upon the body, which no other sin doth, degrading it from that excellent honour whereunto God advanced it in its natural condition, by making it the member of an harlot.

19 What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ?—

Here we have the apostle's fifth argument against fornication and uncleanness, and it runs thus : " Temples which are peculiarly consecrated unto God and his service, ought not to be profaned or polluted : but the bodies of Christians are the temples of God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and therefore they ought to be kept pure and undefiled. " Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost," as well as your souls ? " Our bodies are called temples of the Holy Ghost, because he hath sanctified them for himself, for his habitation, and for his service. From whence the divinity of the Holy Ghost may strongly be inferred ; a temple always supposes some deity to dwell in it : the tabernacle and temple are called God's habitation : Now if the Holy Ghost dwells in good men as a temple, he is truly and really God. In fine, since all Christians are become the temple of God, by virtue of his Holy Spirit sent into their hearts, consecrating their bodies to his sacred service ; let us not desecrate or pollute this temple by defiling it with filthy lusts, but make chastity the keeper of this sacred house, and suffer nothing that defileth to enter into it, lest that God who dwelleth in it being offended, should desert his house thus defiled.

—And ye are not your own ?

20 For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Here we have the sixth and last argument which the apostle makes use of to flee fornication : Our bodies are not our own, but God's, they are his by creation, his by preserva-

tion, his by purchase and redemption: We are bought out of our own hands, as well as out of the hand of divine justice: therefore we sacrilegiously rob and wrong God, when we alienate any part of his own from him, and glorify him not, whose we wholly are, by the faithful service both of our souls and bodies which are his. Learn, 1. That Christians are not their own but God's; not their own, and therefore not in their own power, not at their own disposal, not to live after their own will, or by their own lusts, but according to the will and to the ends and uses of their principal Lord, whose they are. Learn, 2. That as Christians are not their own, so they must not act and live, and dispose of themselves, of their souls and bodies, as if they were their own, as if they had an original propriety, a plenary possession, and a full dominion over themselves; a Christian must not make his own reason his supreme rule, nor his own rule his chief law, nor his own interest his ultimate end, for he was neither made by himself nor made for himself. Learn, 3. That all of us are God's, and therefore, we cannot without great sacrilege, invade his right, and give that body to an harlot which is consecrated unto him. Learn, 4. That though we are all God's, yet we have alienated ourselves from God, and withdrawn ourselves from his disposal. Learn, 5. That being thus alienated from God, he has once more bought us, bought us with a price, a great and full price, the blood of his Son; and we are now God's own again by redemption and purchase. Learn, 6. That our bodies and spirits being thus the Lord's, we should glorify him both in our souls and bodies, which are his; glorify him in our bodies by eternal purity and exemplary sanctity, glorify him in our spirits by internal purity of heart. Thus if we glorify him in our body, and in our spirits, in a way of obedience, he will at last fashion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body, and make our spirits as the spirits of just men made perfect, in that great day, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

CHAP. VII.

Our apostle having finished the reprehensory part of this epistle in the foregoing chapters, he comes in this chapter to resolve divers cases of conscience about which the Corinthians had written to him, particularly concerning marriage; not about the lawfulness of marriage, for that was out of dispute, but about the expediency of it at that time, whether it were advisable in that afflicted state of the church.

NOW concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me; *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

The first scruple or case of conscience which the Corinthians wrote to the apostle about, was concerning marriage. Amongst many other wicked opinions, which the Gnostics, those ancient heretics, maintained, this was one, that marriage was from the devil. Our apostle elsewhere, Heb. xiii. 4. asserts marriage to be holy and honourable; here he determines first in general, that such as have the gift of conti-

nency, and can live chaste in a single state, do well; and, in particular, that a single life at that time was most advisable, and most agreeable to the calamitous and afflicted state of the church: So that when the apostle says, in this verse, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," his meaning is, it is more agreeable to the present necessity, more convenient in regard of the persecuted state of the church, as being a condition less distracted with cares, and less troubled with distraction: for marriage plunges men into an excess of worldly cares, it multiplies their business, and usually their wants, and those wants are harder supplied than in a single life, and more difficultly bore; it is much easier to bear personal wants, than family wants: With respect to all which, says the apostle, especially as the present state of the church stands, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman:" not that it is at any time simply unlawful, but at sometimes manifestly inexpedient.

2 Nevertheless, *to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

As if the apostle had said, "Such are the inclinations of human nature, that every man cannot always do that which is most for his own quiet and ease, but men find the strength of lust and the power of concupiscence so strong in themselves, that marriage, which is God's ordinance for avoiding fornication, and for the propagation of mankind, is of absolute necessity in some persons; therefore, for avoiding fornication and all sorts of uncleanness (which was so common at Corinth) let every man retain his own wife, and every woman her own husband." Here observe, 1. The apostle's expression, he says, *Quisque et quaque*, not *quidam et quadam*; let every man and every woman marry, not some men and some women only: He excepts none, neither priest nor nun, but every one is here permitted, yea, for avoiding fornication, commanded to marry. Observe farther, How the apostle directs every man to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband; more than one is forbidden, and polygamy, or the sin of having either more wives or more husbands at a time than one, is here condemned: To bridle and restrain men's extravagant lusts, the wisdom of God has directed every man to enjoy his own wife, and every woman her own husband. Let the church of Rome consider how she will answer at the bar of God, for the spitting in the face of this ordinance of God, for denying the lawfulness of marriage to her priests and nuns, when God has told her, Heb. xiii. 4. "That marriage is honourable in all; and that all unclean persons God will judge;" and such too often have their priests and nuns been one with another.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may

Give yourselves to fasting and prayer: and Come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Observe here, 1. That matrimonial conversation, or the husband's and wife's performing towards each other all the duties of marriage which they promised, is an act of justice which they owe to one another: This is intimated in the word *render*, and consequently to deny the same is injustice and fraud; *defraud not one another*. Marriage takes away from persons that power which they had over themselves and their own bodies, and transfers it in some sort to the person they are married to. Yet observe, 2. That persons in a married state may, and in some cases ought (namely, for religious ends and purposes) by mutual consent, to abstain from a conjugal duty for some time. "Defraud not one another, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer." Observe, 3. The apostle lays no obligation upon any single persons to take upon them a vow for a single life, nor doth he direct married persons to those perpetual divorces from the marriage-bed, which the papists practice, under pretence of religion: For the apostle admits of no perpetual separation between husband and wife, upon any pretence whatever; no, not that they may give themselves to prayer and fasting, but only permits it for a time upon condition that they come together again. So far was this holy man from laying a snare upon the consciences of any person, either in a single or married state.

6 But I speak this of permission, and not of commandment.

7 For I would that all men were even as I myself: but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

8 I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

As if the apostle had said, "Mistake me not, as if I imposed marriage upon all persons as a duty; No, but I declare it is permitted to all as a remedy against fornication: for so far am I from that, that I could wish all men were unmarried, even as I myself am, and that they had the gift of continence with myself; but God, who will have the world yet farther continued and increased, hath not given this gift to all, nor to all alike in the same measure. Therefore to the unmarried I say, that so many are the advantages of a single life, that if they can abide chaste and single, as I do, it will be many ways for their advantage: But if they cannot, let them use God's remedy, which is marriage; for it is better to marry, than to burn in lust, to be perpetually assaulted with unclean desires, and subject to the ravings and insults of lust." Learn hence, 1. That marrying or not marrying, is, according to several circumstances, matter of advice and counsel, but neither of them absolutely of precept. 2. That

second marriages are not only lawful but an incumbent duty, if persons cannot contain themselves within the bounds and rules of chastity. "To the widows I say, if they cannot contain, let them marry."

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband;

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled unto *her* husband: And let not the husband put away *his* wife.

As if the apostle had said, "Although it be no sin to marry, yet it is a sin to depart, when married; herein I lay the authority of God's command upon you, that you agree together, and that no difference which may arise between you, cause you to separate and live asunder. But to marry upon departure is a double sin. Therefore if any disagreements and discontents between husband and wife cause you to live asunder for a time, think not either of you of marrying to another person; but be reconciled to each other, and live together in love, as becometh persons professing godliness." A civil war in families is fatal as well as in the commonwealth. Domestic contentions, especially betwixt husband and wife, are dangerous and destructive of love and peace. If at any time they arise to that height as to cause a separation betwixt the two, who are one flesh, yet nothing of that nature can warrant their divorce: nothing but death or adultery can untie the marriage knot, and release them from their obligation to each other.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: Else were your children unclean: but now are they holy.

1. Here we have another case of conscience put by the Corinthians to the apostle; namely, whether such husbands as had Heathen and Infidel wives might put them away; and whether such wives as had Infidel husbands, might not, and ought not to depart from them? The apostle resolves the case, That they ought according to the intent and end of marriage, cohabit and dwell together; and he assigns the reason for it, because the unbelieving or infidel wife is sanctified to the believing or Christian husband. How sanctified? not in her nature, but in her use: so that they might lawfully cohabit and converse together; being by marriage made one flesh with him or her that is holy; "And for you"

children says he, they "are not seminally unclean, like the children of Heathens, but "federally holy." *How are they holy?* Not with an inherent, internal, personal holiness; for the holiest man's child is born in sin, and by nature a child of wrath; but with an external, relative, and federal holiness; they are not common and unclean like the children of Infidels, but fit to be partakers of the privileges of the church, to be admitted into covenant with God, as belonging to his holy people; *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* Observe, He doth not say, *Else were your children bastards*, but now are they legitimate, as the enemies of infant baptism, those *duri infantum patres*, would make him speak: but *else were they unclean*, that is, Heathen children, not to be owned as an holy seed, and therefore not to be admitted into covenant with God, as belonging to his holy people. If by holiness here the apostle means a matrimonial holiness, as the anabaptists dream, then according to their interpretation of the word *holy*, the apostle speaks neither pertinently, nor truly: Not pertinently, 1. For then the answer had been nothing to the purpose. The case put, was concerning husbands and wives, not concerning men and whores: and the question propounded by the Corinthians, was not whether a believing husband, and an unbelieving wife, were lawful man and wife together? nobody questioned that; but whether the Christian husband might put away his Heathen wife? The apostle answers, He ought not, if she were willing to dwell with him, for she is sanctified to him; not sanctified in respect of her personal condition, but in respect of her conjugal relation, otherwise their children would be looked upon as unclean, like the children of Heathens; but now are they holy, that is, to be accounted visible saints, and, as such, to be admitted to church privileges. 2. According to his interpretation of the word *holy*, the apostle had not spoken truly; for the children of Heathens, born in lawful wedlock, are no more bastards than the children of Christians; for their parents marriage frees them from the charge of illegitimacy as well as others. Add to this, that in all the New Testament, though the word *holy*, be used above five hundred times, yet it never once signifies legitimacy, but is always used for a state of separation to God; Therefore, to make it signify so here, is a bold practising upon scripture, a racking and wresting of the word of God to maintain a private opinion, to make the text speak what they would have, and not what the apostle intends. But the argument for infant baptism from this text, runs thus: "If the holy seed among the Jews were therefore to be circumcised, and made federally holy, by receiving the sign of the covenant, and being admitted into the number of God's holy people, because they were seminally holy; for the root being holy, the branches were also holy: Then, by like reason, the holy seed of Christians ought to be admitted to baptism, and receive the sign of the Christian covenant, the laver of regeneration, and so be entered into the society of the Christian church."

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

16 For what knowest thou, Oh wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or

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how knowest thou, Oh man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Here another doubt is resolved by the apostle, in case the unbelieving party, either husband or wife, depart, that is, refuse to co-habit and dwell with their believing yoke-fellow, and so make void, as much as in him or her lieth, the marriage-bond, out of hatred to the faith; in that case, if they will go, let them go; you are not bound to leave your family to follow them. However, let every Christian husband or wife omit nothing, but endeavour every thing to the utmost to oblige and win, to incline and engage to their unbelieving yoke-fellows, to live quietly with them; for God hath called us to peace; and therefore we must give no occasion of quarrel with, or separation from, so near a relation: And besides, by the peaceable dwelling together, there is hope of, and a fair opportunity for, the gaining and bringing over the unbeliever to the faith of Christ, and of being the instrument of his or her salvation; But however that may be, let every Christian discharge his duty in every relation in which God has set him. This order I appoint in all churches converted to Christianity, knowing it to be agreeable to the mind of God, "That no Christian should pretend his profession of religion, to excuse him from the duties of any relation."

18 Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Here the apostle proceeds to exhort the Corinthians to be content with the lot and condition which God had distributed unto them, and to frame themselves to walk Christianly in it. Particularly he shews, That if any person amongst them were a native Jew, and so circumcised, and afterwards converted to Christianity, he should neither trouble himself to get off that mark from his flesh, nor affect the state of him, who being a Gentile, had never been circumcised. On the other side, if any of them were native Gentiles, and never circumcised, but now converted to Christianity, let him not affect the state of one who was a native Jew, and circumcised; for *circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing*; that is, nothing now available to salvation, nothing that renders persons more or less acceptable in the sight of God; but the keeping of the commandments of God, this is all in all: For God regards not men's outward conditions, but obedience to his commands. Christianity consists not in a warm zeal, either for or against outward ceremonies, but in positive holiness, and a strict conformity to divine precepts.

26 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

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21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord being a servant, is the Lord's free-man; likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant.

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

24 Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

The apostle seems to intimate from these words, that some persons converted to Christianity in the primitive times, apprehended, that thereupon they must leave their worldly callings and employments, as if they were shares to them, or unnecessary diversions from better things. No, says the apostle, *Let every one, in his calling wherein he is called, therein abide with God*; that is, look in what honest civil calling they were found, when they became Christians: let them keep to that calling still: For God doth not call us from our worldly employments and business, but calls us to be holy in them; nor doth our serving God any whit acquit or discharge us from serving one another. But particularly it was the opinion of some servants converted to Christianity, that their spiritual freedom by Christ exempted them from all civil service to their masters. The apostle therefore tells them, they are indeed freed by Christ from sinful slavery, but not from civil servitude and subjection; from Jewish bondage, but not from Christian obedience. Learn hence, That Christianity doth not free men from any civil obligations which before they lay under. Our advantages by Christ are spiritual, and not secured; no man's outward condition is changed by his becoming a Christian; though he be now the Lord's free man, yet he is a servant still, if he was so before; nay, their Christianity did not exempt them from their secular relation to their Heathen and Infidel masters: As service to man doth not exempt us from, nor is inconsistent with, the service of God; so our spiritual calling doth not make void our civil: *Therefore let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*

25 Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

26 I suppose, therefore, that this is good for the present distress; I say that it is good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

28 But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall

have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

The next case which our apostle comes to resolve, is concerning virgins; whether they being at their own disposal, should marry, or keep themselves single. He tells them first, that he had no special command, whereby the state of virginity was either enjoined or prohibited, but he would faithfully give his advice, according to the best of his judgment: And this he doth in two particulars: First, That by reason of the present distress, and danger of persecution, which threatened the church, it was most convenient, that such as were single should continue so, if it might lawfully be done. Yet, secondly, He declares, that if they marry, they do not sin; only they will be exposed to more troubles, as the church's troubles do increase. Here note, 1. That the apostle pronounces marriage lawful in all persons, of both sexes, and not sinful at any time or in any state and condition whatsoever. Note, 2. That he signifies to all persons, that the troubles of a married life are more than those which attend a single state; *Such shall have trouble in the flesh*. Marriage plunges men into an excess of worldly cares; it multiplies their business, and usually their wants; and these wants are far harder borne than in a single life. Note, 3. That besides the ordinary inconveniences of a married life, which all persons are to expect, such as enter the married condition, when the church is under persecution, must prepare to meet with more than ordinary troubles. *Such, that is, in those times of persecution, shall have trouble, that is, more trouble, in the flesh: But I spare you*, that is, "I forbear to speak any more of that matter, lest I should seem to dissuade you from marriage, which is the ordinance of God, more than is fit, and be thought by any, to lay the yoke of celibacy, or a single life, upon you. I only tell you, that when Christians are under persecution and distress, it is much more for their ease and quiet to be single, than to have a wife and children to care for in poverty or flight."

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as tho' they had none;

30 And they that weep, as though they wept not: and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away.

As if he had said, "Let all persons, both married and unmarried, consider that the time of this life is short and passing; it is but a point of time we have to live, and shortly it will not be a pin to chuse, whether we had wives or not, or children or not; but before the expected fruit of the comforts be ripe, we ourselves may be ripe. 'Tis therefore true spiritual wisdom, to look upon these things now, as they will be shortly; to be very moderate in the enjoyment of them, not to be too much affected when we have them, or too much afflicted when we want them." Observe here, 1. The apostle's proposition; *the time is*

short. This is true in all the notions of it. Take it first for the whole duration of this world, from the day of its creation to the hour of its dissolution; compare it with what sure is it, eternity; and it is very short, but a moment. Secondly, take time for the whole duration of any one man's life, so 'tis shorter; so short, that it is nothing. Thirdly, Take time for the special season, either of doing or enjoying good in this life; so 'tis shortest of all. Observe, 2. The inference which the apostle draws from this proposition: therefore, let them that have none, be as if they have none, &c. Learn thence, that the consideration of the great shortness of time, and the uncertainty of human life, should keep our heart in a great deal of elevation towards the best and sweetest of our outward comforts and enjoyments: That we neither love inordinately any mercy when we enjoy it, nor mourn immoderately for any contentment when we come to be deprived of it: "They that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." Observe, 3. The advice which the apostle gives to such as have great possessions and revenues in this world. 1. To take heed, that though they possess these things, that they be not possessed by them. 2. That they so use them as not to abuse them, nor be abused by them. There is much evil in the world, yet we may, we must use it, and it will be our wisdom to make a good use of this world, while we are in it; otherwise we neither answer the end of God in sending us into the world, nor the design of God in trusting us with the good things of this world. Observe, 4. The reason assigned, why we should use the world in the forementioned manner: because the *fashion of this world passeth away*. Here the apostle compares the things of this world to a scene which is presently changed, and vanisheth almost as soon as it appears. As fashions in this world alter, so doth the fashion of this world alter every day. There is a world to come, the fashion whereof shall never pass away; but the fashion or scheme of this world passeth away continually. This world is like a stage, persons interchangeably act their parts upon it; but they soon disappear, and the stage itself ere long will be pulled down: *The fashion of this world passeth away*. Thence learn, That this consideration, that all the comforts and conveniences of this life are fading and passing away from us, should be a strong motive and inducement to us, not to set our hearts upon them.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

34 There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Here our apostle subjoins another reason why a single life is to be preferred before a married life; namely, because single persons are comparatively more free from cares and distractions, and have commonly more time and leisure to attend upon the Lord in religious duties. For the unmarried man has but one care upon him, namely, how he may serve and please God: But the married man has another care upon him: to wit, how he may oblige and please his wife. In like manner, a married woman is encumbered with household affairs, disturbed with domestic cares, and concerned in lawful things to please her husband, and consequently has neither so much time nor freedom for holy exercises: But the virgin that has no family to care for, no husband to seek to please, has much more leisure to attend upon God in holy duties and religious exercises; therefore he advises them to chuse that state of life in which they may attend upon the Lord without distraction. Learn hence, 1. That a married condition is certainly and necessarily attended with many diversions and distractions, from which a single life is free. 2. That persons in a conjugal relation may and ought to seek the obliging and pleasing one another with their utmost endeavours, without violating their duty to Almighty God. Learn, 3. That persons in a single state have great advantages (may they improve them!) of serving God above others, in regard of their freedom from domestic cares, troubles, and temptations; they have time and leisure for pious performances, if the heart be disposed for them. Learn, 4. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of all persons, both married and unmarried, not only to serve God in religious duties, but to attend upon him in them, as much as may be, without distraction. Distractions are the wanderings of the heart, mind, and thoughts, from God in religious duties. The nature of God requires, that we watch and strive against them: His majesty and greatness, his purity and holiness, his omniscience and all-seeing eye upon us, and within us, do oblige us to this careful endeavour; and the nature of his worship calls for it, which is a reasonable service, and a spiritual service; and the nature of distractions should make us dread them. They divide the heart, they deaden the duty, contract guilt, and provoke displeasure. Lord, help us in all the services we perform unto thee, to attend upon thee without distraction.

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely towards his virgin if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them marry.

37 Nevertheless, he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

38 So then, he that giveth *her* in marriage, doeth well ; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage, doeth better.

The next case which our apostle speaks to, is concerning virgins, who are under the power of others, (and not at their own disposal) as parents and guardians ; namely, whether it be best and most adviseable for them to dispose of their virgins in marriage or not. The apostle answers, that in this case, particular respect must be had to particular circumstances ; as, namely, if she be of marriageable years, and beyond them ; if she has an inclination to, and be desirous of marriage, then she advises that she be so disposed of : But if a parent be fully satisfied in his own mind, that he wrongs not his daughter in declining to marry her, if he has a perfect freedom in his own will, and his will is not contradicted by his daughter's desire, he doth well, yea, he doth best not to marry her ; best with respect to the distressed condition of the church, best with respect to the troubles of the world, which she will be the more free from ; and best, with respect to the young woman's liberty and freedom for the service of God, and the exercises of religion. Learn hence, That although children are to be disposed of in marriage by their parents, yet parents have no such absolute power over their children, as to hinder them from marriage, or to compel them to it : To do either, is very sinful, very unnatural.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth : but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will ; only in the Lord.

40 But she is happier, if she so abide, after my judgment. And I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

The apostle concludes the chapter with a resolution of this case of conscience ; namely, Whether second marriages of widows were lawful or not. He answers, They were. After the first husband was dead, the widow might marry again, provided that she married in the Lord : that is, with a believer, not an Infidel ; with one of the same faith with herself. It is very dangerous and sinful, for persons professing the true faith of Christ, to match with idolaters. There is far greater ground of fear that they will pervert you, than there is ground of hope that you shall convert them. But though the apostle asserts it lawful for widows to marry again, yet he declares, that in regard of the present danger which the church was in of persecution, they would be more happy in their widowhood. So that the determination of the apostle as to the case of marriage and a single life, is concluded thus : " That ordinarily, where there is no necessity, a single life is more for a person's peace, more free from distractions in God's service, and therefore best."

CHAP. VIII.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, resolved several cases of conscience concerning marriage ; in this chapter he resolves that grand case touching the lawfulness of

eating things offered to idols. The occasion of which scruple was this : The Heathens used to sacrifice to their idols, oxen, sheep, and other cattle, and to feast upon their sacrifices. Part of the oxen or sheep the priest burnt upon the altar as a sacrifice to the idol, and the other part either took to himself, and made a feast in the idol's temple, and invited his friends to it ; or else, the priest restored it to the offerer, who carried it home, and either feasted his neighbours with it, or else carried it into the market, and sold it in the shambles as other meat. Now, the question which the Corinthians put to the apostle to resolve, was this, Whether Christians, if invited to these feasts, might go and eat of these meats, either in the idol temples, or in the Pagan houses, or might buy and eat of such meat, if it were sold in the shambles ? A resolution of which question, we have in this and the tenth chapter. In which the apostle thus bespeaks them :

NOW as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

It was the opinion of the Gnostics and Nicolaitans, those early erroneous persons in the apostle's days, that from the knowledge they had of their Christian liberty, they might either be present in the idol temples, or eat of the idol sacrifices as they pleased. The apostle here tells them, that he knew many of them had a good degree of knowledge, but desires, that they might not be puffed up with it, but that their knowledge may be accompanied with charity, which respects the edification of others ; and put men upon considering, not only what is lawful to be done in itself, and with respect to ourselves, but what is expedient or inexpedient in relation unto others. True love, or Christian charity, will put us upon consulting the good of our neighbours' souls, as well as our own ; and will not suffer us to do that thing which may offend our weak brother, that is, lay a stumbling-block before him, to tempt him into sin. *Knowledge puffeth up ;* this is to be understood of a notional, literal, and speculative knowledge only ; not of a spiritual, practical, and experimental knowledge. The more a gracious man knows, the more humble he is, because his knowledge shews him his own vileness and emptiness ; but the more a carnal man knows, the more proud he is, because he knoweth not himself ; his knowledge is not only a temptation to pride, but the very matter of his pride. Such knowledge doth not build up, but puff up : whereas *charity edifieth* ; that is, applies itself to the instruction of others, and accommodates itself to the edification of others, and considers, not only what may lawfully be done, but what is fit and expedient to

be done; as in the case here before us, eating things offered to idols.

2 And if any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

That is, "If a man have ever so much knowledge, yet if it be not accompanied with charity and humility, if he improves not his knowledge to the glory of God, and the good of others, he knows nothing to any saving purpose, or as he ought to know. Learn, That Christians should by no means content themselves with an empty speculative knowledge, but labour to know as they ought to know. Observe, farther, The apostle says, *He that thinketh he knoweth any thing*, that is, he that is conceited of his own knowledge, that thinks of it with insolency and pride, and speaks of it with affectation and vain-glory; he who is thus conceited of his own knowledge, knows not himself: yea, he knows nothing as he ought to know. Learn thence, That it becomes us to have very humble thoughts of ourselves, and of our own knowledge, how much soever we really know: That man's wisdom is but conceit, who is only wise in his own conceit.

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Observe, The apostle doth not say, If any man know God: but if any man love God: the same is known, that is, allowed, accepted and approved of him: A man may know much of God in this world; and yet God may be ashamed to know him in another world: but the soul that sincerely loves God, is certainly beloved of him, and shall be owned and acknowledged by him. Now, true love to our neighbour, is a good evidence of our sincere love to God; and if we love our neighbour truly, we dare not scandalize our neighbour sinfully, nor offend our fellow brethren: Only here we must take notice, that by offending the weak, is not meant displeasing them, but by offending them is meant, laying a stumbling-block before them, which may occasion their falling in sin.

4 As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there is none other God but one.*

One argument which the Gnostics used to prove the lawfulness of eating things offered unto idols, was this, That an idol was nothing in the world: but how nothing? It was not materially nothing, for it was wood or stone; but formally it was nothing, it was nothing of God's creation, nothing that the idolater took it to be, there was nothing of a deity in it, and nothing of a deity could be represented by it; an idol is the vainest thing in the world, it was mere vanity, a perfect nothing, (called therefore the *vanities of the Gentiles*) it is of no worth or value, it has no power or virtue. Some observe, That the same Hebrew word signifies both an idol, and sorrow, and labour, partly because idols are made and formed with much labour, and great exactness; the wood or stone figuratively speaking, is put to pain, you must cut it and carve it, to make an idol or statue of it; partly,

because idols are served and worshipped with much pain and labour; false worship is more painful than true, the service of the true God is an holy and honourable service, a noble and ingenuous service, an easy and delightful service; but the service of idols is slavish, a toil rather than worship. Idols are troublesome both in making and worshipping: and, after all the bustling made about them, an idol is nothing in the world, because there is no God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many.)

6 But to us *there is but one God*, the Father of whom are all things, and we in him: and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Here the apostle tells them, that although the heathen idolaters acknowledge a plurality of gods, some in heaven, as the sun, moon, and stars; some on earth, as men and beasts, there having their celestial and terrestrial gods and lords, but these were only called gods, that is, in God's name, not in nature, not in reality: Yet, says he, we Christians do own and acknowledge but one living and true God, one in nature, not one in person, to whom all our prayers must be directed; and one Mediator, by whom all our prayers are to be offered. To us *there is but one God the Father*. This text the Arians, Socinians, and Unitarians, exceedingly boast of, as if it expressly confined the deity to the Father, as distinct from Christ and the Holy Ghost. Thus they argue, 1. "He who saith there is one emperor, to wit, Cæsar, says in effect there is no other emperor, but Cæsar; so when St. Paul saith there is one God the Father, he doth (say they) in effect declare that there is no other God besides the Father." To this the Orthodox answer, 1. "That God the Father is often put in scripture for the whole Deity comprehending the three persons; he being *fons Deitatis*, and *fundamentum trinitatis*, as the schoolmen speak: so that the application of the word God here unto the Father, doth not exclude the Son from being God, but only from being the fountain of the Deity as Father is. In Rev. 1. 17, Christ says, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; Will any conclude thence that God the Father is not Alpha and Omega? Is not he first and the last, as well as Christ? Again, We call our Lord Jesus the only Saviour; do we therefore exclude God the Father from being a Saviour? Is he not styled the Saviour of all men? 1 Tim. iv. 10. Again, God the Father is called the Creator of all things, it is asserted that all things were created by Christ, the Word, John i. 2. In short, we assert, as well as they, the unity of the Godhead, and that Christ is not another God, but only another person from the Father. We answer, 2. Their own argument may be thus retorted upon themselves: as the apostle says here, there is but one God the Father, so he adds in the next words, there is but one Lord Jesus Christ: Now if the saying that there is but one God, doth exclude Christ from being God, then the saying that there is but one Lord, doth exclude God the Father from being Lord; and if it be blasphemy to exclude God the Father from being Lord, it is no less to exclude Christ the Son from being God." Know then, That as Christians have in all ages of the

Church acknowledged one God only, even God the Father, so have they also owned that Jesus Christ was truly God, of the substance of the Father, God of God, very God of very God. The Lord keep us steadfast in his faith, seeing he that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father that hath sent him; but he that denieth the Son, denieth the Father also.

7 Howbeit *there is not in every man that knowledge*: For some, with conscience of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

These words are brought in as a reason by the apostle, why strong Christians should not eat meat offered unto idols with respect to those that are weak; as if he had said, "Though many of you know that an idol is nothing, and that meat is neither sanctified nor polluted which is set before it, and therefore, you can eat or not eat without any scruple as to yourselves, yet you should consider what is safest to be done with respect to others; for every man has not this knowledge that an idol is nothing, but some persons having a conceit of the idol's being something, eat what is offered to it as a thing offered to an idol, that is, not as common meat, but as a sacred banquet in honour of the idol! and so his conscience being weak, that is, erroneous, is defiled." Learn hence, That an action which is lawful in respect of ourselves, may yet be a sin if done by us with respect to others; another, encouraged by our example, may do the same act, but not do it with the same intent, as in the case before us: The sight of one Christian's eating things offered unto idols, who knows that an idol is nothing in the world, may harden, embolden and encourage others to do the same, who really intend some honour by it to the idol; the outward action is the same, but the opinion and intention wide and different.

8 ¶ But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better: neither if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.

As if the apostle had said, "It is not the eating or not eating barely considered, that makes a man either better or worse, more or less acceptable in the sight of God, but we must take great heed lest by our example others take occasion to worship the idol; you therefore ought not so to eat as to give occasion to the fall of your weak brother." Still the apostle holds forth this truth unto us, That such a man certainly sins who uses his liberty, so as that it becomes a snare and a stumbling-block to his weak brother, by emboldening and encouraging him unto sin.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which

is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols:

11 And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ died?

The meaning of the apostle seems to be this; "If any man with an erroneous conscience goes to these feasts, and there sees thee, who he thinks has more knowledge than himself, sit at meat in the idol's temple, will not his conscience be the more emboldened by thy example to eat things offered to idols in the honour of the idol, or as thinking it no hurt, to worship the idols? And thus, by occasion of thy knowledge, a weak brother is in danger of perishing, for whom Christ died." An indiscreet use of that liberty, which our supposed knowledge teaches us to make use of, doth that, if we be not careful, which may be accounted a destroying of our weak brother, by causing him to fall into sin: By all which the apostle lets us know the obligation which lies upon every good Christian not to use his liberty to the prejudice of other souls, by doing any action which may be let alone, but if done, may really become a snare to others.

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

The apostle goes on to shew, that such an use of our Christian liberty as doth embolden and encourage others to do that which is evil, is both an act of uncharitableness towards our brother, and also an act of sin against our Lord Jesus Christ, in betraying a soul to ruin as much as in us lieth, and hindering his salvation for the saving of whom Christ died, wounding the members of his body, defeating the great end of his death, and destroying them whom he designed to save. Learn, 1. That Christ in dying for the weakest believers, hath shewn the highest degree of love imaginable unto them. Learn, 2. That such as will not abate or abridge themselves of their Christian liberty, when the use of it may probably be an occasion of sin, and the ruin of their brethren's souls, do at once wound their weak brethren, and sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words. Some understand the apostle speaking thus: "If my eating meat offered to idols be a stumbling-block to any persons, and confirms them in their sinful practice, or be an occasion of sin unto them, I will certainly deny myself the use of that liberty which may prove of such dangerous consequence to my fellow Christians." Others carry the thing higher, and understand it of all flesh in general, that rather than the apostle would offend his weak brother, he would not eat any flesh to his dying day: an hyperbolical expression, by which the apostle declares how far one Christian should condescend to another, to prevent each others sinning against

God : As if the apostle had said, " Verily I do not make so light of another's sin, nor set so light by the soul of my weak brother, nor by the blood of my blessed Saviour, as for flesh, that is for an unnecessary thing, to make use of my liberty, when it may prove a temptation unto sin." From the whole of the apostle's discourse in this chapter, we learn, That it is the duty of Christians, in matters, wherein they are at liberty by the law of God, to do a thing, or not to do it, to take that part which, they see, will give least occasion of sin unto their brethren, and to avoid that part, which, if taken, will certainly give occasion unto others to sin. Although we be ourselves never so well satisfied as to the lawfulness of the action, yet we ought to deny ourselves in some things, rather than be an occasion to others, to fall into sin ; he forfeits the name of a Christian who will not abridge himself of his Christian liberty to preserve his brother from sin and temptation.

CHAP. IX.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, exhorted the Corinthians to abridge themselves in the lawful use of their Christian liberty, when it will be prejudicial to weak Christians : In this chapter he propounds his own example for their encouragement and imitation, who, though he was an apostle, and had as great a freedom and liberty as any man in things undetermined by the law of God, yet restrained himself in several cases, which are recorded in this chapter, in which the holy apostle thus expresses himself :

A M I not an apostle ? am I not free ? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ? are ye not my work in the Lord ?

The first instance which the apostle gives of his freedom and liberty was this, That when he preached the gospel amongst them at Corinth, he had a liberty either to live on the gospel, and take maintenance of them for preaching, or to live upon his labour, following his trade of tent-making, according as he saw it best for the furtherance of the gospel : *Am I not free ?* As if he had said, " Have not I as good a claim to freedom and Christian liberty as any man ! For am not I an apostle, or an extraordinary messenger of Jesus Christ ? And though I never saw the face of Christ upon earth, yet have I not seen him, and heard him speaking to me from heaven ? And is not the conversion of you, the Corinthians, to the Christian faith by my ministry, a fruit and seal of my apostleship ? Now, if I be all this, certainly I have as great a right and claim to the use of Christian liberty, as any of you can pretend to have. Yet will I only make use of it for the benefit of others, and for the furtherance of the gospel. Learn we from the apostle's example, in abstaining from that liberty and power which God hath given him for receiving maintenance from them to whom he preached the gospel, how much it is the duty and concern of all Christians to the end of the world, to abstain from the exer-

cise of that liberty, and rightful power, granted to them Christ, for avoiding the scandal of the weak, and promoting men's spiritual welfare.

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you ; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord ?

As if he had said, " Whatever others do, you of all men should not question my apostleship, for you were converted by it : You confirm and ratify my ministry, that it is of God, and that God is in it of a truth : The conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints, is God's seal to our ministry." Learn hence, That there is no such argument to prove a minister sent of Christ, as the success of his ministry in the conversion of souls unto God : This is God's seal to his office, that he is a minister called of God, and sent by God. Happy those ministers who can say unto their people, " Ye are our work, and the seal of our apostleship are ye in the Lord." Yet must it not be concluded from hence, that a person is not a true minister of Christ, because he cannot produce this seal : The good of our ministry is not always known to ourselves, much less published to the world ; More good is done many times by the ministry of the world than the ministry knows of ; the seed sometimes lies long under the clods before it fructifies ; what is sown in one minister's time, comes up in another's ; so one soweth, and another reapeth, but both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together. But where this seal can be produced, it is a certain sign that such a minister is sent of God, and that God is with him, and owns him ; yet it must be added, that though the success of our ministry to others is a seal of our office, and assures us that we are true ministers, yet it is the efficacy of the word we preach upon our own hearts and lives, that is the witness of our sanctification, and the zeal of our salvation. Lord ! how sad will it be for any of us to have been instruments for the helping others to heaven by the soundness of our doctrine, and to go to hell ourselves for the badness of our example, and the wickedness of our lives.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this :

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink ?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas ?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working ?

Here the apostle instances in another branch of his Christian liberty, and that was marriage ; he could have taken a wife, as Peter, and other apostles did, had he pleased, and have put the church to a farther charge in maintaining himself, a wife, and family, as did others, without blame : And he and Barnabas had power to forbear working for their living and maintaining themselves with their own labour in tent-making ; they had power to ask maintenance of the Corinthians, if they pleased. But they considered the low-

circumstances which the church was in and under at that time, and continued both in a single state, and wrought with their hands to maintain themselves, when they might have expected maintenance from the church. *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife?* That is to marry, if we saw fit. Hence learn, 1. The lawfulness of the ministers of the gospel marrying, as well as other men; neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the apostles of the New, did abhor the marriage bed, nor judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker; the doctrine forbidding marriage to any (which the apostle says is honourable in all) is called a doctrine of devils. Learn, 2. That no Christians, much less ministers, have power, that is, any lawful power, to marry such as are no Christians; their wives must be their sisters in Christ; that is, Christian women, at least by external and visible profession. 3. That husband and wife ought to be undivided companions one to another. *Have we not power to lead about a wife?* That is, to take her with us in our travels and journeying from place to place, for our comfort and assistance. Husbands and wives are to be mutual companions, sharers in each other's sorrows, and partakers of one another's comforts.

7 ¶ Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

As if the apostle had said, "As soldiers are paid by those that employ them, and as husbandmen and shepherds live upon the fruit of their labours, so may I, and all the ministers of the gospel with me." Where note, 1. That the ministerial function is represented here as a warfare: the ministers of Christ are spiritual soldiers, they have many enemies to encounter with, and contend against. They are also planters, vine-dressers, husbandmen, shepherds: All which titles given to them, to intimate and signify what care and painfulness, what diligence and watchfulness, should be found with them. Note, 2. That maintenance, a comfortable maintenance, for the people, is a debt due to the ministers of the gospel, who labour in the word and doctrine amongst them. *Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?* this is the first argument which our apostle here makes use of, to prove the minister's maintenance, a duty taken from the law of nations, equity and custom, which do appoint and allow to soldiers, vine-dressers and shepherds, yea, to all that labour for the use of others in their respective callings, a due regard of wages. What soldier goes to war at his own charges?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, no doubt *this is*

written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope: and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

A second argument produced by the apostle for the people's cheerful maintenance of the ministers of the gospel, is taken from the Levitical law: *Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also?* As if he had said, "I do not speak this only rationally, as a thing very agreeable to the light of nature, and the law of nations, but the Levitical law says the same: For when God, in Deut. xxv. 4. forbids to muzzle the mouth of the ox, who by hard labour treadeth out the corn with his feet, his design therein is more than the bare taking care of the ox; for thereby he shews in general what equity should be used in the just rewarding of all men that labour for us; and in particular, the spiritual labourers, such as plow, and sow, and thresh, in that spiritual husbandry, should labour in hope of a livelihood and subsistence, and eat their bread when they have earned it. If all men are encouraged to work, by a just expectation of the fruit of their own labours, why should not the ministers of the word meet with the like encouragement, which all mankind look upon as their just due?"

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

A third argument for the minister's maintenance is here taken from common justice: *They sow spiritual things*; that is, they dispensed the word and sacraments, and endeavour to make men spiritual and holy here, and happy hereafter; and therefore they ought to reap some of their people's carnal things, things for the support of their lives, a subsistence for themselves and their families: So that the ministers of God are not indebted to their people, but their people are indebted both to God and them; they give their people things of a much greater value, and more excellent use, for things of much less value, and more inferior use; for their carnal things, they give them spiritual things.

12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Here we have a fourth argument for the Corinthians allowing St. Paul and other apostles a maintenance: namely, for their own example to other teachers at Corinth? As if he had said, "You maintain others, why not us? Do not you owe more to us, who first laid the foundation of a Christian church amongst you, and have begotten you through the gospel, than you do to others? Nevertheless he tells them that himself and Barnabas, although they had this unquestionable liberty, yet they never made use of it, but suffered hunger and thirst, weariness and want, lest it should obstruct the course, and hinder the progress of the gospel; whilst some might, though very unjustly charge them with covetousness; and others, to save charges, might decline hearing of them.

3 Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar ?

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

A fifth argument is here produced for the ministers' maintenance, which is taken from the example of the Levites, who lived upon the things that were offered in the temple, and at the altar, and had a considerable part of the sacrifices allowed them by God himself for their ministration under the law. ' In like manner, says the apostle, " It is the Lord's pleasure and appointment now under the gospel, (Matthew x. 10. Luke x. 7.) that they who preach the word should be maintained for it, and not diverted from their work, by the cares and business of the world, but have a livelihood from their labour. Hence it clearly appears, that a maintenance for the ministry under the gospel is of divine right ; if it was so under the law, it is likewise under the gospel ; for so says the apostle, *God has ordained*. God's will in this matter is the same under the New Testament as it was under the Old : and as a maintenance in general is of divine right, so tithes may make thus far a claim to be of that nature, that it is believed the wisdom of man cannot find but any better expedient, than by them to support a ministerial maintenance for the preachers of the gospel to the end of the world.

15 But I have used none of these things. Neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me : for *it were* better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void.

The apostle having thus asserted his liberty, now shews his great moderation in the use of it : Although he had a liberty to marry, and to demand maintenance for his ministry as well as others, yet he denied himself in both. The apostle was charged by false teachers, that he preached the gospel for his own profit and advantage ; whereas he gloried in the contrary that he made the gospel without charge ; looking upon it as his great honour, that he could, and did, preach the gospel freely, for sincere ends, and not out of sinister respects ; and professes he had rather die by starving than lose his advantage of glorying. Now the inference which St. Paul draws from this discourse, of his declining the use of his lawful liberty, is this : " If I your minister, for your profit and the advantage of the gospel, abate of my own just right and unquestionable liberty, why should not you abate of yours, in the case of eating things offered unto idols, to keep your weak brother from destroying his soul by sinning against God ?"

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of : for necessity is laid upon me : yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward : but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

That which the apostle glories in, is not his bare preaching of the gospel, but his preaching of it freely, and without maintenance ; for, says he, " Though I preach the gospel, that has nothing singular in it, others do it as well as myself ; and I am bound to do it as well as others ; for necessity is laid upon me, by special call and command from Christ so to do ; yea, woe is unto me for my disobedience to Christ in the heavenly vision (Acts xxvi.) if I preach not the gospel. Now, if I do this thing willingly, that is, freely, without demanding any thing of you for my pains, which I might do, *I have a reward* ; that is, a special reward from God, and may glory in it : But if I preach unwillingly (demanding a maintenance for my pains, and refusing to preach without it) all that can be said is this, that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me ; and so in preaching I only discharge a trust of which I cannot boast or glory. The strength of the apostle's argument lies here : " No man can reasonably boast of, glory in, or expect an extraordinary reward for the doing of that which he is under a command from his superior to do, and that under a penalty too." Now this was his case : Necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel, but no necessity but what he laid upon himself to preach it freely ; therefore for him to do it, without demanding any reward from them for the doing of it, this made it matter of glorying to him, which he declares he had rather die than any should take from him. But was it the apostle's own glory that he was thus fond of, and concerned for, that he had rather lose his life than lose it ? No, it was the glory of God, the honour of the gospel, that was so inexpressibly dear unto him ; this great apostle did, upon pure principles of faith and love, from his heart and soul, design the glory of God, pursuant to which he did cheerfully and willingly apply himself to the preaching of the gospel, waiting upon God for his acceptance and reward, without expecting any wages (as he might) from them his Corinthian converts ; and this was the matter of his boasting and glorying in the face of the false apostles, who insinuated that he preached the gospel for filthy lucre sake.

18 What is my reward then ? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

The sense is, " This gives me hopes of a reward extraordinary from God ; namely, that I have preached the gospel to you, without being chargeable to any of you ; for had I received maintenance from you, I found my reproaches would have brought an ill report upon me. To prevent which, I made use of my Christian liberty, and took nothing of you ; which he calls, *his not abusing his power in the gospel*." Learn hence, 1. That ministers, generally speaking, lawfully may expect, yea, require maintenance from their people to whom they preach the gospel. Learn, 2. That although they may expect and demand maintenance for their ministry, yet in case people are so poor, that they cannot give it ; or enemies so malicious, as to open their mouths against them for it ; or if it will hinder the progress

of the gospel, by keeping people from coming under the preaching of it, fearing it should be chargeable to them; under such circumstances, if the minister can subsist without it, it is his certain duty to preach freely, and for such extraordinary services he may expect a more than ordinary reward. Learn, 3. That the liberty, which God hath intrusted us with, must never be abused by us, to the prejudice of his glory, or the detriment of his gospel, or to the disadvantage of others. All such use of our liberty in any thing, is indeed an abuse of it; therefore, says the apostle here, *I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself a servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

21 To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

In these verses our apostle proceeds to shew the Corinthians farther, how mightily he did abridge himself of his Christian liberty, which was the argument he was insisting upon: For, says he, *though I be free from all men*, as being a servant to none, yet have I made myself as a servant to all, that I might gain the more to embrace the gospel. To the unconverted Jew he became as a Jew, circumcising Timothy for their sakes, Acts, xvi. 3. that he might gain the Jews. To them, who in their opinion were yet under the obligation of the ceremonial law, he carried himself as a person under that law, though he knew himself free from it, to the end that he might gain them that were under the law; and accordingly he purified himself in the temple, Acts xxi. To them that were without law, that is, the Gentiles, who were without the ceremonial law, he became as a person without law, abstaining from the use of all ceremonies as they did: But yet, not being without law to God, but under the law to Christ; that is, as to the moral law of God, which was not abolished, but re-inforced by Christ, he did never account himself free from that, nor durst do any thing contrary to that eternal rule of righteousness; and all this, that he might gain them that are without the law. To the weak converts either among Jews or Gentiles, he became as weak, by abstaining from what might hurt their weak consciences, that so he might gain the weak. Finally, he became all things to all men, by compliance with them in all lawful and indifferent things,

that he might gain as many as he possibly could. And all this he did for the gospel's sake; that the gospel might be the better esteemed, and farther propagated, that he might himself partake of the promises and rewards of it, together with them to whom he preached it, and had effectually entertained it. Behold here the humility and charity of this great apostle; his ready condescension to the pitiable weaknesses of all men: his compliance with them in all lawful and indifferent things, for the glory of God, and the advantage of the gospel. A rare and singular pattern for all ministers and private Christians to imitate and follow. Now from this example of St. Paul's becoming all things to all men, and making himself a servant unto all, we learn, 1. One great duty of a gospel minister, is not to be a slave to any, but a servant to all; not a servant to their lusts, but to their weaknesses and infirmities. Our apostle did not turn, as the flattering and false apostles did, with the tide and times, nor conform to them in what was sinful: He did not symbolize with all colours, nor was he a man for all hours and humours; for, says he, *If I please men* (he means in any thing that is sinful) *I am no more the servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. But wisely considering the case and state of all men, he did accommodate his ministry, for the gaining of as many as possibly he could. Some are all things to all men, that they may gain by all; a spirit not only unworthy of a minister, but of a man. But St. Paul complied with all men, and made himself the servant of all, that Christ might thereby gain; his gospel gain, yea, and they themselves gain; which hints to us a second observation, the great end which the holy apostle aimed at, in this his compliance with, and condescension towards, the weakness of his people: *This I do for the gospel's sake*. As if he had said, "Though I thus stoop and yield to all men, 'tis to serve my Master, not myself. Think not that I thus put myself into all forms towards men for my own preferment in the world; but that Christ may be preferred in the hearts and acceptations of all men: "I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." 1. Cor. x. 33. Behold here the noble mark which this minister of Christ had in his eye, *the saving of souls*. That he might hit it, he wisely observed the temper and state of his people, striving to render himself agreeable and acceptable unto all, that he might by all means save some; yet had he also an eye to himself in all this; he had respect to the recompence of reward, as lawfully he might? "This I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker thereof with you:" that is, that I may have a share myself in the promised rewards of the gospel, which I have preached to you. Blessed be God, it is lawful for all the ministers and members of Christ to do good out of hope of reward; and that his glory and our own happiness are so inseparably connected and knit together, that by promoting the former, we secure the latter.

24 ¶ Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.

Our apostle according to his custom in sundry epistles, does in the end of this chapter fall upon the use of terms agonistical, borrowed from the Olympic, and other Grecian games, celebrated near Corinth, in which the contending parties did put forth all their strength to out do one another. These games were running, cutting, and wrestling; all which the apostle here alludes unto: and first to running;

They which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize : so run the Christian race, that ye may obtain the prize. Learn hence, That Christianity is a race which God hath set us, and it is our duty faithfully and perseveringly to run it. In a race, the foundation of it is a prize ; in a race there is a considerable distance between one goal and another ; in a race there is a race-plot for the racers to run in, there are certain laws to run by, and there is a certain judge to determine who wins the crown fairly. Now this race of Christianity vastly differs from all other races, thus : This is a spiritual race, it strains not legs and lungs, but faith and patience. Other races are performed by natural abilities, but this by a supernatural power and strength. Those races might be run without disturbance, but not this ; their reward but a garland of bays, ours a crown of immortality. But what is it to run this race ? *Ans.* It supposes a motion, it imports a vehement and intense motion, it implies progress and proficiency ; every step brings the racer nearer the goal : and it implies perseverance ; the racer must hold it to the last, or he loses his labour and reward ; every one that thus runs shall obtain the prize ; whereas in other races, but one receiveth the prize.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible.

It was a custom amongst those that used at Corinth the forementioned games of running and wrestling, to tie themselves to a strict prescribed diet, both for quality and quantity, by way of preparation. They did not indulge themselves in gluttony, or any sort of excess, but were temperate in all things, that the crown might be won by them ; which, alas ! was nothing but a garland of leaves or flowers. In imitation of whom, he advises the Corinthians to be very moderate in the use of all worldly things, and to abstain from whatsoever may hinder their running the Christian race, and their receiving the incorruptible crown.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.

That is, "I run this race of Christianity myself, which I advise you unto : But my care is to run sure, not at uncertainties ; to make sure of the crown at the end of the race ; and I do not only run, but fight ; I oppose whatever opposeth me." Here observe, The apostle changes the metaphor from that of running, to the other game of cussing ; and says he did not fight like one that beats the air, but never hurts the adversary ! No, he fought in good earnest with all his spiritual enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. It is not every running that will gain the prize, nor every fighting will obtain the victory ; but it must be a running with all perseverance, and a fighting with our utmost power, that will bring us to heaven and eternal happiness.

27 But I keep under my body,—

The original word may be fully rendered, I give myself blue eyes ; alluding to the Olympic game of cussing, in which the combatants were wont with their blows to beat

one another till they made each other livid, their eyes black and blue. The sense is, that by mortification he used great severity upon himself, contending against and combating with that body of sin and death, which did obstruct and hinder him in running the Christian race which was set before him.

—And bring it into subjection :—

The word in the Greek is an allusion to the other exercise of wrestling, wherein the antagonists or contenders do strive to cast each other to the ground, and to keep them under. So he, the better to subdue his body of sin, was careful to keep down the body of flesh, which, if pampered, is apt to rebel. He concludes all with a reason why he exercised all this care and caution, namely,

—Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be cast-away.

That is, Lest when he had acquainted them with the laws and rules of Christianity, and proposed to them the way of striving and getting the crown, he himself should at last prove a cast-away, or one unworthy to be approved or rewarded by God. From whence, Observe, 1. That it is possible for him, who has been all his life preaching to others, and furthering them in their way to heaven, to be thrown himself into hell at last. Many that have prophesied in Christ's name, shall yet perish in his wrath ; and such as have cast devils out of others, shall yet be cast to the devil themselves. Observe, 2. That such ministers as indulge their unruly appetites, giving the flesh whatever it craves, and can deny it nothing it desires, pampering the body to the prejudice of the soul, go not in St. Paul's road to heaven, but the contrary, they gratify what he mortified, they indulge what he subdued : He administered to the wants, they to the wantonness of the flesh : He knew that Hagar would quickly perk up, and domineer over Sarah ; that the body would quickly expect and command more attendance than the soul, except it were kept under ; and, for this reason, says our apostle here, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

CHAP. X.

The scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is the same with that which he had been pursuing in the two foregoing chapters ; namely, to dissuade Christians from eating of things offered unto idols, either publicly in the idol's temple, which was absolutely sinful ; or privately in the houses of any, to the offence and scandal of their weak brethren : Which, when there was no scandal in the case, was lawful, but otherwise not. Of the former, he discourses from the first to the twenty-third verse, which he proves to be altogether unlawful. Of the latter, he

treats from verse twenty third, to the end of the chapter ; and although he grants, that eating of meat offered to an idol, may lawfully be done in itself in a private house (especially when it is uncertain and unknown to be so offered) yet when offence is thereby given to the weak brethren, it ought to be forborn. And accordingly he dissuades from by many arguments in the chapter before us.

MOREOVER, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea.

Amongst other arguments which the apostle produces to dissuade the Corinthians from eating things offered to idols in the idol temples, and to prove it absolutely unlawful for Christians to have communion with the Gentiles in their idolatrous banquets, the first is drawn from the danger of such sinful communion ; it would endanger their falling into such kind of sins as the Israelites, on that occasion, fell into and consequently expose them to such punishments as they suffered. But first of all, in the beginning of this chapter, he acquaints the Corinthians with the great favours and privileges which almighty God vouchsafed to, and conferred upon the Israelites, who came out of Egypt with Moses into the wilderness, who had a pillar of cloud to guide and protect them, the manna from heaven to sustain and uphold them, and water out of a rock to refresh and satisfy them. *All our fathers were under the cloud ; that is, under the conduct and protection of the cloud : and all passed through the Red-sea, as upon dry ground. This cloud, which accompanied the Israelites in their journeyings, had a threefold use. 1. In respect of God ; it was a sign and symbol of the presence of God with them, and of his care and protection over them, for it encompassed their camp as a wall doth a city. Hence is that of the psalmist, He spread out a cloud for a covering to them, and fire to give them light in the night season, Psal. cv. 39. 2. In respect of the Israelites, the cloud did guide and direct them in their journeyings ; Psal. lxxviii. 14. In the day he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. And as the cloud did guide and direct Israel, so did it cool and refresh them in the wilderness, preserving them from the heat of the sun : It was a covering canopy over them, in a scorching desert. 3. In respect of their enemies, it was darkness to the Egyptians, and consequently, protected the Israelites from their enemies, that they could not assault or fall upon them. It had a bright side to the Israelites, and a dark side to the Egyptians. Lord ! how easily canst thou make the same creature a comfort to thy children, and a terror to thine enemies. Every outward blessing is that, and no more, which thou art pleased to make it to us. A cloud shall guide, a cloud shall cover, a cloud shall comfort Israel : And the same cloud shall be darkness, yea at thy command, shall be death to the Egyptians.*

2 And were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea ;

Observe, 1. The Israelites is here said to be baptized in the cloud and in the sea ; that is, the cloud which overshadowed them, did sometimes bedew and sprinkle them : And the Red sea, through which they passed, had its waters gathered into two heaps, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, betwixt which the Israelites passed, and in their passage seemed to be buried in the waters : As persons in that age were put under the water when they were baptized ; and thus were Israel baptized in the cloud and in the sea. Observe, 2. They are said to be baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea : unto Moses : that is, into the doctrine taught by Moses, they believed him, and followed his conduct through the sea and were confirmed in their belief of Moses (the typical Mediator) as a person employed by God ; and were obliged, under the ministry and guidance of Moses, to follow God whithersoever he led them. Observe, 3. That all this was a figure to which our baptism answers : both the cloud and the sea had some resemblance to our being covered with water in baptism, by which we are confirmed in the faith of Christ, and obliged to profess and own him, to trust in and depend upon him, to serve and obey him, and this to the death. Behold how much of Christ and his gospel was shadowed and held forth to the Jews under the dispensation of the ceremonial law ; they had Christ in their sacrifices, and we have all their sacrifices in Christ. The cloud, the sea, the manna, the rock, all typified Christ, and were resemblances and representations of him. Christ was as truly represented to the Jews as unto us, as truly, though not so clearly.

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat:

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink. (For they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them ; and that rock was Christ.)

They, that is, the fathers in the wilderness, did all eat of the manna which came down from heaven, which is here called spiritual meat ; either because it came down from heaven, which is the habitation of spiritual beings : or because it was food given out by the ministry of angels, those spiritual agents ; or else it is called spiritual, that is, sacramental meat ; because it typified Christ, who is the bread of life, the true bread which came down from heaven. That manna was a type of Christ, thus appears : " Was manna provided by God for the Israelites without their labour and industry ? so is Christ given unto men without any merit or work of theirs, but of the free gift and goodness of God: Did manna come down from heaven besides the ordinary course of nature ? so was Christ's birth wonderful, and not as the birth of other men ; being not begotten of mortal seed, but by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Was manna distributed to all alike, one not having more and another less, but all an equal share ? In like manner, Christ communicates himself unto all alike, without exception of persons : A beggar may have as great a part in Christ as a prince. Again, as manna was food, plentiful food, sweet and pleasing food : so is Christ, the food of life, very sweet to such a soul as can truly relish him. Farther, must the manna, before fit for food, be beaten in a mortar, or broken in a mill, and baked in an oven ? so Christ, our heavenly manna, was broken on the cross, scorched in the fire of his Father's wrath,

that he might become the spiritual food wherewith our souls are nourished unto everlasting life. Finally, as manna was given only in the wilderness, and ceased when the Israelites came into Canaan; so is Christ our spiritual meat, our sacramental food whilst we are in the wilderness of this world; but when we shall come to the heavenly Canaan, we should have no more any need of sacramental supports, but shall behold him face to face, and be satisfied with his likeness." *And they did all drink of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ.* Here the water out of the rock is also called spiritual drink, it being typically and sacramentally so. *That rock was Christ;* that is, it typified Christ. The word is, doth import as much as signifies or represents; so the rock is Christ: that is, it signified, represented, and typified Jesus Christ. For as the rock gave no water before it was smitten with the rod of Moses; so was Christ smitten upon the cross, and out of his side came forth water: And as it was the rod in Moses' hand that smote and broke the rock; so was Christ smitten with the curse of the law, in the day when his soul was made an offering for sin. In a word, as the rock yielded water, not only to them that were first present at the breaching of it, but followed them with its streams, in their stations through the wilderness: in like manner, the water which gushed out from our smitten Saviour, the sweet fruits and benefits of his death, did not only belong to them who were present at the time and place of his sufferings, but it doth, and will accompany all believers to the end of this world. The virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood is now as great, as efficacious and effectual, as it was the first hour it was shed; the divinity of his person adds an eternal efficacy to his passion.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Although the Israelites were made partakers of the fore-mentioned privileges and spiritual flavours; though they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did eat sacramental meat, and drink sacramental drink; yet it did not set them out of danger of God's displeasure, for they were overthrown, their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Learn thence, That no external privileges or prerogatives whatsoever, can exempt persons from God's judgments, if they return not suitably to him for the favours and benefits received from him. The bare outward receiving of a sacrament is not saving to the soul of a person; and the unworthy receiving of sacraments, and unsuitable walking after them, do inkindle God's anger, and provoke his heavy displeasure against persons, even to the cutting them off by untimely death here in this world; *With many of them God was displeased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

6 ¶ Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Observe here, 1. The sin charged upon the Israelites in the wilderness: *They lusted;* that is, after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and to return thither again. They had manna for forty years together, but being tied to it, (though angels food, that is, most excellent food) they grew weary of it.

Lord! how exceedingly indebted are we to thy liberality and bounty, in that plenty and variety of creature refreshments which thou affordest us? The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, are given us, not barely for necessity, but delight, and do all administer to our support and comfort. Observe, 2. How the apostle calls upon us to improve examples, that we may not be made examples. *These things, that is, their sufferings, were our examples;* they were for our caution to receive warning by them, not to walk in those soul-defiling ways, in which they have walked, fallen, and perished. A wise Christian may receive much good by observing the dealings of God with them that are evil, for God is unchangeable, just, and holy, and will not favour that in one person, which he punishes in another. *These things were our examples.* As if the apostle had said, "O ye Corinthians, look upon the dead bodies of the Israelites, which are cast upon the shore of the scriptures, for a warning to you: follow not the same course, lest you meet with the same curse: if you tread the same path, expect the same punishment, for God is as righteous now as he was then: he hates, and will punish sin in you, as much as he did in them. *These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted.*"

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and arose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Our apostle being still dissuading the Corinthians from eating of things offered unto idols, and thereby from holding communion with the Gentiles in their idolatrous banquets in their idol-temples, he sets before them the idolatry of the Jews, who sat down to eat and to drink of the sacrifices offered to the golden calf, and rose up to play; that is, to dance before the golden calf, after the manner of the Heathens, this being one of their rites by which they honoured their gods. He farther advised them to take heed how they mix with idolaters in their feasts, lest they be given up to fornication as the Israelites were in the wilderness, with the daughters of Moab, Numb. xxv. of whom there fell in one day, three and twenty thousand by the immediate hand of God. Learn hence, That Almighty God has left many instances upon record, in his holy word, of the severity of his justice upon persons guilty of idolatry and fornication, and all other sins, on purpose to warn all of their sin and danger in the perpetration and commission of them. To sin against example, is an aggravation of sin.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Observe here, A double sin which the Corinthians are warned against, tempting and murmuring: *Neither tempt ye*

Christ, by trying how long his patience will last, as the Israelites did, (when as the angel of the covenant) he went before them in the wilderness, Numb. xxi. 5, 6. Here note, The object or person, whom the Israelites are said to tempt, *Christ*; which proves, 1. His pre-existence before his incarnation; the Israelites could not have then tempted him, had he not been then existent. His divinity: he who is called here *Christ*, is by the psalmist called, *God*, Psal. cvi. 14. *They tempted God in the desert*. Christ had not an human nature then to be tempted in, they tempted him therefore as he was God: A good argument to prove the divinity of our Saviour, made use of by the ancients. The other sin warded against, is murmuring: *Neither murmur ye: that is, do not repine, because you are forbidden to be present at the idolatrous feasts of the Gentiles in the idol-temples: neither do ye murmur, by reason of the persecutions which you do or may endure, for the sake of Christianity, and the cause of Christ. Learn hence, That to murmur at, or be impatient under, any of the providential dispensations of God, is both great sin and folly. 'Tis an high presumption and wickedness to be dissatisfied with God's works of providence, as with his works of creation; to quarrel at what God doth, is an unchristian-like, yea, as uncreature-like, as to quarrel at what God has made. Therefore, murmur not as the Israelites murmured. Observe, 2dly, A double punishment inflicted on the Israelites, for this double sin committed; such as tempted, were destroyed of fiery serpents. Numb. xxi. 6, 7. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people; the sting and venom of those serpents was inflaming, spreading, killing; much people of Israel died. And such as murmured, were destroyed by the destroyer; that is, by the destroying angel in that plague, mentioned Numb. xiv. 37. Such variety of judgments has Almighty God, with which to punish and plague an incorrigible and un reclaimable people.*

11 ¶ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

That is, the history of the Israelites' sins and punishments was written and recorded by God in the holy Scriptures, for the use and benefit of all succeeding generations, and particularly for us, who live in the last ages of the world, to warn us to avoid the like sin, that we may escape the like punishments. Learn hence, That the fall of others, whether into sin, or under judgment for sin, should be caution and warning to us to take heed of sinning. Here the apostle sums up the most remarkable judgments which fell upon the Jews in their passage from Egypt to Canaan, and closes all with this application to Christians; *These things happened to them for ensamples; in the original it is, as types: they beset them typically, that in them we may see how God will deal with us if we take their course; those calamities which destroy some, should instruct others: Many will never see sin in itself, some will see it in the type and ensample, that is, in the judgment of God upon others, and those that will not see sin in the lashes of severity upon others, shall certainly feel it upon their own backs; such as will not improve examples, shall undoubtedly be made examples.*

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

These words are an inference which our apostle draws from the foregoing discourse: Seeing that so many who enjoyed great privileges among the Jews, were yet punished greatly for their sins: seeing that sacraments are no privileges either for sin, or from plagues: therefore, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, &c.* Where note, 1. A great mutability to which human nature is subject: he that thinketh he standeth, may fall: Man's condition is according to his place and station: This is threefold. The first place is heaven; this is fixed and confirmed, a kingdom that cannot be shaken; the saints there are standing pillars, free from all possibility of falling. The second place is hell, where sinners are bound hand and foot; and being fallen, are without any possibility of rising. The third place is this earth on which we live, where men both stand and fall; and the best are subject to falling, being sons of Adam, as well as sons of God; partly flesh, and partly spirit. Note, 2. The vigilancy required in order to our standing; *Take heed; How many thousands have fallen by a presumptuous confidence of their own strength in standing! they fell by thinking it impossible to fall. A Christian's motto is cavendo tutus; never safe, but when weary and watchful. Let a Christian always keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of his nature, and with a believing eye look up to the promise and power of God, and he shall be both preserved from falling, and also be presented faultless and unblameable in the day of Christ; if ever we stand in the day of trial, 'tis fear and faith must enable us to stand.*

13 There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Here the apostle answers a plea which the Corinthians might probably make for their compliance with their fellow citizens, in eating things offered unto idols in their temples with them, namely, that thereby they should avoid persecution. Fear not that, says the apostle, you have hitherto been preserved, that no temptation has taken you, but such as is common unto man: that is, you have not yet been exercised with any trial but what is human, what the ordinary strength and resolution of human nature is able to bear: But in case you should be tried with extremity of suffering, and that you must either comply with the Heathen idolatry, or endure suffering to extremity, yet you have the promise of a faithful God for your support in that case: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, at any time, above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way so far to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Learn hence, 1. That it is a great addition to an affliction not to see or discern a way to escape, and get out of affliction: God is exceeding gracious in our afflictions, in that he doth not hedge us in on every side, and hinder all possibility of escape out of our troubles. Learn, 2. That the consideration of God's strength to support us in and under our sufferings, is a mighty encouragement to us to grapple with them resolutely, and to bear them patiently and submissively: If our sufferings were intolerable, and human nature were not divinely assisted to

stand under them, we should be forced to consult our present ease and deliverance, and chuse sin rather than affliction : but the assistance of God makes suffering work easy.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry,

15 I speak as to wise men : judge ye what I say.

Here our apostle re-assumes his exhortation to the Corinthians, not to meddle with the mysteries of Paganism, nor to eat of things offered unto idols ; assuring them it was no less than idolatry, in the account of God, to eat of those things which were taken from their execrable altars, as a part and remnant of those sacrifices to idols which were performed in the city of Corinth, with all the pomp of an abominable superstition. This participation of things offered to idols, in the idol-temples, our apostle calls idolatry : *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, flee from idolatry.* Here note, That the nature of man is extremely prone to idolatry, and very ready to comply with men in their idolatrous practices. Note, 2. That the idolatry of the Jews of old, and of Christians since, who knew and owned the true God, and gloried in him, was and is, far worse than the idolatry of Pagans, who knew him not, nor even gloried in him. Observe farther, How our apostle appeals to themselves, and leaves it to them to judge, whether they did not do very ill to be present at the feasts upon the Heathen sacrifices, and eat of things offered unto idols : He leaves it to themselves to judge, *Judge ye what I say.* There is a judgment of discretion which persons ought to use in matters of religion, and not to deliver up themselves blindfold to the conduct of their teachers, the church of Rome, by denying the people this liberty, make them slaves : they put out the people's eyes, to make them fit for a blind obedience. Our apostle was far from this practice : Let wise men, says he, judge what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?

These words are a special argument, made use of by the apostle to dissuade Christians from joining with the Heathens, in their impure feasts in the idol temples ; the Gentiles have fellowship with the idols in those feasts, as Christians have communion with Christ at his holy table : So that the argument runs thus, " If believers, by communicating with Christ at his holy table, have real communion with him, then also, those that do communicate with idolaters, do become partakers of communion with them in their impure feasts : But believers do the first, namely, at the Lord's table they communicate with Christ." This he proves from the words before us, *The cup of blessing, &c.* Where observe, 1. A description of the Lord's Supper, in both the parts of it, namely, the external and visible part, bread and wine : the internal and spiritual part, the body and blood of Christ. Observe, 2. The ministerial actions performed in this solemn ordinance, and they are the blessing of the cup, and the breaking of the bread. 3. Here is the great end and design of God in the institution of this ordinance, namely, that believers might thereby enjoy a spiritual fellowship and

communion with Christ their head ; *Is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?* Learn hence, That one great end and design of Christ, in the institution of his supper, was this, that believers might enjoy a sweet fellowship and communion with himself therein.

17 For we being many are one bread, and one body ; for we are all partakers of that one bread.

The apostle's argument lies thus : " As Christians, though many, yet by virtue of their society in the same worship, are compacted together, as it were, into one loaf or lump ; that is, into one mystical body, in that they partake of one and the same sacramental bread ; so those that communicate with idolaters, in eating things offered unto idols, are compacted together, as it were, into one body, forasmuch as they communicate in one and the same sacrifice ; as many grains of corn moulded together make one loaf, and the juice of many grapes make one cup : so Christians though many, yet are one visible church, one mystical body, and declare themselves so to be, by their fellowship together at the Lord's table.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar ?

19 What say I then ? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing ?

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God : and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Here another argument against eating things offered to idols is produced by our apostle, and it runs thus : " As in the Jewish church, all persons that did eat of the peace-offerings, which were laid upon God's altar, did, by that act, declare themselves members of the Jewish church, and that they owned the God of the Jews, to whom those sacrifices were offered : in like manner, the converted Corinthians, by eating part of those beasts which were sacrificed in the idol's temple, did by that act declare their owning of that idol, and that idolatrous worship which had been there performed, and were really partakers of that idolatrous altar : Not that an idol is any thing, or that which is offered to the idol any thing, that can of its own nature pollute and defile ; but the plain truth was, the Heathens were seduced by the devil to offer these sacrifices, and they were devils whom they worshipped ; though not in their own intention, yet in God's estimation : And consequently those that did eat of those feasts, are supposed to join in those sacrifices, and thereby to hold communion with devils.

21 ¶ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

That is, "Ye cannot have communion with Christ and with idolaters too; your communicating with Christ in the Lord's Supper is utterly inconsistent with communicating with devils in the idols' feasts, for this were to do homage to two contrary Lords, God and Satan, and profess service to both." Here observe, 1. A sacramental table described; 'tis the table of the Lord, so called, because he is the Lord of Lords, did institute it, for the remembrance of his own death. Observe, 2. An impossibility declared, that none can be worthy partakers at the Lord's table that hold communion with sin: True idolatry is the sin here specified, or sacrificing unto devils; but it holds true of all sin in general, and of having fellowship with Satan in any of the unfruitful works of darkness. Learn hence, That no person can really enjoy any fellowship and communion with Christ at his holy table, who maintains correspondence with sin, and holds communion with Satan.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Observe here, 1. That the worship of God, is that which he is very tender and jealous of; never was husband so jealous of the chastity of his suspected wife, as God is jealous in point of worship; idolatry is a provoking God to jealousy. Observe, 2. That such as worship idols, or are guilty of idolatrous worship in any kind or degree, must expect God a jealous avenger, and will find themselves not strong enough to contend with him. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, by joining devils in competition with him? Are we stronger than he? Who knows the power of his anger? The strength of God should make sinners tremble."

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Our apostle having, in the former part of this chapter, resolved the case concerning public eating of things offered unto idols in the idol-temples, and by several arguments proved it to be absolutely unlawful: he comes now to resolve another case, concerning private buying, and private eating of things offered unto idols; for it seems to have been a custom, to set to sale in the market, flesh that was sacrificed, (the gain whereof went to the priests) as well as other flesh; but first he answers an objection: Some might be ready to say, all things are lawful for me: that is, all-meats may lawfully be eaten by me, If so, says the apostle, yet all lawful things are not expedient to be done, in respect of our weak brother: *plainly intimating*, That there are many things lawful in themselves, which, considered under such and such circumstances, are very inexpedient; and so far as they are inexpedient, so far are they unlawful.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

These words may be understood two ways: 1. Let no man seek his own, that is, only his own wealth. 2. Let no man seek his own wealth, that is, to the prejudice of others, though never so much to his own advantage; teaching us, That it is the duty of every Christian, not merely to look at his own profit and pleasure, but at the benefit and advantage of others, as that which edifies, or tends to pro-

mote holiness in others: And that is the use of our Christian liberty, we must regard rather the edification and salvation of others, than the gratification of ourselves.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience' sake.

26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Here the apostle resolves the case, whether it were lawful to buy that meat in the market, which had been offered to an idol in the temple. He determines, 1. That it was; if it be sold in the shambles, it is to be looked upon as common food, and they may freely buy it, without any scruple of conscience; but how came meat to be sold in the shambles, which was offered and sacrificed in the temples of the Gentiles? *Ans.* It is probable, that the priests who had a share in the beasts that were offered unto idols; or the people, who had also a share, returned them out of their own offerings, did bring such meat to be sold in the market: In this case, says the apostle, ask no questions about it. Observe, 2. He assigns the reason for it, because *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*: That is, those things that are sold for food in the market, are to be looked upon as the creatures of God, made for, and sanctified, to the use of man; and, therefore, you may eat of any creature which the Lord provideth for your food, without scruple of conscience, when others are not scandalized at it, 1. Tim. iv. 4. Every creature of God is good, if received with thanksgiving.

27 If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake.

28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Our apostle here puts another ease; "Suppose an unbeliever, an Infidel or Heathen, did invite a believer, a Christian, to a feast of civil friendship in his private house (not to a feast upon a sacrifice in the idol-temple, which was absolutely unlawful) what was to be done in this case?" He declares they may warrantably go and eat of whatever is set before them, without scruple, but would have them ask no questions about the lawfulness of it; nevertheless, if the master of the feast, or any present at the feast, shall suggest that some part of the meat has been offered to an idol, in that case he would have them forbear; lest they should encourage any man to idolatry; adding his reason as above, *For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; that is, there is plenty and variety of other meat to be had, which God the Creator of all things, the Lord of the whole earth, has allowed us the free use of; so that we may well let the idol-sacrifices alone,

Here we see, than an action, lawful in itself, becomes sinful and is condemned as such, when there is a breach of charity in the doing of it.

29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the others; for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

Here the apostle tells them, that they ought to abstain from that which is lawful and indifferent in itself, for the sake of another man's conscience. This meat had not been unlawful to them, though offered to idols, had they not been told that it was so offered, but being made acquainted therewith, for the sake of him that shewed thee it was offered to idols, forbear eating; for why should our liberty be so used by us as to be judged of, and condemned by, another man's conscience? It is not enough that we do what is just and right in our own sight, but we must provide things honest in the sight of all men. Whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; these we must practise, and none but these." And observable is the apostle's reason, why he should, for the sake of another, abstain from eating that meat, which was lawful in itself, ver. 30, namely, to prevent being evil spoken of, *Why am I evil spoken of?* That is, why should I cause another to speak evil of me, for eating that meat, which I might without any prejudice forbear? for in so doing, I shall certainly abuse my liberty, grieve God, and offend the weak.

31 Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Our apostle concludes his whole discourse with three excellent rules, to direct all Christian, how they should govern themselves in the use of their lawful liberty, as to things that are of an indifferent nature; that is, neither commanded nor forbidden in the word of God. The first is this. To refer all our actions in general, both natural, civil, and religious, to the glory of God; to make that our supreme aim, our ultimate end, in all we do. in all we design, in all we desire. A Christian is to perform his natural actions to spiritual purposes; and whilst he is feeding and refreshing his body at his own table, must have an eye at his serving God, both with soul and body. Farther, not only in our natural actions, but in our civil employments, in our lawful recreations; but especially, and above all, in our religious duties must we propound the glory of God as our principal aim, our chief scope, our supreme end: This injunction, *do all to the glory of God*, is applicable to all the actions of human life.

32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

Here we have the second rule given for ordering all the

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affairs of human life, Give no offence to any, neither to the unbelieving Jew, nor to the unconverted Gentiles, nor to the weak members of the church of God; particularly, give no offence to these, by eating things offered to idols at any time, or in any place, where any may be scandalized; for the Jew will consider, that you are enemies to the law and the prophets: The Gentiles will believe that your abhorrence of idols is not real, when they see you eat things offered unto idols before their faces; and the weak Christian will be tempted by your example to revolt from the Christian faith. Therefore, do nothing that may tend to the hurt, or just offence, either of Jew, Gentile, or Christian.

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

The last rule, which the apostle lays down, is his own practice and example, who in different things accommodated himself to all men. *I please all men*; that is, I seek and endeavour to please all men, and in all things; that is in all lawful things, and in all other things, wherein the law of God has left him at liberty; for in neither the omission of any thing which God commanded, nor in the commission of aught which he had forbidden, would St. Paul please any man in the world: And when he did please all men, it was for their profit and advantage, not his own; to promote their eternal salvation, not his own temporal interest. *I please all men, that they may be saved.* Learn hence, 1. That no man must be pleased by sin, nor pleased in their sins. The smallest duty must be preferred before the pleasing of all the men in the world. Learn, 2. We may and ought to seek the pleasing of men, with subserviency, and in subordination to the pleasing of Almighty God. Learn, 3. That inordinate man pleasing is fruitless, needless, and endless; when you have endeavoured to please most, how many will be displeased, when you have done your best? God himself, Jesus Christ, his holy prophets, apostles, saints and servants, could never please the world; and can any of us expect to do it? St. Paul, though he became all things to all men, yet could save but some: The world hates godliness, and godly persons, and will never be pleased with that which they hate; let pleasing of God be our great business, and in subordination to him, endeavour to please all men for their profit, that they may be saved.

CHAP. XI.

BE ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The apostle, had in the foregoing chapters, by many cogent arguments exhorted the Corinthians to deny themselves the lawful use of their Christian liberty for the benefit of their brethren: to enforce which argument he propounds to them his own example in this verse, *Be ye followers of me, even as I follow Christ.* Where note, 1. The duty recommended to their practice; namely, to follow their spiritual guide: *Be ye followers of me.* It is the standing duty of a people whom God honours with the enjoyment of faithful spiritual guides, to follow their faith, and to imitate their exemplary conversation; the graces of all Christians in general, but of

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the ministers of the gospel in particular, whether living or dead, are patterns set forth to the world for their careful imitation : and for omission herein, they must certainly become accountable to God. Note, 2. With what great modesty and caution, with what restriction and limitation, St. Paul propounds his own example to the Corinthians' view ; *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ* : As if he had said, " If at any time you find me your spiritual guide stepping aside, and walking unanswerably to that uniform pattern of holy and humble obedience, which the Lord Jesus set both before you and me, in his own exemplary life, be sure you decline my example, and follow not my footsteps." Learn hence, That the best of ministers, and the best of men, being but men, our imitation of them must not be universal, but a limited imitation ; we must follow pastors, teachers, nay, apostles themselves, no farther than they follow Christ, their infallible Lord and Master. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.

This commendation is to be restrained to the sounder part of the church at Corinth, who were mindful of his precepts and instructions, which he had delivered to them concerning matters appertaining to the public worship of God ; which precepts and rules for the worship of God he calls traditions, because they were immediately delivered to the church, either from the apostle's mouth or by writing : This place, though produced, yet makes nothing for the unwritten traditions of the Romish church. Let them prove by authentic testimony, that their fardles of traditions were delivered to the church from the mouth of the apostles, and we will receive them ; *Now I praise you brethren*. Here it deserves a remark, That the apostle, being about to reprove certain disorders in the church of Corinth, ushers in his reproof for what was amiss, with a commendation of what was praiseworthy among them : *I praise you brethren* : Like the physician, who wraps his bitter pill in honey or sugar before he gives it into his patient's mouth. It is wisdom to intermix commendations with our reproofs, that the latter may take more place when accompanied with the former.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ ; and the head of the woman is the man ; and the head of Christ is God.

Here our apostle answers the query, and resolves the case, which the Corinthians had put to him, and laid before him, about church-order, and concerning the decent behaviour of men and women in church-assemblies. And first he reminds them, that a subordination of persons in the church of God ought to be observed and kept : That as Christ, as Mediator, is inferior to God the Father, but is the head and Lord of all men, as Creator and Redeemer ; so the man is the head of the woman, and, as such, she must shew her subjection unto the man : As Christ, as Mediator, acts in subordination to the Father, so must the woman act in subordination to the man. The Socinians would wrest this text, to confirm them in their blasphemous denial of the divinity

of our Lord Jesus Christ. " Here, say they, the apostle declares, that *the Head of Christ is God* : Now the most high God can have no Head above him ; therefore Christ, who hath an Head above him, cannot be the most high God." The modern and general answer is, That God is here called *the Head of Christ* as Mediator, in which relation he received his kingdom from him, and exercises it for him, and therefore is elsewhere styled the Father's servant. Behold my servant, &c. because he doth all things according to his Father's will, and with a fixed eye to his Father's glory. But the ancients reply to this objection thus : " That God is said to be the Head of Christ, as he is the Father of the Son, and so the cause of him ; and as the woman is of the same nature with the man, who is her Head, so is Christ of the same nature with God the Father, who is here called his Head : *The head of Christ is God.*"

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered, dishonoureth her head : for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

By the man's *praying and prophesying*, understand his performing any divine offices in the church, as prayer and expounding the scriptures, singing of psalms, and the like. By doing this *covered*, understand not the natural covering of the hair, but an artificial covering by a veil, after the manner of women, which is a token of subjection. By *dishonouring his head*, understand either, 1. Christ, who in the former verse was called *the Head of every man* ; He that administers in the church in holy things, represents Christ, who is the Head of the church ; therefore by covering the head, he declares a subjection in his administration, and doth as it were make the church the head of Christ, instead of Christ's being the Head of the church : Or else, 2. By dishonouring the head, may be understood the minister's own head ; he betrayeth his superiority and lesseneth the honour and dignity of his sex, by using such a gesture in divine offices, as is a token of inferiority and subjection ; for in that country, at that time, it was a sign of subjection to have the head covered, but a sign of power and dominion to have the head uncovered. The contrary is found with us at this day ; for those that have power over others now keep their heads covered, and those that are inferior to others keep their heads uncovered before them, ver. 5. By the woman's *praying and prophesying*, is understood either prophesying extraordinarily, which we read the women sometimes did both in the Old and New Testament, and were called prophetesses, Luke. ii. 36. Acts xxi. 9. Or else, 2. By the woman's prophesying, is to be understood praising God in hymns and psalms, 1. Chron. xxv. 1, 2, 3. " They prophesied with harps, psalteries, and cymbals, giving thanks, and praising the Lord ;" where prophesying and praising the Lord are the same thing. By the woman's prophesying with her head uncovered, to the dishonour of her head or husband, is to be understood, her appearing unveiled in the church, open and barefaced in public : which was accounted, 1. An immodest, unbecoming, and unseemly guise. 2. Arrogant ; her being unveil-

ed and uncovered was a token of her usurping an undue authority over the man, and of her casting off that subjection, which she was under by the law of her creation to him. 3. Superstitious; it being a fantastical imitation of the she-priests and prophetesses of the Gentiles, when they served their idols, and particularly when they sacrificed to Bacchus, who used to have their faces uncovered, their hair dishevelled, hanging at its full length round about their ears. Now the Corinthian women, in imitation of these Heathen women (for the female sex is very fond, and exceeding prone to follow the fashion) did cast off their veils, discover their faces, dishonour their heads, even their natural heads, (as well as the æconomical head, their husband) it being there and then accounted as immodest a thing for a woman to appear in public uncovered as to appear with her head shaven. From the whole learn, That God requires at the hands of all persons, who either administer unto him, or stand before him, a decent behaviour, and comely accommodation in his house, especially in the acts and exercises of his worship and service. For if in their habit and dress, surely much in their gesture and deportment, doth he love what is unseemly and unbecoming in any person. Learn, 2. That it is especially the duty of persons employed in divine administrations, to demean themselves as those who represent our Lord Jesus, managing themselves with a due authority and decent gravity, becoming the ambassadors of God. So then it is a general observation of decency in our outward behaviour, when worshipping God before others, which our apostle here recommends as a special duty.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

Our apostle proceeds, by many arguments, to evince and prove the woman's inferiority and subjection to the man, and that she sought to have a covering upon her head, as a sign and token of it. First, Because the image of God, that is, the image of his majesty, dominion and power, shineth forth most brightly in the man, therefore he ought to have his head uncovered; *Man is the image and glory of God.* But is not the woman so likewise? *Ans.* Consider the woman according to her specifical nature, and so she was created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, as well as the man: but then, consider the woman according to her personal relation to her husband, and in that regard, the woman is not the image of God; because dominion, which is the image of God, is the man's privilege: and subjection, the woman's duty: *But she is the glory of the man;* that is, it is the glory and honour of man, that God hath given him superiority over so excellent a creature as the woman; for if his dominion over the irrational creatures be his glory and honour, then what a glory and honour is it for a man to have so excellent a creature as the woman, a creature endued with reason like himself, subject to him! But as in this sense the man is the glory of the woman, so in

another sense the woman is the glory of the man. She communicates with him in all his dignity, how great soever, whatever natural or civil excellency is in him, reflects on her; *uxor fulget radiis mariti*, the wife shines with the rays of her husband's honour. And the woman being thus in a state of inferiority, she ought to profess her subjection to her husband, by wearing a veil.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman: but the woman for the man.

Another argument which the apostle offers, to prove the inferiority of the woman, is this, That originally the man was not made of the woman, or for the woman, but the woman was made of the man (his rib) and for the man; that is, for his service and comfort, to be an help-meet for him, and to be in subjection to him. Man had this prerogative, to be immediately from God; but the woman was from man, and to be administering and subservient to man, and consequently to cover her head, in token of her submission to him.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.

Moreover, for this cause ought the woman to have power (that is, a veil upon her head, as a sign, and a token of her husband's power, and her own subjection) *because of the angels:* that is, say some, 1. Because of the law of subjection given her by the ministry of angels. 2. Because of the pastors, teachers, and ministers of the church, say others, who are often in scripture styled angels. 3. Because of the evil angels, as some interpret it; the woman being tempted by Satan, the prince of evil angels, to commit the first sin, which is a perpetual cause of shame to her and her posterity, and which increased her and their subjection to the man; for which reason, the woman ought to be veiled and covered (in the church assemblies particularly) as a token of shamefacedness and subjection. 4. The more general interpretation is, because of the good angels, who are present in the assemblies of the saints, and eye-witnesses of their carriage there; therefore the woman ought to do nothing indecent in the presence of those holy spirits. And besides, she has the angels for her pattern and precedent who cover their faces and veil their heads, in token of subjection to almighty God. Note here, 1. That it has been a general opinion among the Jews, Heathens, and Christians, that good angels are more particularly present with us, in the places, and at the times of God's public worship; yea, that they are not only present with us, but observant of us, and assisting to us in the performance of all religious exercises, especially prayer; and therefore the Jews speak of a particular angel, whom they call the angel of prayer. Note, 2. That therefore all persons, both men and women, ought to demean themselves with all modesty, reverence, and decency in the worship of God, and out of regard to the angels, who are there present, observing their carriage and behaviour. True, the angels cannot penetrate into the inward devotion of the mind, which God only observes; but they observe, and take notice of the outward decency of our carriage, and the reverence of our deportment. But, Lord! how little is this considered,

and by how few among us in our religious assemblies ! with regard to God, who sees our hearts, we should more particularly compose our minds to the greatest seriousness and sincerity in our devotions ; and with a particular regard to the holy angels, who are there present, we should be careful also of our outward behaviour : But, to our shame be it spoken, there are multitudes amongst us in our Christian assemblies, whom neither the presence of angels, nor the observing eye of him who is the Lord of angels can influence to any tolerable decency of behaviour in the house of prayer, where the eyes of God and angels, of ministers and men, are upon them. Such, without repentance, must never expect to dwell hereafter with God and his holy angels in heaven, but take up their lodgings with the devil and his angels in an eternal hell, for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever.

11 Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

12 For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman ; but all things of God.

Because the apostle might seem to have been too harsh towards the woman, and lest the man should thereupon take occasion to carry himself with pride and insolence towards her, he prudently intimates the mutual help and need which both man and woman stands in of one another ; for, since the creation of the first man, all men are by the woman. And as men have no being but by the woman, so the woman without the man cannot exist or propagate. For as at the first creation the woman was taken out of the man, so now in generation the man is of the woman, and by the woman : she conceives him, brings him forth, suckles him, and brings him up, and all this by the wise disposal of God, who made the woman out of the man, and by his benediction increaseth man by the woman. From which considerations our apostle infers, that both man and woman should look upon their distinct prerogatives as given them by God, and carry it not with pride and insolence, but with respect and kindness each to the other ; and especially, that the woman be in subjection to the man, and testify that subjection by all the signs of it, particularly by her being veiled and covered, which is the argument our apostle is here insisting upon.

13 Judge in yourselves ; is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered ?

14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have longer hair, it is a shame unto him ?

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her : for her hair is given her for a covering.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle closes his discourse, in which he had reprov'd the Corinthians, the men for covering, the women for uncovering their heads, and laying aside their veils in time of religious worship ; by an appeal to themselves and their own judgment, concerning the matter he is speaking of, and reprov'ing them for ; namely, men's praying with their heads covered, and women with their heads uncovered. Observe, 2. How the apostle proceeds to blame both sexes for another disorder ; namely, that men wore their hair like women, and that women appeared in the guise of men as to their hair. Here he lets them know, that both these kinds of disorders are repugnant to the institution of God, and the dictates of natural reason ; *Doth not nature itself teach you ?* That is, 1. The general dictates of natural reason. 2. The particular law of nature, concerning the distinction of sexes. 3. Usage and common custom, which is a second nature. All these suggest, that for men to wear their hair at full length like the women, is uncomely and unnatural in the manly sex, but so to do is comely and natural in the female. Learn hence, That God disallows, and even nature itself condemns every thing that tends to the confounding of the sexes, which it is his will and pleasure should be visibly distinguished. It is a great offence to God, and contrary to one end for which apparel was given, when either the man or the woman wear apparel contrary to their sex ; and what is said of apparel, their artificial covering, may be affirmed of the hair, which is their natural covering. "It is a shame for either sex to wear their hair in an uncomely and indecent manner, disagreeable to the natural modesty of either sex." Observe, 3. How the apostle appeals to the custom and practice of the churches of God in the case before us. The custom of all the churches is against women's being uncovered, as an unseemly thing. It is a known rule, *Ubi nihil certi statuit scriptura, mos populi Dei, & instituta majorum pro lege tenenda sunt* : We ought not to dissent and differ from the custom and practice of the church, in matters not positively determined : but the custom of the church must sway with us, with whose practice it is our duty to be as concordant as we can ; *If any be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.* Learn, thence, That in things only respecting decency, and in compliance with which there is no violation of the command of Christ, the custom of the church of Christ should determine us, and be as a standing rule unto us ; Learn, 2. That it argues a contentious spirit, and savours very much of pride, in matters of little moment, to be singular in our practice, and to create disturbance to the church of God : *If any man seem to be contentious, &c.*

17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you ; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Our apostle here enters upon a new argument or subject-matter of discourse; namely, to reprove the abuses which were crept in amongst them, in their administration of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And the first abuse which he blames them for, was the divisions and factions which were found amongst them: *I hear there are schisms amongst you*: Where we are to understand by schisms, not a separation from the unity of the catholic church, but of sects and divisions in the church; they did not separate from the church, but they ate the Lord's Supper separately in the church, and the whole congregation did not join together, in the celebration of that ordinance. Though we do not separate from the communion of the catholic church, yet if we occasion division and dissent groundlessly in the church, we justly fall under the imputation and charge of schism. Observe next, The apostle argues, *a minori ad majus*; he did easily believe there were divisions, because *there must be also heresies among them*. Heresies are worse than schisms, false doctrines more dangerous than divisions. Heresy is an error in the fundamentals of religion, maintained with obstinacy. When the green wound of an error is let alone, it soon rankles, and quickly grows into the old sore of an heresy. But how comes the apostle to say, *there must be heresies*? What necessity is there for them? *Answ.* 1. Negatively; there is not an absolute necessity for them on God's part, or a necessity of his making, but a conditional necessity, or a necessity *ex hypothesi*, which must needs be, if such a thing be granted before: As supposing the sun to be risen, it must be day. Thus here, upon supposition of the pride, vain-glory, envyings, strife, and contentions, which are amongst the members of the church: upon supposition of the craft and subtilty, malice, and malignity of Satan, the church's grand enemy: upon supposition of God's permission that Satan and wicked men should act according to their corrupt affections and inclinations, heresies must and will be. Note, farther, That the reason here assigned for the necessity of heresies is not casual but eventual; not casual, as if the wisdom of God did design there should be heresies for this end, that they who are approved of him should be made manifest: but rather eventual, as if the apostle had said, "Hence it will come to pass, that they who are approved will be made manifest."

20 When ye come together, therefore, into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

As if he had said, "True, ye Corinthians, when ye come together to one place, ye pretend to eat the Lord's Supper; but though you eat it, yet ye do not eat it as ye ought to do; you perform the material part of the action, but you do not partake of it solemnly and religiously, according to the divine institution: this therefore is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Learn thence, That a duty not done as it ought to be done, is not done at all in the account of Christ. Sermons may be heard, and yet accounted no sermons; prayers made, yet not made; sacraments received, yet not received; alms given, yet not given; because not done in manner and form as God required. A gracious heart will look not barely at the matter of the duty, but also at the manner of performance, and take care not only that he hears, but how he hears.

21 ¶ For in eating, every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

Here our apostle begins to reprove the Corinthians for the abuses found in their love feasts. These love-feasts were founded on no express command in holy writ, but only on the custom of the church, who immediately before receiving the sacrament used to have a great feast, to which all the poor were invited at the charges of the rich, as an expression of their perfect love and charity one towards another. Now in these feasts of charity, they did not observe due order and decency; for *every one*, that is, every party and faction, being come to the place of the assembly, did presently sit down to eat what they had brought, in the company of their own party, not minding or regarding others; whereupon this holy feast of charity was neither celebrated at the same time by all, nor with that unanimity and concord which it was designed to represent; whilst the poor were excluded and sent home hungry, the rich were feasted and drank to some degree of excess which is here called drunkenness; *one is hungry and another is drunken*. Behold what great irregularities and disorders are here found in the church of Corinth! Who can expect a church without spot in this imperfect state? God has left these miscarriages upon record, not for imitation, but for our caution.

22 What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words. Some paraphrase them thus: What! must you make the house of God the place of your feasting? If you be disposed for mirth and jollity, have you not houses wherein you may do it with more privacy, and less offence? Or despise you the church of God? Do you undervalue, and thus profane and unhallow the place set apart for God's worship and service, by converting it into a common banquetting-house! Thus many expound it of the material church; and their opinion is favoured by the antithesis and opposition between church and houses: *Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise you the church of God?* Learn, That holy duties, pious and public, are to be performed in the church or house of God. Duties pious, but not public, better suit the closet than the church. Duties public, but not pious, more befit a guildhall or town-house, than the house of God. Others by the church of God understand the spiritual church, the poor members of Jesus Christ, and reader the words thus: "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in*, if need be before you come? Or *despise you* those poor Christians, who are members of the church of Christ as well as you, and put to shame them that have not what you eat and drink, by excluding them out of your company for their poverty-sake? For since God adopts them into his family, and admits them unto his table, you ought not to exclude them from this feast of charity, which was originally designed for the poor's relief." Learn, He that despiseth the poor, despiseth the church of God: yea, despiseth Christ himself; as he that pincheth the little toe, paineth the whole body, so the dis-

racing the poor members of Christ, is a despising of the whole church. In these love-feasts the poor were the most proper, and should have been the most principal guests: but alas! the rich gorged themselves plentifully, whilst the poor stood and looked on hungry. Yet observe, lastly, With what lenity and mildness the apostle reproves these great disorders in the church at Corinth; *Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* It was the first time he had told them of their faults, therefore he doth it gently, in hopes of amendment. Learn thence, That though ministers must not commend, but reprove people, when they do ill, yet they must use mildness, especially at their first reproof of a sin. Some observe, That God so blessed the mild severity of St. Paul, that the Corinthians, upon the writing this first epistle reformed all their abuses; which they gather from hence, because no fault is taxed in the second epistle, which was reproofed in the first.

23 ¶ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was betrayed, took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle, for reforming those abuses which were crept into the church amongst them relating to the holy sacrament, reduces them to the first institution of that sacred ordinance, *I have delivered unto you what I have received of the Lord.* Mark, The apostle did receive and deliver, but not institute and appoint, this venerable ordinance. Had he not received, he had wanted authority; and had he not delivered what he received, he had wanted integrity. Observe, 2. The author of this institution, the Lord Jesus. To institute sacraments is an act of Christ's regal power and royal authority. The church has no power to appoint, but only to execute and administer what Christ appoints. Observe, 3. The time of the institution, the same night in which he was betrayed. It is a night much to be remembered, in which he settles an ordinance in the church, for the confirmation and consolation of his people to the end of the world. Lord! What an evidence was here of thy tender care and affectionate concern for thy church and people, in spending so much of that little, very little, time thou hadst left, upon their account! Observe, 4. The sacramental elements, or the commemorative, significative, and instructive signs: and they are bread and wine, shadowing forth the body and blood of the crucified Jesus. Where note, St. Paul calls it bread five times over, which

Christ calls his own body, because it was a sign and representation of his body: not his real body, for then Christ ate his own body whilst he was alive, his disciples devouring that body over night, which hung upon the cross next morning, with a thousand such absurdities which the doctrine of transubstantiation carries along with it. Observe, 5. The ministerial actions, *the breaking of the bread, and blessing of the cup.* The bread must be broken, to represent the breaking of Christ's body upon the cross, which comprehended all the sufferings of his human nature, all which were consummated in his crucifixion; and his broken bread must be taken and eaten by us to intimate, that all his breakings, bruising, and woundings, both in soul and body, were for our sins, and for our benefits, and that the sole intention of all his sufferings was for us. Wine also is poured forth, because as no liquor like wine doth cheer a sad and drooping spirit, in like manner, nothing doth so glad and cheer the soul, as faith in a crucified Saviour. That spiritual life which a soul is raised to, by the death of Christ, is a life of the greatest delight and joy which we can conceive. Observe, 6. The great design and end of this institution, *Do it in remembrance of me,* or for a memorial of me; Christ knew how apt our base hearts would be to forget him, amidst such a throng of sensible objects as we here converse with; and how much our forgetfulness of him and his sufferings would tend to our prejudice and disadvantages: and therefore doth he appoint this ordinance to bring him to remembrance. Observe, 7. The strict mandate or charge given for the frequent celebration of this ordinance, *Do this as oft as ye drink it;* that is, Do it often. We can no more live and thrive without our spiritual, than we can without our corporal food, as the body must be often fed, so the soul must have its frequent repast. Observe, 8. The reason assigned for the frequent celebration of this ordinance; *For as oft as ye do this ye do shew the Lord's death till he come;* that is, by frequenting this ordinance, we commemorate the death of Christ during his absence from us. As the end of the ordinance was to be a standing memorial, so the obligation that lies upon all Christians to observe it, is perpetual; Christians are by this ordinance to represent the sacrificing of Christ for their sins, till he comes again in glory. Learn, from the whole, 1. That the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ as a standing memorial of his death and sufferings for us. Here we ought to remember the painfulness of his death, the meritoriousness of his death, the voluntariness of his death, the acceptableness of his death to God, and the advantageousness of his death to ourselves. And the manner how we should remember Christ and his death in the sacrament, is various: with judgment and understanding, with reverence and humility, with sorrow and grief of heart for our sins, yet with joy and thankfulness for the sufferings of a Saviour, with faith and assurance, with love and affection, with resolutions for a new and better obedience. Learn, 2. That the command of Christ lays it as a law upon, and makes it the standing duty of, all Christians, to commemorate his death at his holy table, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Here it deserves our notice what kind of command this is; it is a sovereign and supreme command; it is a positive and express command; it is a permanent and lasting command; it is the command of a Saviour, yea, of a dying Saviour; it is the command of love; it is such a command, as, if we duly observe, will be a blessed means to enable us to observe all the commands of God better. Lastly, It is such a com-

mand, as whoever lives in the wilful neglect of it, cannot be called a Christian, but will be treated by Christ, at the great day, as an enemy and despiser of his dying love. Learn, 3. That it is a Christian's duty, not barely to do this, but to do it often : frequent communicating is a great duty. The primitive Christians received every Lord's day, yea, it is believed, oftener than every Lord's day. This is agreeable to the nature of the ordinance, which is a spiritual repast, banquet, and feast, and therefore to be received frequently. It is also agreeable to the author of the ordinance ; it is a feast of God's own providing ; therefore to neglect it, is to fly in the face of God ; it is agreeable to the end of the ordinance, which is, to renew our covenant, and that cannot be done too often.

27 Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink *this* cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

The apostle having, in the foregoing verses, declared the original institution of the Lord's Supper, he comes now to instruct the Corinthians in the right use of it ; and, to excite them to a due regard in their approaches to it, he acquaints them with the great danger of an unworthy receiving of it ; " Whosoever shall eat this bread, &c. unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." *Ques.* 1. What is it not to eat and drink unworthily ? *Ans.* 1. To receive the sacrament with many doubts and fears, with a weak faith, with a trembling hand, and fearful heart, all this may be, and yet the person not receive unworthily. 2. The want of perfect holiness, and a complete freedom from sin, doth not denominate a person an unworthy receiver ; for this ordinance was not instituted for angels, but for men ; to make sinful men good, and good men better. 3. Backwardness to the duty, deadness and dulness in the duty, when involuntary and lamented, makes not a person an unworthy receiver. *Ques.* 2. What is it not to eat and drink unworthily ? *Ans.* 1. It is to receive out of custom, not out of conscience : for company's sake, not for the command's sake ; because the law of man enjoins it, not because the law of Christ requires it. 2. It is to receive, without such a disposition of mind, such a preparation of heart, such reverence and devotion, as ought therein to be exercised ; to receive without knowledge, without repentance, without faith, without resolutions, for a sincere obedience, without sincere reconciliation to our neighbour. *Ques.* 3. What is it to be guilty of the body and blood of our Lord ? *Ans.* 1. It is an implicit approbation of the Jews' act in crucifying Christ. 2. It is implicitly a jesting with the body and blood of Christ, a playing with the most tremendous things in the world. 3. It is a crucifying the Son of God a fresh ; it is to stab the master of the feast at his own table, whilst he is treating us with the richest dainties.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

Observe here, The duty required to prevent the danger of unworthy receiving, and that is the great and necessary duty of examination. A metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who try the truth of their gold by the touchstone, the purity

of their gold by the fire, the weight of it by the scale. Observe, 2. The examinant, or person performing this duty of examination. *Let a man*, that is, let every man. This stands in a double opposition, 1. To our examining of others. 2. To our resting in another's examination of us. Observe, 3. The frequency of this act ; as often as we partake of the ordinance, so oft we should, if we have time, less or more, examine ourselves. *Let him examine, and so let him eat* : Let him pass through one duty to another. Learn hence, That it is the special duty, and ought to be the singular care and endeavour, of all those that desire safely and comfortably to approach the table of the Lord, to examine themselves before they come ; to examine their right unto it, and to examine their fitness for it.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

What it is to eat and drink unworthily, we find explained before at ver. 27. Note here, farther, That many persons of honest hearts, but weak heads, have sadly misunderstood the words of St. Paul, about unworthy receiving, thinking that such an excess of reverence and preparation is required, that either they dare not come at all, or they come with so much dread and fear upon their minds, that they are more terrified than comforted. Observe farther, The unworthy person eats and drinks judgment ; that is, temporal judgment will follow him in this life ; and without repentance, eternal damnation in the next. Yet note, It is judgment to himself that receives ; not to another that receives with him. If a wicked man's presence at the sacrament pollutes the ordinance to a worthy receiver, then Christ and his eleven apostles were defiled by the company of Judas at the passover ; for at that he certainly was, and, as many think, at the Lord's Supper also. Learn thence, that unworthy receivers of the Lord's Supper do contract great guilt, and incur great danger to themselves. The design of the apostle in these two last verses, is this, that we should not sinfully omit the duty, because of the command ; nor carelessly undertake it, because of the threatened judgment.

30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For this cause : That is, for profaning the sacrament, and not discerning the Lord's body at the Lord's table ; for not approaching it as a feast of love designed equally for the benefit of all his members, and to knit them in the closest bonds of unity and friendship each to the other : Therefore it was, that many were visited with sickness and weakness, and some with death ; which being called *sleep*, some have charitably concluded from thence, that they were pious persons in the main ; for the death of the wicked is hardly called sleep any where in scripture ; and if so, then we learn, that the holiness of an ordinance, or the habitual holiness of any person who approaches an ordinance, will not exempt from God's displeasure, and the infliction of temporal judgments here in this life, if they do not by actual preparation sanctify the name of God in the duties and ordinances of his worship. Besides an habitual, there is required an actual preparation in all those that will safely and comfortably ap-

proach to God in holy duties; without it, we shall meet with a blow instead of a blessing.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

That is, "If we would examine, try, censure, and sentence ourselves, and so come to the Lord's table, as penitent believers, with a purity of aim, and a sincere intention, we should thereby escape the castigatory punishments, and condemnatory sentence of God." Learn hence, That as it is our duty often to examine and judge ourselves, so self-judging in particular, before we approach the Lord's table, will preserve us from the judgment and condemnation of God; we must first summon, then examine, then convict and try, then sentence and condemn ourselves; and all this in hopes of being absolved and acquitted by God, acting our faith upon his free mercy, and the Redeemer's satisfaction.

32 But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Observe here, 1. The nature of those judgments, or afflictive evils, which do befall the children of God in this life; they are *chastenings*; we are *chastened of the Lord*. Chastenings belong properly to children who are wanton and ungovernable. *To be chastened* has a double aspect; first upon our privilege, it denotes our relation as children unto God our Father. Chastenings are a part of his children's portion; yet, in that we are chastened, it tasks us with weakness; we are foolish, wanton, and unruly children, and therefore so long as we are here, must always go with a rod at our backs. Christ, who was also a son, was chastened. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*; but his were judiciary chastisements; God did not chastise him as a child, but as an enemy, as a malefactor, in our stead; as we must have been chastened, who were enemies and malefactors. Our chastenings are fatherly, Christ's judiciary. Observe, 2. The merciful design of God in the chastenings of his children; it is to prevent their condemnation; *We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned of the world*. When therefore at any time we are under chastisement, in all we say or do, let us justify God, and condemn ourselves, seeing his chastisements are designed to prevent our condemnation.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Our apostle here concludes his discourse with an exhortation to the Corinthians, to take heed for time to come, that all these forementioned miscarriages may be rectified; that when they come together to eat the Lord's Supper, and the love feasts, they should tarry one for another, that they may all feed and feast together. And if any man pretend to be hungry, let him eat at home before he comes, lest by

these irreverent actions he bring down the judgments of God upon himself. Lastly, He tells them, that as to other points of church order, he would determine them when he came among them: *The rest will I set in order when I come*; Such unchristian disorders may arise in the church, as will require the presence and coming of an apostle to correct and reform them.

CHAP. XII.

NOW, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Our apostle begins this chapter with the resolution of another case concerning the nature and right use of spiritual gifts. Some that excelled in them, were proud of them, using them to vain ostentation: he therefore tells them, he would not have them ignorant as touching spiritual gifts; not ignorant either of their author from whence they came, the holy Spirit of God; nor of their end and use, which is the benefit and edification of others. Gifts are for the good of others, but a man shall have the advantage and comforts of his own graces: Gifts are the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is the altar which sanctifies the gold. Lord! how many have gone laden with gifts to hell? how many have prophesied in thy name, and yet perished in thy wrath? how many cast devils out of others, who yet were cast to the devils themselves? how many wrought miracles, and did many wonderful works, who yet perished for evil workers? Lord! let me never build upon this bottom (gifts) for eternity: these may make me glorious in the eyes of men, but grace renders me precious in the sight of God.

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle reminds the Corinthians of what they were in their Heathenish state; namely, idolatrous Gentiles, serving *dumb idols*; for though the devil sometimes spake in and by the idols, yet the idols themselves had mouths and spake not; and they were *carried away unto these dumb idols, even as they were led*; that is, as they were led by their idolatrous priests, who had nothing of this divine Spirit among them, which they, since their conversion from Gentilism to Christianity, had been made partakers of. Now from this description of idolaters, that they serve and worship dumb idols, we learn, What an absurd and unreasonable sin idolatry is; the worshipper is better than the God he worships; reasonable men worship unreasonable creatures; sensible men adore senseless stocks and stones; and they who can speak, invoke and call upon dumb idols, that can neither speak nor hear. And yet how prone is the nature of man to idolatry and false worship; partly because it is a worship of our own invention, and we are fond of what of is our own finding out, and setting up; and partly because it is external, and pompous, it courts the outward senses with glittering appearances; and men do naturally love and chuse that for the object of their worship which may be seen, rather than that which is to be believed.

As they walk by sight, and not by faith, so do they worship too: an invisible and unseen being is neither the object of their adoration, nor election and choice.

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

The great difference that was then in the world, was about Jesus: Those that were led away by dumb idols, were taught by Satan to blaspheme, and say, upon the mention of our Saviour's name, Jesus Anathema, Jesus Anathema: that is, let Jesus be Anathema, accursed, detested, and destroyed, as the common odium of their gods. Now, when the apostle says, such speak not by the Spirit of God, his meaning is, that they did it by the impulse and instinct of the devil, by the actings and instigation of the evil spirit, which ruled in those children of disobedience; on the other side, every one that believeth, calleth Jesus Lord, and professeth faith in him. Now, none, says the apostle, can do this but by the Holy Ghost, that is, by his help and assistance. But it may be said, we read in scripture of many who were accursed by the unclean spirit, that yet called Jesus Lord, Mark ii. 23. Acts xvi. 17. *Ans.* These acknowledgments of Christ to be Lord, were either wrested from the devil, and were a considerable part of his torment, or were over ruled by God to advance the glory of Christ. But, 2. The apostle here speaks of such a calling Jesus Lord, as is accompanied with faith in him, and subjection to him. There is a double saying that Jesus is Lord; the one verbal, *one tenus*, with lip and tongue only, without the consent of the heart, or obedience of the life; the other actual, when we do with our whole souls own and acknowledge him, love and embrace him, obey and serve him as Lord, and vote for his government and dominion over us. No man thus called Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost renewing and sanctifying him, assisting and enabling him so to do.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

That is, there is a great variety and diversity of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Spirit from whence they all proceed and flow; and there are different administrations and offices in the church, but it is the same Lord who hath appointed all these offices. And there are diversities of operations performed by these officers in the church, but it is the same God who worketh in them all. Here gifts are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, administrations to the Lord Christ, and operations to God the Father; but in all these, there are great diversities both of kinds and degrees; they differ in the nature, extent, and use. Thus it is with reference to spiritual gifts; but in the case of sanctifying graces, it is far otherwise; these are all bestowed jointly, or not at all; God can-

not give humility to one, purity to another, charity alone to a third, because there is such an inseparable union and alliance among the graces of the Spirit (a concatenation of graces, as some call it) that where one really is, there all the rest must be. Hence probably it is, why the whole of religion is sometimes expressed by one particular duty of it, sometimes by faith, sometimes by hope, sometimes by repentance, sometimes by charity; because the combination of these saving graces is such, that the mentioning of one implies and includes all the rest.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *diverse* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Observe here, How the apostle enumerates and reckons up the several sorts and kinds of spiritual gifts, which were at that time plentifully poured forth upon the ministers and members of the church of Christ, which begat astonishment and admiration; and of these extraordinary gifts, our apostle reckons up nine sorts or kinds, which were found in the primitive church in his days, as they here follow: 1. One had *the word of wisdom*; that is, the revelation of the gospel, which is called the manifold wisdom of God; This was the gift of the apostles; to whom extraordinary measures of divine wisdom were first given, to reveal the mysteries of the gospel to the Pagan world. 2. Another had *the word of knowledge*; that is, a special ability to interpret the mystical senses and veiled meanings of the scripture, and also to foretel remote and future things. Thus St. Paul told the centurion before the shipwreck, that not a man in the ship should be lost, Acts xxvii. and Agabus foretold the famine, and St. Paul's imprisonment, Acts xi. 3. To another *faith*, by which some understand supernatural courage and confidence, with which God did endow them, when he called to extraordinary sufferings and services; accordingly, we read in the Acts of the Apostles, with what invincible courage and resolution poor men appeared before the Jewish and Heathen tribunals, and with what astonishing presence, both of body and mind, they bore the name of Jesus before the kings and people of the earth! Others by faith here, understand a miraculous faith, that is, a supernatural confidence; and firm assurance, wrought by the holy Spirit in the minds of some, in the apostle's time, by

which they were certain, that they could do such and such a miracle before they undertook to do it; and the greatest apostle durst never undertake to do a miracle, but when he was assured by the Spirit that he could do it; and, indeed, it was requisite for Almighty God, by some secret preceding impression of mind, to let the teachers of the gospel know when he would assist them in working miracles, lest they should attempt to work when they could not, and so discredit Christ's doctrines, their own authority, and dishonour the name of God; and therefore it is observable, That the gift of faith here, is set immediately before the gift of healing, and working miracles, because it consisted in an antecedent impulse to both. 4. The next miraculous gift, is the gift of healing: that is, a power of curing all diseases, both of body and mind, without the help of physic, through the name alone of Jesus Christ. 5. The gift of miracles, under which is comprehended the power of silencing and casting out devils, inflicting diseases and death on the bodies of incorrigible sinners, as on Elymas and Ananias: also the more wonderful power in raising the dead. 6. The gift of prophecy; that is, 1. The prediction or foreknowledge of things to come. Thus Agabus foretold by the Spirit a famine, Acts xi. and this gift was sometimes exercised by foretelling who would be fit persons to do God service in the church; 1. Tim. i. 18. and chap. iv. 14 "According to the foregoing prophecies concerning thee, neglect not the gift that was given thee by prophecy." 2. Others, by prophecy, understand preaching and expounding scriptures by divine inspiration, praising God by inspired hymns and psalms, and also praying unto him in public assemblies by inspired prayers; for in the apostle's time, there was a miraculous gift of preaching, praying, and singing, in which the Spirit did, in an extraordinary manner, assist some persons, which, with other extraordinary gifts, is long since ceased. 7. The gift of discerning of spirits; that is, either, first, a power of quick and sure discerning, whether men, pretending to the Spirit, spake from God, or not; or a supernatural sagacity to discern between the impulses of satanical spirits, and divinely inspired persons. Or, secondly, A spirit of discerning, whether such or such persons be best qualified for such an office in the church, and accordingly, chusing them out for that work. Thus, Acts xiii. 2. 3. the Holy Spirit in the prophet, said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them. Or, lastly, By this power of discerning spirits, the apostles could tell very much of the inward purposes of men's hearts and thoughts; so Peter discerned the heart of Ananias, and the thoughts of Simon Magus. 8. The gift of tongues, that is, an ability to speak divers kinds of languages, unlearned and untaught. To which was added, 9. The gift of interpreting those languages; for these two gifts did not always go together: Some could speak divers languages, that could not interpret them; others could interpret them that could not speak them; For, say some, the gift of strange tongues was usually accompanied with such strong raptures, that the person affected, could not use his understanding in an ordinary way, so as to interpret and explain his own inspirations in the audience to which he spoke; which was the reason why the Spirit did usually reveal to others, who stood by, and understood not the inspired languages, the matter which was spoken. Thus are the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated by the apo-

stle, which were bestowed upon the primitive church, whose infant state required all this extraordinary assistance: but as the church grew up, Almighty God, like a wise nurse, weaned her by degrees from these miraculous gifts, till at last, arrived at her full stature, he left her, as parents leave their children when grown to be men, to subsist without these extraordinary helps and supplies.

12 ¶ For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Here our apostle acquaints us, that the intent and design of God, in giving these various gifts, was the profit and edification of his church, which he compares to a body that has many members; for though that one Spirit, which distributes the gifts, could have given them all to the same person, yet to maintain a mutual dependence, and a charitable serviceableness of the members, one among another, he gave to one, one gift; to another, another; by which means, one member of the church would be obliged to take care of the rest. Behold here, how the wisdom of God has ordered the state of the church, like that of the natural body, to which the apostle elegantly compares the body of Christ, which is his church: "As the body hath many members, so also has Christ;" that is, the church of Christ. Now, having assured them, that they were indeed members of one body, he tells them what it was that made them so, ver. 13. "For by one Spirit," says he, "we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and have been made to drink into one Spirit;" that is, by being baptized we are all made members of the body of Christ, and united one to another, under him the Head; and this whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, we are all one in Christ, who by baptism were admitted into his church; And this union of our's, one with another, is testified and declared by our communion at the Lord's table, which is here called, a drinking into one Spirit. And whereas by baptism we are said by one Spirit to be baptized into one body, and at the Lord's Supper, are said to drink into one Spirit; we learn, That the grace of the Holy Spirit was given in baptism and in the Lord's Supper to all the faithful, who do not receive unprofitable signs, but the quickening grace and Spirit of God, to make them living members of that one body.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? if the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

Our apostle here elegantly compares the state of the mystical body, the church, with that of the natural body: As the natural body is one, so is the mystical body; as the natural body is informed and animated with one spirit or soul, so the mystical body, the church, is animated by one and the same Spirit, received from our spiritual Head, Christ Jesus, and communicated to all the members of his body, to give them life and motion: As the members of the natural body are not alike, but some superior, and others inferior, in excellency, yet all of indispensable use; (for the wise God hath created no member of man's body in vain, but designed all for the mutual help and benefit of one another) in like manner is it in the church, the mystical body; there are different gifts, different offices; some are superior and more excelling in gifts, others are of meaner abilities, yet all conduce to the good of the whole: One of inferior gifts must not account himself useless; (for every one that cannot be excellent may yet be useful) for if so, what would become of the church? Therefore there must be different gifts and offices, for different uses: But every one must employ his gift, and perform his office, according to the nature of it, for the service of the whole. Learn hence, 1. That several men have their several gifts, as it pleaseth the gift-giving Spirit to give unto them. Learn, 2. That such as have the meanest talent, either of gifts or graces, ought not to esteem themselves, or be esteemed by others, as useless or unserviceable; but to employ their talent, though ever so small for the service and benefit of the whole church.

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

20 But now are *they* many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more of those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary;

As if the apostle had said, Whereas our wise Creator, who made the body of man, has appointed all the members of that body for divers uses and offices, and also appointed the order in which every member shall stand; that the head shall be uppermost, to guide the body, the foot lowermost, to bear the body: In like manner our gracious Redeemer has appointed to the several members of his church, distinct offices in his church. And as the principal members of the body, the eye and hand, do need the less principal; so

the rulers, pastors, and wisest members of the church, do need even those weak and inferior Christians, whom the world makes small account of. The eye, that is, the man of great understanding, cannot say to the hand, the person employed in lesser services, I have no need of you; nor again the head, that is, the person placed in the highest dignity in the church, cannot say to the feet, the person employed in the lowest offices of the church, I have no need of you. Therefore the superior members of the church must not pride it over the inferior, nor the most knowing Christians despise the less knowing, as unuseful and unprofitable, but as fellow-members, jointly endeavour the mutual benefit and advantage of one another.

23 And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely *parts* have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Still our apostle proceeds in that elegant comparison betwixt the members of the body natural and the body mystical; shewing, that as there are some members in the natural body that are less honourable, and some that are more honourable: and whereas we put more abundant honour upon the less honourable members by a decent covering, and modest adorning of them; but upon our comely parts, such as the face, we put no covering, being comely enough of itself, and lacking no artificial beauty: in like manner all the members of the mystical body ought to be instructed, that the meanest offices in the church, and the meanest members of the church, who have least gifts, are as well of that spiritual body, the church, as those that have more excellent offices and gifts: and as the meaner must not envy the more excellent, so neither must the more excellent despise the meaner, but put a due value and respect upon one another. From practising of which duty, a double reason is here assigned: 1. That there may be no schism in the body, but the members have the same care for, and regard to, one another; if the members of the natural body should strive among themselves, the whole body would come to ruin by schism, so great mischief would arise to the church, the mystical body, by divisions and dissensions amongst the particular members of it. 2. Because there ought to be a sympathy between the members of the mystical body, as there is betwixt the members of the natural body. — There is a fellow-feeling with each other, both of joy and

grief, in and among the natural members, they all rejoice, and mourn with one another; if one member be pinched, the whole body is pained. Thus all the mystical members of Christ's body the church, ought to have the same common interests, the same common concern, the same common care, and the same mutual sympathy with each other, both in weal and woe.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.

Our apostle having thus finished his elegant and excellent comparison between the members of the natural, and those of the mystical body; he comes now to make a particular and close application of it to the believing Corinthians, whom he acknowledges to be a part of the mystical body of Christ; and that it is their duty to carry themselves towards their fellow members, as the members of the body natural do towards each other, who are ever more solicitous for the good of one another. Now, says he, "ye are the members of Christ:" as if he had said, Thus must it be with you who are the several members of Christ's church, which is his body. From the whole of this comparison, with the apostle's application of it, we learn, 1. That as there can be no natural body without divers members, so no mystical body without diversity of gifts and offices. 2. That as the most inferior members of the natural body are as truly members as the most noble, and as necessary and serviceable to the body as the other; so are inferior Christians as much the members of Christ's body, and in their place as useful and necessary as other members of the church, which are more excelling in spiritual gifts. Learn, 3. That as all the members of the natural body are placed and disposed according to the wisdom and pleasure of Almighty God; in like manner, the members of Christ's mystical body, are, by the unerring wisdom of God placed in that station and condition in the church, in which he has set them, and accordingly, they ought to be satisfied with it, and endeavour to be useful in it. Learn, 4. That as there is no division in the members of the natural body, but all the members take care of, and are employed for the good of the whole: so ought matters to be managed in the body mystical, that there be no divisions, nor separate interests in it, but they should mutually regard the common interest of one another, sympathizing, sorrowing, and rejoicing together. O happy day! when the interest of all parties, and private concerns; shall give place to public interest.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Our apostle having, in the beginning of the chapter, reckoned up the divers gifts, which God had variously bestowed upon the church, here, in the close of the chapter, he reckons up the particular officers that he thought fit to place in his church. 1. *Apostles*: persons sent forth immediately by Christ to lay the foundation of Christian churches, and upon whom the care of all the churches lay. 2. *Prophets*: or persons immediately inspired with the knowledge

of future things. 3. *Teachers*; such as labour in the word and doctrine, either as itinerary preachers, going from place to place, or as settled fixed ministers in the church, expounding the scriptures to the people. 4. *Miracles*; that is, some persons endued with an extraordinary power to work miracles for convincing infidels, and confirming believers. 5. *Gifts of healing*; such persons as had a power conferred upon them to heal diseases, without the help of physic in an extraordinary way. 6. *Helps*; deacons, which took care of the poor, and assisted the church in the distribution of her charity: and consisted in holy things, particularly in baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. 7. *Governments*; the rulers of the church and spiritual guides. 8. *Diversities of tongues*; that is, persons enabled to speak divers languages, in order to the farther spreading of the gospel, without the help of an interpreter. Behold here the wisdom of God in this various distribution of gifts and offices in his church; all which, as they are designed by him, so ought they to be managed by her, for the general good of the whole, without either pride or haughtiness on the one hand, or envy and emulation on the other.

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

The force of the apostle's arguments lies thus: As the natural body, to which he had before alluded, cannot be all eye, nor all ear, nor all hand, nor foot; in like manner, in the mystical body, the church, all cannot govern, prophecy, teach, work miracles, heal diseases; but one has this gift, and another that; one has the office in the church, and another that; all which are to be employed and improved for the common good of the church, and mutual benefit of each other.

31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

He concludes the chapter with this advice, that they covet and desire the best; that is, the most useful and excellent gifts, the most beneficial and edifying gifts, such as are most advantageous to the church; yet without intimating to them, that though there be an excellency in gifts, yet there is a greater excellency in grace, particularly in the grace of love. Charity or love to God and our neighbour, is more excellent than a load of gifts, though very extraordinary, though supernatural and miraculous. "Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." That is a more excellent way of ministering to the welfare of the church, and of edifying your own souls, even by true Christian love one towards another. Learn hence, That as the sanctifying graces of the holy Spirit are far more excellent than the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, so it is the Christian's duty to be much more covetous and desirous of them; for when gifts vanish away, the habits of grace shall never fail, but abide for ever, particularly the grace of love, which shall not

only accompany us to heaven, but in heaven ; where, from a small and little spark, it shall be improved into a seraphic and never failing flame.

CHAP. XIII.

Our apostle had, in the foregoing chapter, very copiously set forth the nature, the excellency, and usefulness of those gifts, which were found amongst the ministers and members of the church at Corinth, in his time. Now, lest they should trust too much to any of the forementioned gifts, either of tongues or miracles, which, alas ! a man may have, and perish eternally ; he proceeds in this chapter, to set forth the transcendent excellency of the graces of the Holy Spirit, above the most exalted and admired gifts ; and in particular, the superlative excellency of the grace of charity, that is, the unfeigned love of God and our neighbour, which is the noble subject of this chapter now before us.

THOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Here our apostle begins a comparison between gifts and graces, and shews how much more excelling and desirable the saving graces of the Spirit are, than all those pompous and miraculous gifts, in which there is no real excellency, and nothing for which we should desire them, but only upon the score of usefulness and serviceableness to the church : And he instances first in the gift of tongues : *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels ;* that is, though I had the gift of tongues, or speaking divers languages in the highest measure, and most exalted degree ; could I preach and pray like an angel, discourse and talk beyond the rate of any mortal man, and have not the grace of love and charity, alas ! what is all this to God, who is not taken with a noisy sound, as children are with a musical instrument ? Behold here, that the tongues of men or angels could have said nothing more plain or emphatical, to shew how much more excellent the saving graces of the spirit are than miraculous gifts, which commend us not to God, render us not like God, nor any ways qualify us for the enjoyment of him, giving us no intrinsic worth, or inherent excellency. They only proclaim God's goodness towards us, but are no ways evidential of any goodness in us towards him. Gifts are like the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the altar which sanctifies the gold.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all

faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.

Farther, Suppose I had the spirit of prophecy, and could speak, by inspiration, of things present, and things to come, and could understand deep and difficult points in God's word and works, what is this more than Balaam had ? And suppose I have all faith, that is, the highest degree of miraculous faith, so that I could remove mountains, yet this severed from charity, or the predominant love of God and our neighbour, is all nothing. And *I am nothing*, that is, nothing worth in the sight of God. Observe here, that miraculous faith may be severed from charity, but justifying faith cannot, which always worketh by love ; and wherever that grace is found, it gives value and acceptance to all other graces. Faith without charity, is but a dead assent ; hope without charity is but like a tympany, the bigger it grows the more dangerous it proves ; and the more desusive alms-giving, without love, is but a sacrifice to vanity.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Observe here, 1. That alms may be given without true love to God, or our neighbour, for God's sake ; they may be given out of mere natural pity to the poor, out of a desire to be well thought of, and well spoken of by men, out of an opinion of merit, and obliging God, or from some other cause, which includes not love either to God or man ; and wherever they are thus given, they profit nothing to salvation. The Greek word for feeding the poor here, signifies to divide victuals in several pieces, and so distribute it amongst the poor. Lord ! what a consideration is this, that a man may do all the external works of mercy, even the highest and most transcendent works, and yet want true love to God and his neighbour. Observe, 2. That as alms may be given, so martyrdom may be undergone without charity, *If I give my body to be burned ;* that is, If I have so much fortitude and courage as to lay down my life for Christ and his truth, which is such an high expression of my obedience to him, as angels are not capable of performing, yet without charity, burning is but a vain glorious blaze ; and instead of sealing the truth with our blood, we seal but our own shame and folly. Observe, 3. The apostle says not, if I be burnt, persecuted, and put to death by others ; but if I give myself to be burned, if I voluntarily and freely offer up myself, not to imprisonment only, but to death itself, yea to the most terrible kind of death, *burning* ; yet if all this be not from a right principle, and sincere end, if all this be without true love to God and his glory, church and truth, it will avail nothing to salvation. Learn hence, That no kind of external sufferings, though ever so grievous, either for the truth of Christ indeed, or for that which a man's conscience judges to be the truth of Christ, is a sure and infallible sign of a gracious state ; a man may suffer for truth, but not for truth's sake, only for interest's sake ; he may suffer from a natural strength and stoutness of Spirit, and not from a spiritual fortitude wrought in him by the Spirit of God. Ah, Lord ! how miserable is it to be burnt with fire here for Christ, and to hear him say afterwards,

Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ! It is indeed a great matter to suffer for Christ, but it is much greater to suffer with such a disposition of heart as Christ requires.

4 ¶ Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Here the apostle enters upon the description and commendation of the grace and duty of charity, and declares several excellent effects and properties of it, namely, *It suffereth long ; and is kind ;* that is, the charitable man is kind to all, patient to all ; he can bear injuries and reproaches very long, without either desiring or endeavouring to revenge them. *It envieth not ;* that is, he envieth neither the power, nor profit, nor preferment, nor applause, nor precedence of any man ; but is well pleased with the happiness of every man, and laments their misfortunes. *Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ;* that is, it suppresses all self-applauding and admiring thoughts, all arrogance in assuming to ourselves, and undervaluing of others.

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ;

That is, charity, or true love to our neighbour, will restrain us from all uncomely deportment towards him ; it will not suffer us to do an ill or indecent thing to any one ; it breaks not forth into violent and ungovernable passions upon any provocations, how just soever, how great soever. *Seeketh not her own ;* that is, her own praise, profit, or pleasure ; it seeketh it not inordinately, it seeketh it not injuriously, either in the neglect of others, or to the hurt of others. Charity is not selfish, but generous. *It is not easily provoked ;* that is, charity is not provoked readily to think, speak, or act unduly, by small injuries or occasions, but beareth, forbear-eth, and forgiveth. *Thinketh no evil ;* that is, of any person groundlessly, but construes and interprets every thing in the best sense ; for lightly to take up an evil report of our neighbour, to think or suspect, much more to believe and report any evil of him, without sufficient evidence against him, is a violation of the royal law of charity.

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ;

Charity rejoices not in any evil done, either, 1. By ourselves in the commission, or after contemplation of it ; or, 2. By others. Lord ! how sad is it when it becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul ! Or, 3. It rejoices not in any evil done to others ; charity suffers no man to be pleased or delighted with any deceit or falsehood spoken of, or done to others, or with any ill stories, or malicious insinuations concerning them, or in any calamity befalling them. *But rejoiceth in the truth ;* that is, 1. Charity is so far from rejoicing, either in the falls or misfortunes of others, that it rejoices when the truth and innocency, the righteousness and equity, of any person or cause is made evident and manifest : A good man rejoices when he sees any suspected for, or charged with iniquity, upon due examination, cleared and acquitted. Or, 2. *Rejoiceth in the truth ;* that is, in men's loving truth, doing justly, and living righteously, according to the rule of

truth, the gospel. Oh ! what a complacency and inward pleasure doth it beget in a good man's mind, when he beholds truth and righteousness, piety and goodness, prevailing in the world !

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity or love has strong shoulders to bear wrongs and injuries with patience, though very hard and grievous to be borne ; without returning evil for evil, it will enable us to forbear one another in love, and not cease to be kind, notwithstanding provocations. *Believeth all things ;* that is, charity inclines a man to believe the best of his neighbour, till the contrary appears ; it interprets every thing in the best sense, and makes the fairest construction of every man's case and condition : Not that the charitable man is the credulous man, and can believe whatever he pleases ; but he believeth all things, so far as either reality or probability, so far as truth, or appearance of truth, will encourage him to do it. A charitable man is very willing to believe that things are, meant as they are spoken, and intended as they are done. Oh ! how uncharitable then, and unjust are they, who believe all is ill, when they know nothing ill ; and think and speak ill of them, in whom they never say any thing but what was good ! It is not sufficient that we do not judge our neighbour maliciously, but we must not judge him ignorantly ; it is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions. *Hopeth all things ;* that is, it is the genius of charity and the character of love, to hope the best of persons and things, so far as there is any ground of hope ; yea, though they carry in them some cause and colour of suspicion : It inclines us still to hope the best concerning men's intentions and actions ; and if our brother be bad at present, not to despair of his amendment, but endeavour his reformation, by all proper means. *Endureth all things ;* that is, it puts up wrongs and injuries, without desiring, much less endeavouring to revenge them ; it causes us to endure provocation with much patience, and extinguishes all inclinations to revenge. Some will conceal their anger, but seek revenge ; their malice is like slow poison, that does not discover violent symptoms, but destroys life insensibly : Others have such fierce passions, that they strike fire out of the least provocations ; they inflame their resentments, by considering every circumstance that will exasperate their spirits ; *But charity beareth all things, endureth all things.*

8 Charity never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

Charity never faileth. Holy love is an everlasting quality and employment ; it shall not fail at death, as other graces do, but be perfected at death : Repentance should accompany us to the gates of heaven, but repentance ceases for

ever in heaven; for no need of repentance where there is entire innocence; faith is swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition: but love is then and there in its exaltation. Thus *charity never faileth*, but all other gifts will fail: prophesying, languages, sciences, and all artificial knowledge, will cease for ever; knowledge itself in heaven shall vanish away: But how vanish? the meaning is, that such knowledge as we have now, shall vanish then; that imperfect knowledge we have now, will cease, and beuseless then; our present knowledge is attained with much labour and study, but it shall be no more difficult to know in heaven than it is for the eye to open and see: The beautiful face of truth shall in a moment be unveiled to us in heaven, and the curtain drawn away by the hand of God, which interposed between us and the light. Again, knowledge of so imperfect a degree, as now it is of, shall vanish away: Here we know what we know by divine revelation, but in part; and we prophecy by inspiration but in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

As the imperfect twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect day: so at death, when that which is perfect takes place, then that which was imperfect shall be done away. Blessed be God for the hopes of that blessed place and state where all imperfection shall cease, especially the imperfection of our knowledge. Alas! here all that we know, either of the word or works of God, is but a part, a little part; and blessed be God that this perfect state doth not succeed the imperfect one, after a long interval (at the resurrection and re-union of the body) but the imperfect state of the soul immediately is done away by the coming of the perfect one; the glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see face to face, and eye to eye. Oh happy and vast difference between the Christian's present and future state! True, he now begins to know, he knows in part here; but verily, what here he knows, is little of that he should know, little of that he might know, little of that others know, little of that he desires to know, and little of that he shall know, when he comes to heaven: then all imperfections shall be done away, when that which is perfect is come.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Here the apostle compares the Christian's imperfect state of knowledge and holiness in this life, to a state of childhood, his perfect state of holiness and happiness in heaven, to a state of manhood. As a child conceives, thinks, and speaks of things suitable to his childish state; but when he comes to manly perfection, and to the full use and exercise of his reason, he then puts away childish conceptions and things: Thus it is with the best of us in this life; like children we conceive and think, we discourse and speak of spiritual things in a confused and imperfect manner; but when we arrive at our state of manly perfection in heaven, we shall have knowledge and all other graces perfected. Learn hence, That Christians must stay for perfect knowledge, till

they come to maturity and ripeness of age; children must not expect to know, what men know: Solomon's knowledge on earth, so famously celebrated, will be but ignorance, compared with the knowledge and enlargements which the saints have in heaven; there, in natural things they shall be exact philosophers, in spiritual things complete divines; all dark scriptures shall be clear to them, all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved; in a word, there they shall know God himself perfectly, though they can never know him to perfection.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly: but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

As if the apostle had said, Now in our minority we see divine revelations, as the prophets did of old in a dark enigmatical manner, and by symbolical representations of things upon the fancy, as in a glass; but then in the adult state of the church we shall see them after the Mosaical manner, in a way more accommodate to human nature, and as it were face to face; we shall see clearly immediately: not by reflection, but by intuition. These adverbs, *now* and *then*, distinguish the twofold state of gracious souls; and shew what they are whilst confined to the body, and what they shall be when emancipated and freed from the body, that clog of mortality which now hangs upon them. Observe here, 1. That our imperfect knowledge of God is set forth by seeing in a glass, because it is a weak and imperfect vision; a glass gives but a weak and languid representation of the face that is seen in it; and because it is a vanishing and transient vision, a man having looked in a glass, presently forgets what he saw there; and because it is no immediate sight, but *mediante speculo*, by the glass of his word and ordinances we see and understand something of God's nature and will; though after all our searchings here to find out what God is, we rather know what he is not, than are able to declare what he is. Observe, 2. That such as have seen God here, as in a glass, in the glass of his ordinances and providences, in the glass of his word and works, shall see him face to face, and fix their eye upon him in heaven to all eternity: When once the pious soul is unsheathed from the body, it glisters gloriously: as soon as the cage is open, this bird soars aloft, and sings melodiously. It is death's office to beat down the partition-wall, a gross earthly body; and then the glorified soul shall have a clear and perfect vision, an immediate and possessive vision, a satisfying and soul-transforming vision, a permanent and eternal vision of the holy and blessed God, which the apostle here calls *seeing face to face*. Observe, 3. How St. Paul, in the latter words of the verse, gives us a plainer expression of that which before he had spoken more darkly and obscurely: *Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known*. Where note, How the apostle changes the person; before it was, *we see through a glass darkly*; here it is, *I know in part*. He had included himself before, in the word *we*; but he doth it more apparently in saying *I*. *Now I know in part*. When so great an apostle acknowledges the imperfection of his knowledge, who can, who dare, boast of the largeness of his understanding? Note farther, The apostle's saying, *Now I know*, intimates, that he had begun his acquaintance with God here, which he expected should be improved and

Perfected in heaven: he that knows not God in part here, shall never know him face to face in glory: Heaven is a place of perfection indeed; but nothing is perfected there, that was not begun here; no knowledge, no holiness will be consummated there, which did not commence and begin here. Observe, 4. When the apostle says, We shall know even as we are known; he means that we shall know God as really and truly, though not so fully and comprehensibly as he knows us; we shall know him in his nature and attributes; then and there will his wonderful clemency be sweetly displayed, his exact justice visibly demonstrated, his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded, all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved, all the mysterious depths of divine counsels fully discovered, to the delightful satisfaction of the admiring and adoring soul, who shall then see as it is seen, and know as it is known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

The design of the apostle in these words is, 1. To inform the Corinthians, that the sanctifying graces of faith, hope, and charity, are far to be preferred before all the forementioned extraordinary gifts of prophecy, miracles, tongues; healing the sick, and raising the dead, not excepted. The least degree of sanctifying grace from the Holy Spirit, is to be preferred, with respect of ourselves, before the largest measures of extraordinary gifts, which are wholly for the good and benefit of others. 2. As our apostle had compared gifts and graces together before, so he compares graces amongst themselves now. Faith, hope, and charity, are set in competition, and the preference given to the last: partly with respect to its present excellency, for charity is the end to which faith and hope are but the means; and partly with respect to its future duration; faith and hope will vanish with this life: Faith will end in sight, and hope in enjoyment; but charity will never be out-dated, but last and flourish when we come to heaven, and be a special ingredient in, and a considerable part of, our happiness there, which consists in the rapturous contemplation of divine love, in loving, praising, admiring, and adoring God, our great Creator, and in loving all whom he loves, and that eternally. Learn, 1. That faith, hope, and love, are abiding graces; they do and must keep house, not only in the church militant in general, but in the soul of every member of the church-militant in particular. Learn 2. That of all those graces, charity is the greatest and most excellent. 1. In regard of its extent, reaching to God, angels and men. 2. In regard of its use, extending to the good of others; whereas faith and hope are particular and private graces. 3. In regard of perfection, as rendering us more like to God. 4. In regard of duration; farewell faith and hope, when we come to heaven; but welcome love: Therefore, the greatest of these is charity.

CHAP. XIV.

Our apostle having in the twelfth chapter acquainted the Corinthians with the wonderful diversity and disparity of spiritual gifts, which the wisdom of God saw then fit to be-

slow upon the church, for the propagation and confirmation of Christianity, and farther declared, that the intent and design of them was no other than the common and universal good; in the thirteenth chapter he recommends to them, and admirably decyphers before them, that great and noble grace of charity, which will render us eminent and useful in the world, which sets off all other gifts and endowments whatsoever, and directs us how to manage them to the best advantages. And here he begins his fourteenth chapter, now before us, with a persuasive to follow and pursue so incomparable a grace and virtue, with the utmost eagerness and vigour, and not to give over till we have perfectly attained it; for thus he speaks:

FOLLOW after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Observe here, 1. The apostle propounds to the Corinthians a threefold object, *charity, spiritual gifts, and prophecy*; charity has the precedency and pre-eminency; the apostle not only prefers it before all other gifts, but before the most useful and excellent graces, even faith and hope; for service and benefit to the church of God it exceeds them all. Next he mentions *spiritual gifts*, such were the gift of tongues, the gift of miracles, the gift of healing, and lastly, *prophecy*: by which we are to understand an ordinary set course of preaching, interpreting, and opening the holy scriptures, which contain a revelation of God's mind and will. Observe, 2. A threefold act recommended, answerable to a threefold objection propounded. An act of prosecution; *Διωκετε*, persecuted and follow after, charity as close as your persecutors pursue and follow after you: It imports a most earnest, vigorous, and vehement pursuit. An act of emulation; *Ζηlete*, Desire earnestly spiritual gifts. An act of election and choice; *Chuse rather that ye may prophesy*, or clearly understand the mind of God yourselves, and have an ability to expound and explain it to others; this will bring most glory to God, most profit to his church, and most comfort to yourselves.

2 ¶ For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries.

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Here observe, 1. That the gift of tongues, or speaking divers languages, was greatly valued and much desired by

some in the church at that time; probably for this reason, because the apostles were very eminently endowed with this gift, the Holy Ghost descending upon them in the shape of cloven tongues: But yet the gift of prophesy, that is, of understanding and interpreting God's will, was clearly the more valuable and desirable accomplishment; for though speaking with tongues created more admiration, and conciliated greater veneration to the speaker, yet prophesying was by far the more excellent gift, and tended most to the edification of the church: It is far better to *do good*, than to appear great; that is most valuable and excelling, which is most advantageous and edifying. Observe, 2. How the apostle enters upon a comparison between the gift of speaking in an unknown tongue, and prophesying or speaking plainly to the church's benefit and comfort: *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, that is, in a language not understood, not explained or interpreted, he speaketh not unto men; that is, not to the understanding of men, for none understand him; but to God only, he alone understands him: And though in the Spirit he speaks mysteries, or the deep things of God, yet all this is not to edification, because not understood by the church. Whereas, he that prophesieth, that is, he that intelligibly openeth and applieth the word of God to his auditors in the congregation, what he speaks conduces exceedingly to their edification and consolation. Here note, That the apostle not only dislikes, but plainly forbids preaching, praying, and all other offices, being performed in the church in a language not understood: So that the practice of the church of Rome in their Latin prayers, is a flat contradiction to this whole chapter, and to the practice of the primitive church, Acts, iv. 24, who lifted up their voice with one accord, and offered up a reasonable service to God: the prayers of the Jewish church were made in the Hebrew tongue; and God gave the gift of tongues to the Christian church, that the apostles might establish the worship of God in every nation, in their own language.*

4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied; for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Observe here, 1. Another argument used by the apostle, to prove the gift of prophesying, that is, of interpreting the holy scripture, to be far more excellent than the gift of tongues separated from the gift of interpretation: He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifies none but himself, because none but himself understands it; but he that teach-

eth, instructeth, and exhorteth others, edifieth the church, or the whole assembly that he speaks in. Observe, 2. The apostle wishes they all had the gifts of tongues, because they were so very covetous and desirous of them; though, alas! rather for their own ostentation than the church's edification; yet he rather desires with Moses, *That all the Lord's people were prophets*; that is, directed and assisted by the Spirit of God, to deliver plainly, and persuasively the will of God to men; for he is the greatest in the church, who is most edifying; and he that prophesieth, edifieth more than he that speaketh all languages uninterpreted. Observe, 3. He amplifies this, by instancing in his own person: *If I come to you speaking with tongues. As if he had said, I wonder whether what you so admire in others would please you in me: Suppose that I, whom God has eminently endowed with the gift of tongues, should come and speak to you in the Arabian language, what good would it do you? What would you be the wiser or better for me, should I make known to you some revelation which I immediately received from God, or open to you some truth which you knew not before, or urge you to some needful duty, or doctrinally expound to you the matters of faith and obedience recorded in the gospel, if either myself for some interpreter did not make what I say intelligible to you, what will it profit you? To deliver the mind and will of God plainly and persuasively to the church's benefit and edification, is much more acceptable to God, profitable to man, and comfortable to ourselves, than to speak with the tongue of men and angels, in a language not understood, or not heard.*

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise you, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.

Our apostle here proceeds to illustrate his former arguments, by a similitude taken from musical instruments; the one used in peace, to wit, the harp; the other in war, to wit, the trumpet; as they are useless, if by distinction their signification is not perceived; for if a man hears not, or understands not the sound of the harp or trumpet, he cannot prepare himself either for the dance or the battle; so if persons in the church do not speak intelligibly, they will nothing edify; it is like beating the air, all in vain, and to no purpose.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the mean-

ing of the voice; I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian: and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye; forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

Here the apostle tells them, that there may probably be as many voices or languages in the world, as there are nations; and every nation understands its own language, and commonly no other: Now, says the apostle, if he that has the gift of tongues, speaks to you in a language which ye understand not, will he not be a barbarian unto you? And if you talk to him in a language he understands not, will you not be barbarians unto him? Verily, it will be just as if two men of two different countries should talk to one another, and neither understand a word of each other. He farther adds, that seeing they were so very desirous of the extraordinary gifts of the spirit, they should seek those gifts especially, by which the church may receive edification and advantage; *Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.* Here note, 1. The noble end which St. Paul directs them to propound in what they desire and design, namely, *The edifying of the church.* The church's edification should be the scope of all her members, especially of all her ministers' wishes and prayers, enterprises, and endeavours: Our first care should be, to lay a right foundation, namely, the doctrine of redemption and salvation, by the meritorious undertaking of Christ Jesus our Lord, the eternal Son of the Father: Our next care, that our superstructure be answerable to our foundation; this being solid and substantial, that must be so too; acquainting persons with the whole will of God, and the whole duty of man: Note, 2. The operation to be performed, and the means to be used, in order to this noble end; *Seek that ye may excel*; that is, passionately desire and endeavour that you may, by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, be eminently qualified for edifying and building the church of God: *Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.* Learn hence, 1. That the edifying of the church, and the improvement of its members in knowledge, faith and holiness, is, and ought to be, the great end which the ministers of God propound to themselves in the use of their gifts, and discharge of their office. Learn, 2. That the edifying of the church being the proper office of the ministers of Christ, they should study to excel in all gifts and graces conducing thereunto, by such means and methods as are proper for that end; namely, by fervent prayer to God for divine illumination and knowledge, by reading the scriptures with great attention and application of mind, by studying other authors in order to that end, by deep meditation, by judicious zealous, and laborious preaching, but especially by holy living. There ought to be a consecration of our lives, as well as of our persons, to the service of God and his church; in this manner, especially the meanest of her ministers, may seek that they may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Observe here, How strongly the apostle pleads the necessity of all public worship, particularly preaching or prophesying, praying and singing, to be performed in a language known and understood by all the congregation: *Let him that speaketh, preacheth, or teacheth, in an unknown tongue, in which he cannot edify others, pray for the edifying gift of interpretation, that others may be edified as well as himself; otherwise when we pray in an unknown tongue, our spirit prayeth, that is, our own gifts are exercised; but our understanding is unfruitful, that is, unto others: If we satisfy ourselves, we cannot edify them.* He resolves therefore to pray with the Spirit, and to sing with the Spirit, that is, with a strange tongue ministered to him by the Spirit; yet to pray with understanding also, that is to pray so as others may understand him, and join with him, and be edified by him. Learn from hence, Both the impiety and absurdity of the church of Rome, in appointing their public offices to be performed in Latin; a language which the common people in France, Spain, Germany, yea, in Italy itself, do not understand; for the Latin tongue is not now the mother-tongue of any nation under heaven: And the council of Trent thunders out an *anathema* against those, that say the mass ought to be celebrated only in the vulgar tongue. Lord! what is, if this be not, to offer the sacrifice of fools? How can this be a reasonable service, which is no better than a sinful taking-God's name in vain? How can their hearts and tongues go along together, who understand nothing which their tongues utter? They neither know the God they pray to, nor yet the mercies which they pray for. Lord! pity the miserable souls in their communion, who erect an altar, and offer up *unknown prayers* to an *unknown God*.

16 Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

Our apostle still goes on arguing, that public prayers ought to be made in a language understood by them that pray. His argument is this, The heart ought to consent to, and agree with, the supplications and prayers presented unto God, and to testify its consent by saying, Amen; but, says the apostle, no man can say Amen to that which he doth not understand, nor be edified by that which cannot be understood. For at the close he tells them, That Almighty God hath given him the gift of speaking more languages than all of them put together, that so as an apostle, he might plant and propagate the Christian faith in and throughout all nations; yet he declares he had rather speak a few words to the instruction and edification of his hearers, than a multitude in a language not understood: The faithful ministers of Christ have such a regard to the end of their ministry, which is the communicating of divine knowledge to the understandings of their people, that they had much rather they should be edified and profited, than their own parts and gifts applauded and admired.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children; but in understanding be men.

As if the apostle had said, My brethren, be not like children in understanding, who prefer gay and gaudy things, which make a fine show, as the gift of tongues does, before things more useful. Thus, do not you chuse what best pleaseth you, but what most profits others. I would have you indeed, in some respects, to be as children, namely, in innocence and harmlessness, in freedom from malice, and all kinds of wickedness; but in understanding be and act as men, as persons of mature judgment, who know what is fittest to be spoken, and best to be done. To be like children in the innocency of our actions is a virtue, but to be like them in the inpotency and weakness of our understandings, is a reproach: *In understanding be men.*

21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Observe here, How our apostle, to take the Corinthians off from their fond admiration of the gift of tongues, tells them, *That in the law*, that is, in the writings of the Old Testament, particularly in Isa. xxviii. 11, it is declared, That because the people of Judah would not be instructed by the plain preaching of the Lord's prophets, therefore he would cause them to be spoken to in an unknown language, namely, by outlandish enemies and armies, whose language they should not understand: from whence he infers, that strange tongues were not given for a sign of any good to be-

lievers, but they were given as a token rather of God's displeasure to unbelievers; insomuch, that by the just judgment of God, their ignorance by this means would be the more increased: But the gift of prophesy serveth not only for the conversion of unbelievers, but for the edification of believers also; therefore, prophesy or preaching intelligibly, is to be preferred in the church before speaking with tongues.

23 If, therefore, the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all;

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

To convince the Corinthians that prophesy was far more excellent than the gift of tongues, the apostle here argues from the absurdity of speaking in the congregation with a strange tongue uninterpreted; *Will they not say ye are mad?* And from the utility and advantage of speaking in a language understood, it convinceth and converted sinners; *He is convinced of all, he is judged of all:* As if the apostle had said, when the church meets together, if all that speak should speak in a strange tongue, what will an ignorant or unbelieving person coming into the congregation think or say? Will he not apprehend you to be mad-men?—Whereas, if all that speak do prophesy and interpret scripture to the edification of the church, in such a case, if an unbeliever comes in, he is convinced, discovered, judged by all them that prophesy, and the secrets of his heart are made manifest to himself; and so falling down, he will adore God, the searcher of the heart, and report, from his own experience, that God is in or among you of a truth. Where, note, Whence prophesying, or preaching of the word has its convincing power, and converting efficacy, namely, from that God who is present in and with his own word; *God is in, or with you of a truth.* When Almighty God quickens the word with his own Spirit, and clothes it with his own power, when he bids it go in his might, and prevail in his strength, the strongest holds of ignorance and unbelief, of obstinacy and rebellion, fall to the ground like the first ripe figs shaken with the wind; when the unlearned or idiot comes into the assembly of the saints, *he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, he falls down and worships.* What is it that works this sudden change? Not the preaching of men, but the power of God: *He will report that God is in you of a truth:* The arm of grace in the ministry of the word is victorious and invincible: The efficacy and success of the word depends not on the parts of a man, but the power of God:

26 How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation? Let all things be done unto edifying.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, the apostle lays down particular precepts for the preservation of decency and good order in the church of God: and, first he advises, when they came together in the public assembly, that if any of them had a psalm or hymn suggested to them by the Spirit of God, to his glory, and the church's edification, or had a doctrine, either for instruction or consolation, or had a strange tongue, or the gift of interpreting tongues, let it be how it will, he exhorts that all be done so as may most and best tend to the benefit and edification of the church, which is the true end of church assemblies. The great end, design, and aim, which those who administer in holy things ought to propound to themselves in all their public administrations, is the church's edification, the people's growth and improvement in knowledge, faith, and holiness: *Let all things be done unto edifying*, that is, let all your public offices be so performed, and in such a manner, as may best conduce to the end for which they were designed.

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Our apostle's next advice for the church's edification, is this, that such as had the gift of tongues should not speak all together, but two or three successively one after another; and that one interpret what was spoken, to the benefit and edifying of the church. But if there were no interpreter present, let him, says the apostle, that only speaks with tongues, keep silence in the church; and let him only speak mentally to himself, and to God in prayer and thanks-

giving. The same advice he gives to them that prophesied; to wit, that only two or three of them should prophesy successively, in order to the church's edification, and that the rest of the prophets should sit still and judge, examining their doctrine by the rule of the word: For, says he, *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*; that is, the doctrines which the prophets deliver, are apt to be judged and examined by other prophets, whether they be agreeable to the word of God or not; or the instinct by which the prophets pretended to be moved at that time to prophesy, is subject to the judgment and censure of other prophets, who are endowed with the same gift. And thus he declares, that all that are prophets, and prophetically inspired, may prophesy, provided it be done orderly and successively, without occasioning disorder and confusion in the church, and so managed, as to answer the great end of the institution; namely, the instruction, edification, and consolation of the church. *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace*: Confusion is so far from being of divine inspiration, that it is hateful to God, who requires that peace and order should be kept and maintained, not only in the church of Corinth, but in all the churches of the saints. That which breaks order, breaks peace; for there can be no true peace without order; and God is not the author of disorder and confusion in the churches, but of peace. Here, by the way, let us observe and note, that speaking and preaching in the public assemblies is limited all along by the apostle to the prophets; *Let the Prophets speak*; not the common people, they were to sit by, it was no part of their business to speak, but to examine what was spoken, by the rule of the word. The authoritative preaching of the gifted brethren, at the call of a private congregation, was no more permitted by St. Paul, than his suffering of women to speak in the church: none but prophets, or persons in office appointed for the work of preaching, were ever suffered to undertake it in the primitive times, and downwards till very lately. Let such as first gave and still give encouragement to the contrary, consider how they will answer it at the bar of God, who is not the author of such confusion and disorder but of peace.

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

A farther rule is here given by the apostle for maintaining decency and order in the public assemblies; namely, that the women should never presume to speak or utter any thing as public teachers in the congregation; no, nor so much as ask any question publicly: Almighty God having, by his law, made subjection (not public instruction) their duty, of which silence is a token. Here observe, That it is not the women's speaking in the public assemblies, when they join with the congregation in singing of psalms and prayer, but their speaking by way of teaching and prophesying.

syng, that is here forbidden. Note farther, that the means of instruction were not denied the women; at home they might put forth questions to their husbands for their own information and satisfaction; but to do any thing like this publicly, was a shame, an indecent thing, both to the church, the husband, and herself. Still observe, How the God of order calls for order, and delights in decency, especially in places where his religious worship is celebrated. He has unworthy thoughts of God, that thinks him either a patron of, or pleased with, any disorder, either in civil affairs or religious services.

36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

These words are looked upon by interpreters, as a smart reflection upon some of the ministers and members of the church at Corinth; who, from an high opinion which they had of themselves and their own management, would not submit to the foregoing precepts, canons and rules, for order and decency in the church of God. What! says the apostle, do you think that you have all the word and will of God? Doth all knowledge of scripture, and resolution of doubts rest in your breasts, and flow out of your lips? Consider, you are not the first church that was planted (Jerusalem was before you) the gospel was sent to you, it did not first come out from you. Whence learn, That all kind of scorn is not always uncomely; men are apt to over-rate themselves and to overvalue their own abilities, as if they had engrossed all knowledge, that all must borrow from their store, and light their candle at their torch. Now in that case, we may, without breach of charity, or blemish of holiness, check pride with derision; and speak them below men who set up themselves above men. Observe next, The apostle affirms, That these rules for order and decency which he had given them, were from the Lord; and he expected and required, that those who esteemed themselves prophets, should observe and obey them as such: But if men will be ignorant, and obstinate in their ignorance, be it at their peril, and let them look to it, do not you regard them: *If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant.*

39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophecy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

For a close of the whole, he exhorts them earnestly to endeavour after the gift of prophesying, and not to forbid the use of the gift of tongues, provided the forementioned rules and directions before given be observed; that so in

their public assemblies all things relating to religious worship be performed with that becoming gravity and decency which may most and best conduce to the glory of God, and the church's edification. Learn hence, 1. That the whole church in general, and every individual member of it in particular, ought to perform all the duties of God's worship in a decent and orderly manner. Learn, 2. That it is the duty of church governors to take care that order and decency be enjoined and observed in the church of God, to the edification of all the members of it. Learn, 3. That they only have authority to make church-orders, whom the Lord has made church-governors. Learn, 4. That such orders as relate to real decency in the worship of God, made and confirmed by the governors of the church, ought to be obeyed and conformed to by the members of the church, for conscience-sake, that all things may be done decently and in order.

CHAP. XV.

The design and scope of our apostle in this excellent chapter now before us, is to establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which some in the church of Corinth at that time denied. This grand article of the Christian faith is here by several arguments defended, the absurdity of the contrary declared, the objections made against it fully answered, and Christian-steadfastness in the faith, and laborious diligence in the work of Christ, urged and enforced to the end of the chapter.

MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Observe here, 1. The subject-matter of St. Paul's preaching to the Corinthians, it was the gospel: *I declare unto you the gospel which I preached*; and particularly the doctrine of the body's resurrection, which was a great point of that gospel which he had preached and delivered to them. Observe, 2. The obedience which many, if not most of the Corinthians had given to the doctrine of the gospel; they heard it, believed it, and embraced it as the truth of God: *Which gospel ye received, and wherein ye stand*; that is, the best and greatest part of you are firm to your former profession, though some are fallen away. Observe, 3. The blessed effect which the gospel had upon those that did believe and receive it: *By it they were saved*; that is, put into a salvable state, brought into the right and only way that leads to salvation. The gospel reveals the object, *Salvation*: it directs lost man which way to arrive at it, assures him that it is attainable, and inclines and encourages him seri-

only to endeavour after the attainment of it. Observe, 4. The condition annexed and required on our part, in order to the obtaining that salvation which the gospel discovers unto us, and that is perseverance; for that is implied in *our keeping in memory what we have received: ye are saved if ye keep in memory.* If ye do not steadfastly cleave to the gospel, and to this grand doctrine of it, the resurrection, our hearing is vain, our believing is vain, our hopes of salvation are vain. *By the gospel we are saved, if we keep it in memory, and practice it; otherwise we have believed it in vain.*

3 ¶ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.

6 After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

Observe here, The apostle's fidelity, 1. In delivering nothing to the church but what he had received: *I delivered to you first of all that which I also received;* either mediately by Ananias, or by immediate revelation from Christ himself. Observe, 2. The principal and fundamental doctrines or articles of faith, which the apostle in his preaching had insisted upon amongst them, namely, the death, the burial and the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *That he died for our sins:* that is, a voluntary sacrifice for our sins, to make an atonement for sin, as the prophets Isaiah and Daniel had long foretold. *And that he was buried:* The dead body of our dear Redeemer was decently buried by a small number of his own disciples, and continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, for a time. That he was buried, is a demonstration of the certainty that he died. *And that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures:* Christ, though laid, was not lost in the grave, but, by the omnipotent power of his Godhead, revived, and rose again from the dead the third day, to the consternation of his enemies, and the consolation of all believers. Observe, 3. How the apostle proves the truth and verity of Christ's resurrection, by ocular demonstration: He is risen, because he was seen alive after his passion; first of Peter, next of the whole college of the apostles, which formerly consisted of twelve; then of five hundred brethren at once in Galilee, whereof some were then alive to testify it; after which he was seen of James, and then of all the apostles. These were all holy persons, who durst not deceive, and who confirmed their testimony with their blood. So that no article of faith, no point of religion, is of more confessed truth and infallible certainty, than this of our Lord's resurrection; and blessed be God it is so, see-

ing the whole weight of faith, hope, and salvation, depend upon Christ as risen from the dead. Behold how great a weight the scripture hangs upon this nail; thanks be to God, it is a nail fastened in a sure place. Our Lord's resurrection is his church's consolation.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

As Christ was seen by St. Paul last of all the apostles, so it is probable he was seen last by him of all persons: We read not of any that saw Christ after St. Stephen and St. Paul, who here reckons himself among those who were eye-witnesses of the risen Jesus; *Last of all he was seen of me also.* Observe farther, The great humility of St. Paul, in styling himself an untimely birth, or a person born out of due time. But in what sense doth he mean that he was born out of due time? *Ans. 1.* Negatively; not that he was as to his spiritual birth born too soon, but rather too late. Alas! he had been too long a proud Pharisee, a formal professor, a fiery persecutor. In this sense he was no abortive, or born out of due time, but rather born too late than too soon. But positively he calls himself an abortive, or untimely birth, 1. Because he was the last of the apostles that was called; the rest were called by Christ whilst here on earth. Paul was called by Christ from heaven after his departure from earth to heaven. 2. Because of the suddenness and violence of his conversion. An abortion is occasioned by some sudden surprise, some strain, or violent motion. St. Paul's conversion was a wonderful, violent conversion, out of the ordinary way and course; he was smitten from his horse to the ground, and lay as one dead in his passage to his new life. 3. Because abortive children are lesser, weaker, and more imperfect children, than those of full growth. As an abortive child is the least of children, so he reckons himself the least of the apostles; and styles himself so in the next verse, where he thus speaks:

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and this grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

Observe here, 1. The profound humility of this great apostle, and how low he was in his own thoughts, he calls himself *the least of the apostles;* nay, not meet or worthy to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of Christ with so much fury and fierceness. Elsewhere he styles himself, *less than the least of all saints:* Not that any thing can be less than the least; but the original being a double diminutive, his meaning is, that he was as little as could be. Oh admirable humility! the more we know of God and ourselves, the more humble apprehensions we shall have of ourselves; a good man's thoughts are always lowest of

himself; the more holiness any man has, the more humility he has. Humility is a great evidence of our holiness, it being indeed a great part of our holiness. Observe, 2. How the apostle ascribes all that he was, wherein he differed from others to the grace of God; *by the grace of God I am what I am*. As we receive our natural being from the power of God, so we derive our spiritual being from the grace of God: if I forbear what is evil, it is from restraining grace: if I follow what is spiritually good, it is from sanctifying grace: Therefore, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy grace be the praise*. Observe, 3. The blessed fruit which the grace of God produced in St. Paul, it caused him to labour, (grace is an active principle) to labour abundantly, to labour more abundantly than all the apostles; not more than all of them put together, but more than any one of them that were his fellow apostles separately considered. Such as receive most grace and favour from God, are holily ambitious to do the utmost services for God. Observe, 4. Lest he should seem to be too assuming, and to arrogate any thing to himself, he adds, *Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. Behold how the holy apostle ascribes the fruit of all his endeavours to the grace of God, to the influences and assistances of the Holy Spirit of grace, exciting him, assisting him, working in him and with him, and succeeding of him in all his enterprizes and undertakings, for the glory of God, and the good of souls: *I laboured, yet not I; but divine grace that went along with me*. Observe, 5. The inference which the apostle draws from the whole: *Therefore, whether it were I, or they, so we preach, and so ye believed*: that is, whether it were I, or any other of the apostles, who laboured most in the preaching of the gospel, the doctrine is the same, namely, That Christ died for our sins, rose again, and will raise us. This is the doctrine which we apostles preached, and which you Corinthians believed and received; therefore why should any of you now stagger in the faith, and disbelieve the resurrection of the body, which is a blow made at the root of Christianity? Alas! what have we to carry our spirits through all the rugged passages and cross dispensations of this life, but only our hopes in reversion, only our hopes of a glorious resurrection, and blessed immortality?

12 ¶ Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Our apostle having asserted and proved the resurrection of Christ by ocular demonstration, by a plentiful testimony of those who saw him after he was risen; and withal informed them that this was the doctrine of the gospel which both he and the rest of the apostles had with one consent preached to them, he from hence infers the certainty and necessity of our resurrection. And because some in the church of Corinth were tainted with the wicked opinion of the Sadducees, who said there was no resurrection; therefore, to strangle this monstrous opinion amongst the Corinthians in the birth, he shews the absurdity of it in these verses before us. His first argument runs thus: If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ the Head is not risen; for if the Head be risen, he will certainly raise up his members. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the pattern and archetype of ours: He did not only raise his body from the grave, but his church with him: For indeed Christ is not perfectly risen, till all his members are risen with him, and raised like him. True it is, that Christ's personal resurrection was perfect when he arose; and it is as true, that all believers arose representatively when Christ arose: But till all believers arise personally, the resurrection of Christ has not received its utmost perfection. His next work is, to prove the certainty of Christ's resurrection, from the manifold absurdities, which would follow upon the denial of it; as, namely, 1. If Christ be not risen, then the apostle's preaching was vain, and their belief of it was vain also. *Our preaching is vain*; that is, we who in our preaching have so strongly asserted Christ's resurrection, as an infallible argument of the divinity of his person and doctrine, have taught you a vain and idle dream: *And your faith in Christ, as risen from the dead, is no better than a fancy*; vain also: seeing the object of it faileth, Christ has risen from the dead. 2. If Christ be not risen, then we are found false witnesses of God; that is, then St. Paul himself, and the other apostles, had given a false testimony of God to the world, in affirming that God the Father had raised up Christ the Son from the dead; which he did not do, if there be no resurrection of the dead. To be false witnesses for men, is a sin of no common guilt; but to belie God, and to be false witnesses for God, is a sin of an aggravated guilt, which the holy apostles could not be supposed to be guilty of. Again, 3. If Christ be not raised from the dead, then we are yet in our sins; that is, under the guilt of our sins, and liable to condemnation for our sins: we are not justified and absolved from them, unless Christ has expiated the guilt of them; and this he has not done, if he be not risen, but remains himself under the power of death; for he was raised again for our justification. Farther, 4. If Christ be not risen, then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished: that is, the dead saints in general, and the holy martyrs and sufferers for Christ in particular, who are fallen asleep are perished utterly, and lost finally if there be no resurrection; martyrs will then be great losers, and martyrdom great folly. Lastly, Then Christians

are of all men most miserable. As if the apostle had said, As those martyrs were errant fools, and perished as such, who laid down their lives for Christ, if they have no hopes of a resurrection, when they shall take them up again; so we Christians that survive, are the wretchedest creatures upon earth, who undergo all the sufferings and hardships of this life, and deny ourselves many comforts and advantages which we might enjoy. If after this mortal life we have no hope, who would care to do well, or who would fear to do ill? Were this believed, none would live so fleshly and sensual a life as those that do not believe the resurrection of the flesh; and none would be so miserable in this life, as the holy self-denying Christian, had he not an hope after death of a glorious resurrection. Learn hence, That true Christians would be more unhappy than any other men, if their happiness were confined to this life only: *We are of all men most miserable.* We Christians are more miserable than any other mortals; and we apostles and ministers more miserable than other Christians, who, like beacons upon the tops of mountains, stand open continually to all storms and tempests raised against us by men and devils.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

Observe here, 1. The resurrection of Christ declared; *Now is Christ risen from the dead.* 2. Our resurrection from his inferred and insured; he arose as the first-fruits of them all that slept. The term of first-fruits is metaphorical, alluding to the oblation of the first-fruits in the Levitical law, Lev. xxiii. 9. These were offered, both as an acknowledgment that the whole crop was God's, and as a pledge and assurance of their enjoying the whole crop from God, and as a mean by which the whole crop was consecrated and sanctified to their use. As sure as the whole harvest follows the first-fruits, so shall the saints' resurrection follow the resurrection of Christ, as an effect follows its proper cause: For Christ's resurrection is the meritorious cause, the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause of our resurrection; and as it is the cause, so it is the pledge, the earnest, and the full assurance of ours. Observe, 3. Christ is called the first-fruits of them that slept; that is, the first-fruits from the dead of them that slept; not as if Christ was absolutely the first that was raised from the dead, for we read of one raised by Elijah, and another by Elisha, and of Lazarus raised by Christ: But these were so raised as to die again; they were not raised to a life of immortality: But now Christ was the first that arose never to die more; the first that arose by his own power, the first that arose to give others a pledge and assurance of their rising after him, and of their rising like unto him; Christ's resurrection is the cause, the pattern, the pledge, the assurance of the believer's resurrection: *Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

21 ¶ For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Here observe, That our apostle, to prove Christ's resur-

rection to be the cause of our resurrection, makes a comparison betwixt Adam and Christ, whom he represents as two originals and fountains, the one of death, the other of life: As by Adam's sin all that are partakers of his human nature die a natural death, so all that are partakers of Christ's divine nature, all that are his spiritual seed and offspring, shall be raised and made alive by him; for the expressions, in Adam, and in Christ, do denote a casualty in both, the one in death; and the other of life; as the death of all mankind came by Adam, so the resurrection of all mankind comes by Christ; the wicked shall be raised by him *officio judicis*, by the power of Christ as their Lord and Judge; the righteous shall be raised *beneficio mediatoris*, by virtue of their union with him as their Head.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Here the apostle answers an objection. Some might say, if Christ's resurrection be the cause of the believer's resurrection, then why did not all believers rise when he arose? The Head being risen, why did not all the members rise with him? He answers, No. God had appointed an order which must be observed; and this order was, that Christ should be the first-fruits of the harvest; that he should rise first from the dead, and then they that are Christ's at his coming to judgment shall rise after him. And then cometh the end; that is, the end of the world, when Christ will deliver up his kingdom to God the Father. What kingdom? his mediatorial kingdom, which, as Mediator, he received from his Father, not his natural and essential kingdom, which, as God, he had with his Father from eternity; this shall never be delivered up, for of this his kingdom there shall be no end; but at the end of the world, Christ having subdued all his and his church's enemies, and put down all rule, authority, and power, both in the world and in the church, he shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to his Father, and reign no longer as Mediator, and as deputed by his Father; but he shall still reign, eternally reign, as God equal with the Father: For his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth to eternal ages. Here note, That when our apostle is setting forth the order in which the saints shall arise, he says nothing of a first and second resurrection, nothing of a first and second coming of Christ to judgment; one to reign on earth a thousand years, and a second to judge all the world. Mention is here made of a general resurrection, when all the saints shall be raised together, but not a word of some being raised before the rest to reign with Christ a thousand years.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Observe here, 1. What sin has subjected the human nature to, and that is death; sin brought mortality into our nature, and the wages of sin is death. Observe, 2. That death is an enemy to humanity, an enemy to the whole race of mankind, both to body and soul, to the righteous and the wicked; to the body, by turning that which is the glory of the creation, in a moment into rottenness and putrefaction; to the soul, by occasioning its separation from the body, towards which it has so strong and affectionate an inclination and desire, as its old companion. Death is also an enemy to the righteous, as it blunts the edge of his desires after heaven, and abates that joy which he should have in the believing thoughts and apprehensions of heaven; and it is an enemy to the wicked, as it is a passage to everlasting misery, by their falling immediately into the hands of the living God, from whose mouth they receive a final sentence to depart accursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Observe, 3. That this enemy is the last enemy: It is so to the children of God; when they have overcome death, they have overcome all their enemies at once, and especially their worst enemy, sin, which they could never overcome before fully. Blessed be God, though death came into the world by sin, yet sin shall go out of the world by death. Observe, 4. This last enemy shall be destroyed, by losing its sting that it cannot annoy, by losing its terror that it cannot amaze, by losing its power that it cannot destroy; and by losing its very being, it shall be finally abolished and destroyed by a resurrection from the dead. Observe, 5. The destroyer of death, this last enemy, is Christ, Hos. xiii. 14. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." Christ has conquered death meritoriously by his satisfaction, victoriously by his resurrection. Observe, 6. The scope and drift of the apostle's argument in this assertion, and that is, to prove the necessity of the resurrection; the argument lies thus, Christ must reign till all his enemies are destroyed, but death is one of these enemies, the last of them which keeps the believer's body from union with his soul, and from communion with Christ, therefore death must be destroyed; and there is no other way to destroy death but by a resurrection from the dead, which is the truth our apostle strongly proves throughout his whole chapter.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Our apostle here proceeds in the argument which he begun at the 24th and 25th verses, that Christ must continue as Mediator to reign till all things are subject to him, and all enemies are subdued by him: This the apostle here proves, because God the Father has put all things and all persons under his Son's feet, as Mediator, himself only excepted:

God the Father having reserved to himself his own sovereign empire, and supreme authority; he being excepted from this subjection himself, who gave it to his Son. And when all things shall be thus subdued to Christ, then his mediatorial kingdom shall be delivered up to his Father, from whom he did receive it; yea, the Son himself, as Mediator and Head of the church, shall be subject to the Deity, that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may be all in all, by a full communication to, and intimate union with all the saints. Learn hence, 1. That the mediatorial kingdom of Christ was given to him by God the Father, as a reward of his sufferings. Phil. ii. 8, 9. "He became obedient to the death, wherefore God hath highly exalted him." Learn, 2. That this mediatorial kingdom was given to Christ only according to his human nature; seeing the human nature only suffered, and the divine nature is capable of no such exaltation or new dominion, he was thus exalted, "Because he was the Son of man." John v. 27. Learn, 3. That during the continuance of this mediatorial kingdom of Christ, the Father judges no man, but commits all judgment unto his Son, giving him full power and authority to punish and reward according to his own wisdom, will, and pleasure; and, as Lord of all, he gives laws to all. Learn, 4. That this mediatorial kingdom, Christ shall certainly lay down; when all things are subdued unto him, the exercise of his kingly power shall cease then; and as Christ is now all in all with relation to his church, the God-head then will be all in all: and Christ himself, as man, will be subject to his Father, as well as saints and angels are subject to him. From those words, *God shall be all in all*, as applied to his saints, we learn, That all the saints shall be abundantly satisfied in heaven, with the fruition of the Deity alone; there is enough in God alone eternally to fill and satisfy all the blessed souls in heaven, without the addition of any creature comfort. God is complete satisfaction to his children in the absence (I must not say want) of all other enjoyments; we want these comforts in our way, we shall want none of them at our journey's end, for there God will be all in all; as in heaven we shall see God, so we shall there eye nothing but God.

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

Expositors do vary exceedingly in the sense and interpretation of this difficult text; some understand it of a sacramental, some of a funeral, and some of a metaphorical baptism or washing. Those who understand it of a sacramental baptizing, say, That the *baptized for the dead*, are those who are baptized upon the article of the resurrection of the dead, and consequently in hope of the resurrection: As if the apostle had said, As for those among you in the church of Corinth, who are baptized persons, and yet deny the resurrection of the dead, I would demand of them why they have in their baptism made a profession of believing the article of the resurrection? Why were they baptized in this faith, if they now renounce it? To be a baptized Christian, and yet deny the resurrection, is a flat and plain contradiction. Others understand it of a funeral washing of the dead corpse, in order to burial; and they say this was done in the belief and expectation of the dead body's rising again. As if he had said, If the dead corpse shall never rise more, to

what purpose do you wash them! Do men give respect where there is no hope? Others will have a metaphorical and allegorical baptism here intended, namely, afflictions, persecutions, and martyrdom: As if he had said, If there be no resurrection of the dead, what benefit will accrue to those that suffer persecution, and death itself, for professing and defending the resurrection of some that are dead, namely, Christ-Jesus, whose resurrection is past; and of the saints whose resurrection is to come? Some, last of all, render the words thus: Moreover, what shall they do that are baptized, for the sake of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they therefore baptized for the sake of the dead? As if the apostle had said, What shall they do which are baptized for the sake of the holy saints and martyrs deceased? Is it not by reason of them, that they take up the profession of Christianity? Yes, surely; the sight of the holiness of their lives, and of their courage and constancy at their deaths, has stirred up many to espouse the same holy religion, and to admit themselves into it, by the sacrament of baptism. The death of an eminent saint made a great number of disciples in those days, and the blood of any holy martyr baptized whole cities: Now to what purpose is all this, *If the dead rise not at all.*

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour.

31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Our apostle is still arguing for the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and seems to speak here after this manner: What folly would it be in us Christians, to chuse a religion that exposes us continually to death and danger? Why should we run the hazard of the loss of estate, liberty and life itself, if there be no resurrection in order to a retribution, when our courage and constancy for Christ and his holy religion shall be acknowledged and rewarded? "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" intimating, that it would be the greatest folly and madness, to suffer the worst of evils, for the sake of Christianity, if all our hopes perish in the grave. He adds farther, That as to himself, *he died daily*; that is, was continually exposed to death, in danger of it, and in a preparation for it; which he would never have been, if he had not an expectation of a glorious resurrection, when all his sufferings and services should be rewarded. And to confirm the truth of what he said, he binds it with a solemn protestation, "I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily;" that is, either I protest by all that joy which I have in your conversion to Christianity, and by all that rejoicing which is found with me for the success of my ministry among you; or else I protest by all that rejoicing which I have in common with you, and all Christians under the heaviest suffering for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord, that I live continually a dying life, perpetually in expectation of death, and preparation for it.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?

Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.

The apostle had mentioned his sufferings in general in the former verses, to testify his belief and hope of a future resurrection. Here he relates one particular kind and manner of suffering; namely, his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*: To what purpose had he that mighty struggle there, and ran such a hazard of his life as that was, if he had no hope of a better life after this, no expectation of a blessed resurrection? *If I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, &c.* A twofold interpretation is given of these words: Some understand them literally and properly, that he did really combat with wild beasts; it being usual in those times of persecution, under Heathenish powers, to cast Christians to wild beasts: The common cry then was, *Christianos ad leones*; Away with the Christians to the lions. But some objected to this interpretation, That the apostle being a freeman of Rome, had no such indignity offered to him; and in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke gives no relation of it; and that the apostle himself, in the catalogue he gives of his sufferings, 2 Cor. xi. makes no mention of it, unless it be comprehended under those general words, *In deaths often.* Others therefore understand the words in a metaphorical sense, *I have fought with beasts*; that is with savage men, with men like beasts in their manners and conditions. And thus some refer this conflict to Acts xix. where we read of his contest with Demetrius, and the silversmiths, about Diana's temple at Ephesus. Others refer it to Acts xiv. when he was stoned at Lystra, and left for dead. But whether we understand it literally or figuratively, the force of the argument lies thus: *If I have undergone such deaths and dangers at Ephesus as I have done, and exposed my life to the utmost hazard, in hopes of an happy resurrection, what profit is all this to me, if there be no resurrection? What got I by such hazards and hardships, if there be no life to come? Nay, if matters be so, it will be more reasonable to say, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* Verily then, sensual fools are the wisest men; and they have the best of it, that gratify their appetites and brutish desires, expecting they shall shortly die, and there will be an end of them. Learn hence, 1. That faith in the resurrection to a future life, encourages us against all the troubles and afflictions of this present life; the hope of future good, is a powerful support under the pressure and burden of present evil. Learn, 2. That upon supposition that there is no happiness beyond the grave, a life of sensual pleasure is not absurd: the epicure's song (*Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas*; Eat, drink, and play, while it is day, for after death no man shall breathe) seems not unreasonable.

33 Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners.

34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not: For some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

Here the apostle advises them to take heed of being corrupted in their manner by such wicked principles as epicures would be ready to instil into them. Ill words draw persons on to ill deeds; therefore, says he, look to your communication and discourse, take heed of debauching your

morals by evil communications; and he backs this exhortation with a forcible motive, because that such sensual principles and lewd opinions shew that men's consciences and reason are in a deep sleep, and that a sottish stupidity has benumbed them: So much is implied in the next words, *Awake to righteousness and sin not.* Here note, 1. That sin is frequently in scripture compared to sleep, and very fitly, because sinners apprehend things no better than men asleep: all their apprehensions of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, of eternity and a life to come, are slight and hovering notions, wild and uncertain guesses; and the most substantial realities are with them but mere fancies. Again, he that is asleep, is void of all care and fear, full of forgetfulness, unapprehensive of dangers; such is the sinner, whilst he continues asleep in sin, secure but not safe. Note, 2. That repentance is the soul's awaking out of the sleep of sin: The soul rouses up, apprehends, and considers its danger, whilst there is a possibility to escape it, and accordingly by repentance, flies from the wrath to come. Note, 3. That it is not enough that we awake from sin; but we must awake to righteousness; we must not only eschew evil, but do good; for a negative holiness saves none: the positive fruits of holiness towards God, and righteousness towards our neighbour, must be brought forth by us, and the duties of both tables be observed of us; this will be an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession: The want of this, the apostle tells the Corinthians here, argued them not to have the true knowledge of God, which was really matter of shame to them; considering the means and advantages enjoyed by them: "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame."

35 ¶ But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

36 Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.

37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Our apostle having fully proved the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in the foregoing part of the chapter, comes next to answer the objections that might be made against the body's resurrection. And, first, That it seems impossible that the dead should rise. To this he answers, That it is as possible for the dead to rise, as it is for corn sown in the earth to be quickened after it dies in the earth; corn sown rots and dies, yet doth not perish by dying, but rises up green and fresh. Thus, the body sown in the grave is not lost; though the parts of the body by death are dissolved, yet they are not annihilated; they are scattered, but they are not perished: They lose not their entity, when they part with their relation to humanity; whatsoever we lose at death, is not lost to God; his knowledge is infinite,

and his power unlimited; it is as easy for God to raise our bodies out of the dust, as to make them at first out of nothing: Therefore, Christ told the Pharisees, who denied the resurrection, That they "erred, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," Matt. xxii. 29. The next objection against the body's resurrection, is this: Who, say the objectors, can describe with what bodies the dead shall arise? Our apostle's answer to this effect, That our bodies shall arise the same in substance, though not in qualities; as corn sown is raised in substance and kind the same, but divers in qualities, coming up with blade and ear, and corn in it, it does not rise in the same figure in which it was sown, but it rises in the same nature in which it is sown: That, which was sown wheat, arises wheat. Thus our bodies sown in the grave, shall arise substantially the same, but different in qualities. Here note, That those who did not believe the resurrection of the body, judged it not only an impossible thing, but an unworthy thing, for God to raise the dead; they looked upon the body as the sepulchre and prison of the soul, and accounted it the soul's chiefest happiness to be delivered from the body, esteeming it a real punishment to the soul to be again re-united to so great a clog as the body is. Therefore to this objection the apostle returns a satisfactory answer, by shewing the happy change which shall pass upon the raised body; declaring, That though it shall arise the same body in substance, yet vastly different in qualities; of a mortal body sown, it shall rise a spiritual body; of a vile body, be made a glorious body.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead.—

St. Paul here proceeds farther to answer the question which the philosophers at Corinth put, namely, With what bodies do persons come forth out of the grave? He tells them, they shall be vastly different in qualities from what they are at present; and this he illustrates by a similitude. As, says he, there is difference in bodies here below, some more excellent, as the flesh of men, others less excellent, as the flesh of beasts and birds, and as there is a difference between celestial and terrestrial bodies, among themselves, one excelling another in glory, as the sun excels the moon, and one star excels another; so will it be in the resurrection, the bodies that rise will vastly differ from those that died. Here note, That all this is to be understood of the resurrection of the righteous; since it is their bodies alone that shall undergo this happy change, which in the next words the apostle describes:

—It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ;

43 It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power :

44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.—

Here the apostle gives a fourfold instance of the body's differing qualities in the resurrection, *It is sown in corruption*, that is, it is here a frail, mortal body, subject to putrefaction, but when raised, shall be *incorruptible*, that is, never more subject to death or dissolution. It is here a vile body, subject to deformity and dishonour, and when sown or laid in the grave, is loathsome and unlovely ; but shall be *raised in glory*, a bright and beautiful body, shining like the sun in the firmament of the heavens. It is thought we shall rise in a full and perfect age, in full strength, activity, and vigour ; and were our bodies more heavily, they shall then ascend and descend like angels. Again, *It is sown in weakness* ; that is, it is subject to weakness by labour, to decays by age, to impotency and wastings by diseases ; and when it dies, it appears an impotent piece of clay. But it shall be *raised in power* by God's power : it shall be raised a powerful body ; no more impotent, weak, or feeble ; but strong and active, vigorous and nimble ; never subject more either to weariness or weakness. Lastly, *It is sown a natural body*, an animal body, a body suited to this lower sensible state, in which we live at present ; and when it dies, it is sown in the grave, like the body of a beast. But it shall be *raised a spiritual body*. Mark, he doth not say it shall be changed into a spirit, but into a spiritual body ; a body it shall remain still, but spiritualized. It is probable that our bodies will then be aërial, and thin and light, more suited to the nature of the soul, as active as fire, as fine and thin as the air. More particularly note here, That the raised body will be a spiritual body in a threefold respect. 1. As it shall always be subject and serviceable to the spirit. Here the soul is subject to the body ; the soul must go the body's pace ; but at the resurrection the body shall be everlastingly subject to the soul or spirit, and for that reason it is called a spiritual body. 2. It may be called a spiritual body, in regard of the great strength and activity with which the body shall be then endowed ; spirits are strong, and so is every thing that is spiritual. The devil is called a spiritual enemy, because he is a powerful enemy. Thus our spiritual bodies will be strong bodies ; and strong had they need to be that they may be able to bear that *exceeding weight of glory*, as the apostle calls it, 2 Cor. iv. 17, which would crush our bodies under it, were they not made strong to bear it. 3. It is called spiritual, because it will then need no natural helps to support it ; as meat, drink, sleep, and clothing. We shall want these no more than the angels want them, being immediately supported by the power of God, as they are. Thus it is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body ; not attenuated into a spirit but still a body ; a real, but spiritual body. The body after the resurrection shall be true flesh, but spiritualized, rarified and refined ; it shall not lose any perfection which it had, but gain many perfections which it had not. Hail, Hail happy day, when soul and body shall be re-united, and the happiness of both com-

pleted ! How will the soul then bless God for that body which was here its instrument and assistant in the service of God ! And how will the body then bless God for such a soul, which was so careful to secure an interest in that happiness which it was created for, and made capable of ! Then will full glory be procured into the soul ; and when it is a second time married to the body, it shall have a greater degree of glory than ever it had.

—There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

46 Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterwards that which is spiritual.

47 The first man is of the earth, earthy ; the second man is the Lord from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle draws a parallel between the two Adams, the first man and Christ ; they were two roots and distinct fountains, from whence all life did spring and flow ; all natural life from the first Adam, all spiritual life from Christ the second Adam : " The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Observe, 2. The apostle compares the animal life we live by the union of our souls and bodies, with the spiritual life we live by the union of our souls with Christ. In point of dignity and real excellency, the spiritual life is far before the natural ; but in point of priority the natural life is before the spiritual : " First that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual." Observe, 3. What the pedigree and original of man was and is ; *He is of the earth, earthy*. Earth is the original of man, the matter out of which his form was produced....Hence " the earth is called his earth." Psalm cxlvi. 4. " His breath goes forth, and he returneth to his earth." Observe, 4. As believers have borne in their bodies here on earth the image of the first Adam ; so in the resurrection their bodies shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam ; that is, be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. This is the highest degree of dignity and honour that an human body is capable of. Those bodies which in their formation were of dust and clay, and which in their dissolution are no better than a lump of corruption, when the grave delivers them back again, shall be shining and excellent fabrics, " bearing the image of Christ the heavenly Adam." Then will the saints' bodies be absolutely and everlastingly freed from all natural infirmities, from all accidental deformities, from all wants and necessities, and shall never more be subject to.

death, that formidable adversary of human nature. Oh blessed hour! when both soul and body shall live immediately upon God, and act freely and delightfully for God, and be for ever satisfied in the full fruition and final enjoyment of God.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

By flesh and blood here, we are to understand our bodies in their present natural, corruptible and mortal state. Such flesh and blood as ours is at present, unchanged and unclothed with its heavenly body, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; that is, it cannot possibly enter into heaven, and bear the weight of that glory which will there be put upon it. Corruption, or nature subject to corruption, *cannot inherit incorruption*; that is, our corruptible bodies cannot enter into an incorruptible heaven. Note here, Another argument produced by the apostle, to prove the necessity of the resurrection, or of raising and new-moulding the body into a spiritual condition; because our natural body, till it be made spiritual, cannot bear the presence of God in heaven; it must be fitted for that glorious place and state, before it be brought into it: by a change of qualities it must be spiritualized, purified and immortalized, or it can never bear that weight of glory which is prepared for the saints in that glorious kingdom.

51 ¶ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound,) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Here our apostle answers a third objection: Some might say, What shall become of those who shall be found alive at Christ's coming? He answers, they shall not die or sleep, but yet shall undergo a change as well as those that rise from the dead; these shall have flesh and blood changed into spiritual bodies as well as they, and of mortal be made immortal, of corruptible become incorruptible, and all this in a moment of time. Christ's powerful voice will be like a trumpet, calling men together, and the dead shall be raised, and living saints changed into an incorruptible state.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Observe here, The identical expressions used by the apostle: He doth not say, corruptible must put on incorruption, and mortal must put on immortality, but this corruptible and this mortal, to shew the identity and sameness of it. I believe the resurrection of this body, said the primitive Christians. Every man at the resurrection shall receive the same body that now he hath, and be the same person that now he

is. Though he be not in every consideration what he was yet he shall be who he was. If the same body that falls be not raised, it is not a resurrection, but a new creation. Indeed it is both unreasonable and unjust, that a person should sin in one body and suffer in another; or serve God in one body, and be glorified in another. Job was clear in the belief of this, chap. xix. 26, 27. "In my flesh shall I see God, and mine eyes shall behold him." *I shall see God*, this points out the reality of the resurrection; and *with these eyes behold him*, this denotes the identity of the resurrection; that the same body shall rise again. The resurrection is not a creation of new bodies, but only a restitution of the old ones.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death! where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Here observe, 1. The happy condition of believers in the glorious morning of the resurrection, when their corruptible bodies shall be made by the power of Christ incorruptible and immortal: *Then shall death be swallowed up in victory*; that is, be overcome for ever, never to destroy or hurt any more, or to have the least power over the body for ever. The conqueror of all flesh is now fully conquered, and the spoiler of mankind finally spoiled. O death! thou wert once a victorious conqueror, an universal conqueror, slaying not thy thousands and ten thousands only, but beyond number: from the infant to the aged, from the dunghill to the throne, sparing neither age nor sex, neither great nor small, neither sacred nor profane: But the Captain of our Salvation having entered into the grave, the territories of death, the king of terrors, has there encountered, disarmed, and destroyed this victorious conqueror; *death is swallowed up in victory*. Some read it, Death is swallowed down, death is drank up at a draught: Christ called his sufferings, by which he obtained victory over death, *a cup*; and as death is drank up, so mortality is swallowed up, 2 Cor. v. 4. blessed be God, beyond the grave there is neither death, nor any thing like death, neither death nor mortality. The one is abolished, the other *swallowed up of life*. Observe, 2. How the apostle, in the name of all believers, triumphs, and holily insults over death, the last conquered enemy. He laughs at it to the very face with a pious scorn and holy derision! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" As if a man having disarmed his enemy, should say, Now, Sir, where's your sword? where's your pistol? Thus the believer; O death thou thoughtest to pierce, to pain, to poison us with thy sting; but *where is now thy sting*? Thou thoughtest thyself a conqueror, but behold thou art conquered. Where is now thy victory? Blessed be God for these songs of victory and triumph, which the Captain of our Salvation has put into the mouths of all those that fight under his exalted banner.

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Observe here, 1. Death hath its sting. A sting has a

threefold property; to pierce, to pain, and to poison: "All which are applicable unto death. Observe, 2. Death's sting is sin, or death has its sting upon the account of sin: Sin, like a sting, pierces; it pierces us in its guilt; it pierced Christ in its punishment. The soul which no weapon can reach, sin can wound. As a sting, it paineth, as well as pierce; Judas was so pained with it, that in the height of horror, he hanged himself, in hopes of ease. And as a sting it poisoneth; sin is a deadly poison, pleasant in the mouth, bitter in the belly, baneful in the end. So strong a poison is sin, that nothing could expel it but the blood of Christ. Observe, 3. Death comes to a believer without a sting. Behold! Christ became obedient unto death, that he might unstring death. Death shot its sting in our Saviour's side, there left it, and there lost it: It is not now unto any of his members an hurting, but an healing serpent; there is now no venom, no malignity in it. Observe, 4. That as sin is the sting of death, so the strength of sin is the law. Not as if the law did encourage a man to sin, to strengthen him in sinning; for it prohibits sin under the severest penalties, and condemns the sinner to the pit of hell: but the law gives life or adds strength to sin. 1. By the curse and obligation of it, binding the sinner under the guilt of sin to the judgment of the great day. Thus the law strengthens sin, by putting into it a condemning power. 2. By the irritation of the law: Sin takes occasion by the law, and by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful; when lust finds itself restrained, then, like a river that is stopt, it rises and foams, and rebels against the law of the mind, and fetches in all its force to rescue itself from that sword which heweth it in pieces. 3. By the conviction and manifestation of the law, laying open sin to the conscience of the sinner, and shewing him that God is all eye, to see, and all fire, to consume, every unclean thing. Thus the law gives sin its strength, and death its warrant, to arrest and execute us. Ah! wretched and miserable sinner! upon whom, together with death, the weight of sin and the curse of the law fall together; which woundeth deep, and presseth low, even to the lowest hell, unless thou canst say truly, what the apostle doth triumphantly, in the next verse:

57 But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory—

Over sin, death, and the law.

—Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is, through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe here, 1. An enemy encountered, death; death armed by sin, and strengthened by the law. This is often a surprising enemy, an amazing enemy, a spoiling and destroying enemy, an inevitable and unavoidable enemy. Observe, 2. Victory over this enemy declared; the destruction of death, as to its terror and power; Death is overcome. But how? *Non ut ne-sit* but *ut non ob-sit*: not that it should not be, but that it should not hurt.—Death has lost its sting, that it cannot annoy; it has lost its terror, that it cannot amaze: it has lost its power, that it cannot destroy. Observe, 3. The victors or conquerors over this enemy, who are first Christ, and then all that are Christ's, all that harvest of which Christ is the first-fruits. Observe, 4. The triumph proclaimed, "Thanks be to God,

that giveth us the victory." From the whole learn, That all believers are victorious over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ. They may triumph over death through Christ, because he has disarmed it by his death and satisfaction, he has destroyed it by his resurrection; and Christ's victories become the believers, by participation and communion with him. As they communicate with him in the value of his satisfaction, so they communicate with him in the virtue of his resurrection. Let us therefore triumph with the apostle, and say, *Thanks be to God, with the prophet, awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.* Thus victory was won by Christ, it was won by us; it was dear to Christ, it is cheap to us; We overcome, but it is by the blood of the Lamb. Let us therefore, living and dying say, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Here our apostle concludes this chapter, and closes his discourse on this great subject, the doctrine of the body's resurrection, with an exhortation to duty, *Be ye steadfast*, that is, in the faith of the gospel in general, and in the belief of this particular article of our Christian faith, the resurrection of the dead. *Unmoveable*: that is, be not moved by any temptations or tribulations, either from the faith and hope of the gospel, or from obedience to the gospel. Let not fear of the cross of Christ make you weary of the yoke of Christ: *Always abounding in the work of the Lord.* Here note, That the more steady and steadfast any man is in the belief of a blessed resurrection, the more forward and zealous, the more active and industrious will he be in the service and work of God. "Forasmuch as your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:" that is, your painfulness in the service of God shall be plentifully recompensed by him at the resurrection of the just. Where note, 1. The nature and quality of the service or work of God declared; it is a labour; the vast circumference of a Christian's duty makes it so; the curious and exact manner in and after which every duty must be performed makes it so: but the greater their labour is on earth, the sweeter will their rest be in heaven. Note, 2. The reward that sweetens this labour, *It shall not be in vain*, there is the transcendency of the reward; *Forasmuch as ye know*, there is the certainty of it. The Christian's services for Christ shall be certainly and transcendently rewarded by Christ in another world. His labour is finite, his reward is infinite. There is no more proportion between a Christian's labour and reward, than betwixt time and eternity. O infinite glory, the reward of our poor labour!

CHAP. XVI.

Our apostle in this concluding chapter of his excellent epistle, gives the Corinthians several useful directions for their acceptable performance of some needful duties; and then shuts up the whole with particular

salutations to them, and with his hearty wishes for a multiplied increase of all spiritual and temporal blessings upon them.

NOW concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whosoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring you liberality unto Jerusalem.

4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

The first duty which the apostle here directs the Corinthians to, is the making a collection for the poor; and particularly, for them at Jerusalem, who were now in great straits, by reason of a famine which was then and there amongst them, as some expositors affirm. He advises, that on the Lord's day every one should lay something by, as God had prospered him, that there might be no need of farther collections when he came: And that the charity might be distributed according to their pious intentions, he tells them they shall send it by messengers of their own; and that if they judged it meet and needful, he would accompany the bearers of their charity, and assist in the distribution of it. Here note, 1. The great duty which the apostle directs unto *care of, and provision for*, the poor saints at Jerusalem. To relieve the poor members of Christ, especially such as suffer for his name's sake, is a necessary, yea, important duty. We evidence our love and affection to the Head, by our pity and compassion to the members. The charitable contributions of such churches as are in and under better circumstances, towards those that are in worse, especially if in want, "is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing unto God," Phil. iv. 18. Note, 2. The time when he advises them to make this charitable collection for the poor; *Upon the first day of the week*, which was the day of their public assemblies, the day upon which our Lord rose again from the dead. Divines, both ancient and modern, do from hence argue for the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week: It is evident that this was the day on which the Christian churches constantly assembled, to perform their religious worship, to read the scriptures, to preach the word, and celebrate the Lord's Supper; and it was called by them the Lord's Day. Upon this day the apostle orders the collections to be made for the poor; and all Christians, in compliance with this precept, did offer their alms upon that day. Learn hence, That works of charity and mercy, though needful and acceptable every day, yet are the proper duties of the Lord's day. That being a day separated and set apart for sacred works, of which charity is a special part. Add to this, that the day itself doth contain a special motive in it to excite and enlarge our charity, it being the day

in which we were begotten to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, of an inheritance incorruptible, and the day upon which we partake of our Lord's most precious body and blood. We having, therefore, received spiritual things so plentifully from Christ, ought to be the more ready to impart of our temporal things to distressed Christians. Note, 3. The apostle bidding every one to lay by something of his store for the relief of others, intimates to us, that God has given unto every one of us a special, proper, and personal right to what we do enjoy. To have all things common, would run all things into confusion. The apostle directing the Corinthians here to a constant use of their charity every Lord's day, in making collections for the poor, doth suppose that they had something of their own to give. Almighty God doth keep up the eighth commandment in full force and strength, as a fence and hedge about the worldly estates of men; and he that goes about to break this hedge, a serpent shall bite him. If there be no such thing as property, how shall we exercise charity? Note, 4. The rule which St. Paul directs the Corinthians to observe and follow in the distribution of their charity; namely, to lay it by in proportion for others, as God had blessed and prospered them. The good which we do, must be proportionable to what we receive. God will not accept of a little, when he has given us an ability to do much: we must always relieve the wants of others as we are able. Such as have ability ought to abound in all kinds of charity; they are to add charity to charity, one way of charity to another, and one work of charity to another; otherwise, though they may do a good work, yet they are not rich in good works; "Let every one lay by in store, as God hath prospered him." Note, 5. How desirous the apostle was that the Corinthians should receive all possible satisfaction in the prudent distribution of their collected charity. He proposes to them to chuse messengers of their own to carry their contributions: he proffers to give them letters of recommendation to the saints at Jerusalem; nay, if need require, and they desire it, he is ready to go himself upon this charitable errand. So ready are the ministers of God upon all occasions, to contribute their utmost endeavours to promote the charitable relief of the poor members of Jesus Christ: *If need be, I will go also.*

5 Now will I come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia. For I do pass through Macedonia:

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Observe here, St. Paul acquaints them how he had laid

his business, ordered his stay and station where he was, and designed afterwards to come and winter with them, and not to see them in passage only. From whence we learn, That a wise contrivance of our own business, of our course of labour, and of what we design to do, is very lawful, provided it be done with submission to the will of God. The apostle declares what he had in his intentions contrived, whither to go, where to stay, how long to continue; but adds, *If the Lord permit.* All was with submission to the wisdom and will of God. Farther he informs them of his present intentions to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost, because God had opened there unto him a great door for the propagation of the gospel, and had abundantly blessed his labours to the good of many. But there were many adversaries of the truth there, which made his stay longer at Ephesus both necessary and unavoidable. Learn thence, That the great success of the gospel is usually attended with many adversaries and great opposition. The devil stirs up all the rage and fury he can against the professors, but especially the preachers of the gospel: But where the devil is most angry, we may hope we have done most good; that ought to encourage us to stay in our place, though our difficulties are many, and our discouragements great. "I will tarry at Ephesus, where a great door is opened to me, though there are many adversaries."

10 ¶ Now, if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as also I do.

11 Let no man, therefore, despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

Observe here, 1. Though Timothy was a young minister, and St. Paul an aged apostle, yet doth he bespeak the church to pay respect unto him as to himself, he being a minister of the gospel as well as himself; though far inferior to him in years and abilities. None of the faithful ministers of themselves, but content, yea, desirous, that all their fellow-brethren should share with them therein; for all men pretend to a share in reputation, and do not love to see it monopolized by a single person; and every wise and good man rejoices when that respect is given to others, which is justly due and payable to their worth and merit. Observe, 2. How affectionately this aged apostle recommends Timothy to the church's tender care, as well as to their deserved respect: *See that ye may be without fear;* that is, without fear of disturbance from the factions that were amongst them at Corinth; see that he be not exposed to any trouble of danger from any party whatsoever. *Let no man despise him;* either because of his youth, or his bodily weaknesses and infirmities, or for any other cause whatsoever. *But conduct him forth in peace,* bring him on his way towards me, and provide for the necessities of his journey. Oh! how happy is it when the ministers of Christ are thus careful of and solicitous for the welfare of each other, as St. Paul here was for Timothy!

12 As touching our brother Apollos,

I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Here again observe, 1. How respectfully this great apostle speaks of Apollos, an inferior minister in the church of Corinth. Our brother Apollos. Nothing better becomes the governors and pastors of the church, than humility and condescension, sincere love and affection, a due deference and regard towards those who are under-labourers in our Lord's vineyard, to own and treat them as brethren, co-workers and fellow-helpers with them. God has not made his ministers lions to tear one another, nor bulls to gore each other; but shepherds to watch over, and nurses to cherish one another: *Our brother Apollos.* Observe, 2. How St. Paul, though a dignified person, a great apostle, left Apollos, an inferior minister of the gospel, to judge for himself, whether he had best go to Corinth, or forbear; "I desired him to come to you, but his will was not to come;" He did not suspend him, or silence him for not obeying the voice of an apostle, but lets him take his choice. There may be, and sometimes are, particular cases and circumstances relating to ourselves and our people, (as about going from them, or continuing with them) which none can adjust and determine so well as ourselves. Perhaps Apollos here had greater and stronger reasons for his refusing, than St. Paul had for his requesting him to go to Corinth: However, the great apostle only desired him to go; not censuring him for his denial, but leaving him to the determination of himself, whose will was not at all to come to them at that time. Observe, 3. What might probably be the reason why Apollos had no inclination to go to Corinth at this time, no, not at the solicitation of St. Paul himself: Perhaps it was because he would not encourage or give the least countenance to a faction which was there begun under the authority of his name, 1 Cor. i. 12. Some said, *I am of Apollos.* A pious and prudent minister of Jesus Christ seeks not his own applause, or his people's admiration; but what he does is with a special respect to their edification in holiness, for preserving unity, and promoting love among each other. Afterwards, when St. Paul had by his epistle allayed those heats, and healed those divisions which prevailed amongst them, we find Apollos did return to Corinth, and was no doubt very acceptable to them, and serviceable amongst them.

13 ¶ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Three duties are here exhorted to, namely, watchfulness, steadfastness in the faith, and holy fortitude and courage. 1. Watchfulness, a necessary and daily duty; we cannot be safe one moment without it; something we must watch over, something we must watch against, and something we must watch for. We must watch over our thoughts, our words, our actions; we must watch against all sin, all appearance of sin, all temptations to sin, all occasions of sinning; we must watch for all opportunities of glorifying God, all opportunities of doing good to others, all opportunities of receiving good from others. 2. Steadfastness in the faith: Perseverance in the faith of Christ, and steadfastness in his holy religion, is the great and

indispensable duty of every Christian that has due regard to his soul's salvation: *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.* 3. Christian fortitude, and holy courage; *Quit yourselves like men, be strong:* Where we have the Christian's spiritual enemies supposed and implied, sin, Satan, and the world; and his duty declared, and himself encouraged to play the man, in opposing or contending with, and striving against them. Verily, a Christian, above all men, needs courage and resolution: he can do nothing as a Christian, but it is an act of valour; it requires much more courage to be a Christian, than to be a captain. Alas! how many of the valiant swordsmen of the world have shewn themselves mere cowards, who have come out of the fields with victory, and banners displayed, but after all lived and died slaves at home, slaves to their base lusts! It requires more prowess, more bravery and greatness of spirit to conquer ourselves, than to command an army of men: Therefore, *quit ye like men, be strong.*

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

Our apostle having, in the beginning of this epistle, reproved the Corinthians for their uncharitable schisms and unchristian divisions, he concludes his epistle with this excellent rule of advice, To do all things in love, one for, and one towards another. Where a true principle of Christian charity prevails amongst the members of a church, it will cast out selfishness, pride, envy, and division, and keep them from rash censuring, despising, and abusing one another, and also from separating from the communion of each other. The sum of all the commandments, both towards God and towards our neighbour, is love; it is not praying, hearing or receiving at the Lord's table, which is the fulfilling of the commandment, but when these duties are done in love; and we may do many things commanded towards men, yet if we do them not in love to men, we do nothing as the Lord commanded; therefore, *let all things be done with charity.*

15 I beseech you, brethren: ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints:

16 ¶ That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

Observe here, 1. The honourable mention which St. Paul makes of Stephanas and his house; they were the first-fruits of Achaia; that is, the first there converted to Christianity: It is a great honour to be in Christ before others: Happy they that come in at the call of Christ, even at the last hour; but thrice happy those that come in at the first, who are the first ripe fruits unto God. Observe, 2. What good proof and evidence Stephanas gave of the sincerity of his early conversion: *He addicted himself to the ministry of the saints;* that is, he was very forward to assist the poor saints with his estate and labour. There is no better evidence of our interest in Christ, than an entire affection, and operative

compassion towards all our fellow members in Christ for grace's sake. Observe, 3. The great deference and regard, the special respect and honour which was due, and is here commanded to be paid to Stephanas, for his ministering to the poor saints that were in want: *Submit yourselves unto such;* that is, give reverence and honour to them, and to all such as are alike unto them, who laboured with the apostle in the furthering of the gospel.

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

It is very probable that the faithful in the church of Corinth did send these three persons, namely, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, to St. Paul, at this time at Ephesus, to acquaint him with the state of the church, the rents and schisms that were amongst them; and to desire the interposition of his authority, and the exercise of his apostolical power, in order to the healing of those unhappy breaches. Now, says the apostle, I was glad of the coming of these men whom you sent, with your letters of inquiry to me; for that account of your affairs which was lacking on your part in your letter, they have supplied; I am glad, I say, for they have refreshed my spirit with their presence and discourse, and will at their return refresh yours also; therefore *acknowledge ye them that are such,* own their services, and honour them for the same. There is a tribute of double honour, respect and reverence, due and payable to such as labour in the church's service, even unto weariness, and are willing to spend and be spent in such services as they are capable of, for the benefit of the church in general, or any member thereof in particular.

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

21* The Salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.

Here our apostle closes his epistle with several salutations to the Corinthians, from the churches of Asia, from Aquila and Priscilla, and from the church in their house; that is, from their Christian family, or from the Christian assembly which used to meet in their house for the worshipping of God. Happy that family-governor, who has a church in his house, with Aquila and Priscilla: who worships God with all his house, as did Cornelius; who with his household serves the Lord, as did Joshua; who commands his children and his household after him, as did faithful Abraham. Observe, 2. The nature and manner of his salutation; *They salute him in the Lord:* that is, with a spiritual affection, for the grace of God that is in you, and wishing

you an overflowing stream of spiritual blessings from Christ the fountain. Next, he wills them to salute one another with an holy kiss, a kiss of peace and charity, with which Christians in those times, and according to the custom of those countries, used to salute one another; this was not then a wanton, but an holy kiss, in which they had chaste and holy thoughts; yet afterwards, the piety and purity of the church degenerating and declining, it was thought fit and convenient to lay this kiss of charity aside, which was used in the public assemblies at the celebration of the holy communion. That which is innocent in itself and pious in its first intendment, may in time fall under such abuse, as to cause it to be wholly laid aside. Lastly, He adds his own salutation with his own hand. It is generally believed, that the apostle employed some person to write his epistles over, which he sent abroad unto the churches; yet that he might prevent fraud and forgery, and that they might know which were his own, he used to subscribe his salutation and apostolical benediction with his own hand, which was well known unto them.

22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.

That is, If any man do either oppose Christ and his gospel, or apostatize and backslide from his holy profession, and thereby discover he had no sincere love for Christ, let him be accursed till the Lord comes to judgment: and when he comes to judgment, let him without repentance lie under a dreadful, yea, an eternal curse. Observe here, How that those who do not sincerely love our Lord Jesus, are under the heaviest and bitterest of divine curses. Note, 1. The ground or cause of this curse: the not loving of Jesus Christ: He doth not say, If any man hate Christ, or reproach and blaspheme him, or persecute and injure him; but, if he doth not love him. The bare want of this affection to Christ, is enough eternally to separate us from Christ.—Note, 2. The nature of this curse; *Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha*. The apostle pronounces the curse in two languages, Greek and Syriac, to denote both the vehemency of his own spirit in speaking, and the certainty of the thing spoken; or perhaps to shew, that men of all nations and

languages who love not Christ, are under a curse, and that they are deservedly cursed among all nations. The Greek word *Anathema*, signifies *execrable*; the Syriac word, *Maran-atha*, is a compound of *Maron Lord*, and *Atha he cometh*. These words were used anciently in the most dreadful sentence of excommunication; as if they had cited the person to the tribunal of Christ at his coming to judge the world, or left him bound under the curse of that sentence until the coming of Christ. Note, 3. The extent of this curse: *If any man*; As if he had said, Let him, be who he will, that loves not Christ, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, rich or poor, young or old, prince or peasant, king or beggar, who have opportunities to know Christ, and yet do not love him, let him be accursed by him to eternal ages; let him be fully separated from the society of Christians here in this world, and from all fellowship and communion with Christ finally in the world to come. The sum is this, That those who love not our Lord Jesus Christ, much more those who wilfully hate and oppose him and his holy laws, are accursed persons in this life, and devoted to destruction here; but when our Lord shall come to judge the world at the last and great day, they shall be accursed more openly and solemnly; when they shall stand before that impartial Judge of the world, they shall receive from his mouth a final malediction, an irreversible execration, which shall be immediately succeeded with the anguish and torments of eternity.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Observe here, Our apostle's valediction; it is a benediction: He takes his farewell of them with prayer for them; *The grace, or gracious favour, of Christ be with you*, and multiply all blessings, both spiritual and temporal, upon you: I am sure I love you all in Christ Jesus, and for his sake. Happy is it when ministers can take their farewell of their flocks in this manner, with fervent supplications for them, and with solemn, yet serious protestations of the fervour of their love, and the ardency of their affection towards them. *Amen*.



THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE
Corinthians.

The occasion of St. Paul's writing this second Epistle to the Corinthians, was to vindicate his person from divers imputations which were charged upon him by the false apostles, and to defend his ministry and apostleship against some that sought to bring both himself and that into disgrace and contempt: Such ministers as study, and seek that they may excel to the edifying of the church, must expect to encounter with the violent opposition, and virulent imputations of men of perverse minds, who either cannot, or will not, do so well themselves.

Our great apostle here was charged by the false apostles with inconstancy, in promising to come to Corinth, and not coming; with pride and imperiousness, with vanity and vain-glory, in reference to the incestuous person; they represented him as contemptible in his person, as despicable in his ministry. He therefore confutes, yea, and confounds his adversaries by a new and unusual way of arguing; namely, by boasting of his sufferings, glorying in them, and giving a large catalogue and long inventory of them; he displays his calamities, blazons his crosses, vindicates his person and authority from contempt, clears himself from the charge and imputation of levity and vain-glory, by rehearsing the good services he had done, and the great sufferings he had undergone, for the sake of Christ, and his holy religion. Whence we learn, That it is neither unchristian or unseemly to enlarge upon our own actions and sufferings, when there is a great and necessary occasion so to do, namely, when the glory of God, the credit of our holy religion, and a just vindication of our own integrity and innocency, doth require it, and call for it.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia;

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The writer of this epistle described by his name, *Paul*; by his office, An apostle of Jesus Christ, with the manner how he obtained this office of an apostle, namely, *by the will of God*: it was not man; but God that called him to the apostleship. It is of great concern and

consequence both to ministers and people to be fully informed and thoroughly satisfied of that divine call, which their spiritual guides have to come amongst them; that the ministers may be able to say, "We come to you in the name of the Lord;" and the people may be able to reply, "We receive you as ambassadors from the Lord unto us." *Paul an apostle by the will of God.* Observe, 2. A person conjoined with St. Paul in the writing of this epistle, and he is also described two ways; by his name, *Timothy*; by his relation, our brother. Where note, The great humility and condescension of St. Paul, that though far superior to Timothy in years, and more transcendent in office, and more eminent in grace, yet he doth not assume and arrogate all to himself, but makes another sit, as it were, upon the throne with him; so humble and condescending was this holy man to one so far inferior to him, both in office and grace. Note, also, The happy advantage of Timothy in being with St. Paul, and having the happy privilege of being instructed and directed by so great an apostle; happy was it for young Timothy, that ever he came into old Paul's family. Learn thence, That it is an happy advantage to such who in their younger years are dedicated to, and designed to be set apart for the work of the ministry, to be under the inspection and care, the guidance and conduct of those who are more aged, and better experienced than themselves; *Paul an apostle, and Timothy our brother.* Observe, 3. The persons to whom this epistle is written and directed; *To the church of God which is at Corinth*; Corinth was a city famous for wealth and riches, but most infamous for lewdness and uncleanness; here was a temple dedicated to Venus, where were a thousand virgins set apart to be prostituted to the lusts of men; so that *Korinthioi*, so *Corinthians*; is as much as to be lascivious and unchaste; and after many of them were converted to Christianity, yet did the sin of uncleanness so much abound amongst them, that the apostle doth industriously set himself against it, and warns them of the sin and danger of it, in both his epistles wrote unto them. However, as had as Corinth was, God told Paul, Acts xviii. that he had much people in that city; and accordingly, he spent a year and a half amongst them, in preaching to them, in converting and confirming of them. Learn thence, That even amongst the most profane and unlikely people upon earth, God may, and sometimes doth gather a church unto himself. See what monsters of men these Corinthians were, 1. Cor. vi. 11. "Whoremongers, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind;" and he tells them not only such persons, but *Tartar*, such things were some of them; but now washed, &c. Oh the sovereignty and wonderful efficacy of the grace of God, in cleansing souls, more black than ever was Ethiopian's face! Though man cannot, yet God can, and sometimes does cause figs to grow on thorns, and grapes to grow on thistles. Observe, 4. Our apostle's salutation of, and prayer for this church at Corinth: "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Where note, 1. The mercies and blessings prayed for, grace and peace, spiritual blessings, and comprehensive blessings. Note, 2. The original cause and spring from whence those blessings flow, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ; from the Father as the fountal cause, and from Christ as the procuring cause, the dispenser of these blessings. A good argument to prove the divinity of Christ: He that can dispense grace and peace, of, and from himself, is God; but Christ doth this, therefore he is God; *Grace be to you, and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ.*

3 **I** Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Observe here, 1. The several gracious and comfortable titles which the apostle gives to Almighty God; he styles him, 1. *The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; so he is by nature; and Christ his Son by eternal and ineffable generation: For as the words, *our Lord*, ascribed here to Christ, do not exclude the Father from being Lord; so the word, *God*, ascribed here to God the Father, excludes not Christ from being our God; and as God is the Father of Christ, so he is a Father in him to all that have union with him. 2. *The Father of Mercies*, a most amiable and comfortable relation; not the Father of mercy, or a merciful Father barely; but the Father of mercies, in the plural number, to denote the greatness and multitude of his mercies, and that all mercies flows from him only and freely, as streams from an over-flowing and never-failing fountain. 3. *The God of all Comfort*; because by giving his Holy Spirit, the Comforter, he is the author of all that consolation which is conferred upon us. Observe, 2. The duty here performed by the apostle, that of blessing God, or thanksgiving; *Blessed be God, &c.* Learn, That blessing and praising God for all mercies, but especially for spiritual mercies, is a duty which all the people of God ought especially to be careful of, and abounding in: the more you bless God, the more you shall have cause to bless him; he will multiply blessings upon you for your thankfulness to him. Observe, 3. The particular favour which the apostle blesses and praises God for; namely, for *comforting his children in all their tribulations*. Learn hence, That as God is the only comforter of his people at all times, so he is their best comforter in the worst of times. There is no tribulation or affliction that the people of God can fall into, but God can and will comfort them therein: "Blessed be God who comforteth us in all our tribulations." Observe, 4. The gracious end and merciful design of God in comforting his saints and servants, in and under all their pressures, tribulations and afflictions; it is, "That they may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God." Learn hence, That God doth often exercise many of his ministers, and some of his particular saints and servants, in a very exemplary manner, with trials and afflictions, for this great end amongst others, that they may be experimentally able to instruct and comfort such, who either are or may hereafter fall into the same disconsolate condition with themselves; none so fit to advise and counsel, to instruct and comfort a suffering saint, as an afflicted minister or Christian, who have, together with their afflictions, experienced the favour of divine consolations: "That we may comfort others, as we ourselves have been comforted of God."

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation all aboundeth by Christ.

Note here, 1. That the saints' sufferings are here called the *sufferings of Christ*. The head suffers in the members because the members suffer for the sake of the head. Note, 2. That the saints' sufferings in the cause, and for the sake of Christ, are sometimes overflowing and excessive sufferings; *the sufferings of Christ abound in us*. Note, 3. That as a Christian's sufferings are for Christ, so are their comforts and consolations from him; yea, their comforts do bear some proportion to their sufferings: *As our sufferings abound, so our consolation abounds by Christ*.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

As if the apostle had said, "What sufferings soever I have met with in my ministerial office, you have the benefit of them, and special advantage by them; and therefore you ought not to despise me upon the account of my sufferings (as do the false apostles, and would have you do) but you ought the more to honour me for them, and be encouraged yourselves by them; and when I am comforted, it is beneficial for your consolation, inasmuch as you may confidently expect the same relief." Learn hence, That the sufferings and afflictions, which we endure for Christ, do not only turn to our own good, but rebound greatly to the good and benefit of the church of God, and consequently should not disanimate or dishearten our fellow Christians, but rather be matter of comfort or consolation to them; "If we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." He adds, "If we be comforted, it is for your consolation also." Thereby plainly intimating to us, that Almighty God doth by all his dispensations, both of mercy and correction, promote and carry on the salvation of his own children and people.

7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings; so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Here St. Paul tells the body of the Corinthians, that he had a good hope concerning them, that as they had endured sufferings for Christ, so they would still endure them; assuring them, that they should share no less in consolation than they did in affliction. Learn hence, That such as suffer for Christ, or own those that suffer for him, shall be interested in all that joy and consolation which such sufferings and sufferers shall receive from God: "As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be of the consolation also."

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

Observe here, 1. That it is of no small benefit and advantage, but of excellent use to us, to know what are the troubles and afflictions, which do befall the servants of God for righteousness' sake: "We would not have you ignorant of our trouble." Observe, 2. How pressing the troubles and afflictions were which this apostle underwent; "They were out of measure, above strength, and even to the despairing of life." Thence note, That God may, and sometimes does exercise his servants with such extreme and pressing trials, that all their own natural strength is unable to support them under them, or carry them through them; "We were pressed above strength, and despaired even of life."

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raised the dead;

Observe here, The great and imminent danger which the apostle was in; his very life was in hazard, nay, even despaired of; he looked upon himself as a dead man: But when he had thus sentenced himself, a divine power, which wrought above all his thoughts and rational conjectures, revived him, and revived him. Hence learn, That the Almighty power of God sometimes works beyond all creature expectations, beyond all human probabilities, beyond all rational conjectures, to help and deliver his people in hopeless and helpless troubles.

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us:

Observe here, The deliverer, God; the delivered, St. Paul and the saints that were in Asia with him; the deliverance itself, or the imminent and impending evil delivered from, *death, great death, so great a death*. Learn, 1. That in times of great and imminent danger, God, and God alone, is the immediate deliverer of his children and people... Learn, 2. That it is the property of a precious heart, to magnify and enhance the deliverances of a gracious God: *He hath delivered us from so great a death, &c.* Learn, 3. That past and present experience of God's power and goodness towards his people, may and ought to encourage them to trust in him for time to come; former experience ought to encourage us to future dependence; when we can say, God hath delivered, and doth deliver, let our faith add, "In him we trust, that he will yet deliver."

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that, for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Our apostle having commemorated the goodness and power of God in former deliverances, and expressed his assurance of present and future deliverances, doth in this verse excite and exhort the faithful at Corinth to help and further him with their prayers: *Ye also helping together by prayers for us*. Where observe, The humility of the apostle, in desiring the people's prayers for himself. Such as are most eminent

in gifts and office, yea, and in grace too, do really want, and heartily desire the help and benefit of their prayers, who are far inferior to them in the church of God. And verily, the people do owe unto their spiritual guides as a debt of service, their earnest prayers for them; herein they are not only serviceable to them, but kind to themselves. Observe farther, The great reason why St. Paul was so desirous of the Corinthians' prayers, that deliverance and mercy being obtained thereby, *praise and thanksgiving* might be rendered to God on his behalf. Learn, That when by prayer any mercy is obtained by us, it is our duty, by praise and thanksgiving to acknowledge the same to God. What is obtained by prayer, should be owned by thankfulness: God forbid we should be clamorous in asking favours, and dumb and tongue tied in returning thanks.

12 ¶ For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Observe here, 1. That though St. Paul did not put confidence and trust in his sincerity and Christian grace, yet he did rejoice and holily glory in the evidence of his grace, and in the testimony of a sincere and upright conscience; *Our rejoicing is this.* Learn hence, That an holy glorying and rejoicing in the graces of God, which, upon good and sufficient grounds we find evident in ourselves, is lawful and allowable. A Christian may and ought to rejoice, not only in the confidence of Christ's merits, but also in the conscience of his own sincerity. Observe, 2. The particular grace evidenced, which the apostle took comfort in; *His sincerity and godly simplicity*; that is, his uprightness both of heart and life, his freedom from guile and hypocrisy. Thence note, That the conscience of sincerity is such a crown of rejoicing, as will support a Christian's spirit under and against the greatest difficulties which may arise in any condition. This sincerity discovers itself in its acting by a right rule, from a right principle, and to a right end; and it supports a man's spirit in the duty of a prayer, under the burden of slander and reproach in the dark night of affliction, in the disconsolate hour of death, and at the dreadful day of judgment. Observe, 3. That it is not a single act of sincerity, but a constant course of upright walking, that our apostle rejoiced and took comfort in: "We have had our conversation in the world, in all simplicity and godly sincerity." It is not a single action, but a series of good actions, that administrators comfort: As God doth not judge of our state and condition by a particular action, no more should we, but by the general bent of our resolutions, and the constant course and tenor of our conversations: "Our rejoicing is this, that by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world."

13 For we write none other things unto you than what ye read or acknow-

ledge, and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

The apostle having asserted his own sincerity and upright conversation in the former verse, he doth in this verse make his appeal to the conscience of the Corinthians for his justification. It is a good demonstration of our uprightness, when we can not only appeal to God as touching our sincerity, but dare appeal to the consciences of men; for if, through prejudice, they will not with their mouth's vouch our integrity, yet secretly with their consciences they cannot but bear witness to it. Observe, 2. The apostle's having declared, that he had his testimonials, not only from his own conscience, but from theirs also; he adds, that he trusted this would hold and continue even to the end; that is, to the end both of his and their lives. As if the apostle had said, "My conversation hath hitherto been acknowledged by you to be sincere and upright; and I hope, as you shall never see it otherwise by me, so you will persevere and continue in your good opinion and right judgment concerning me, to the end of your and my life."

14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe here, 1. The great trial which St. Paul met with from the Corinthians, whose spiritual father he was; though he had served them with great faithfulness, yet they did *acknowledge him but in part*. There was a time when he was high in their esteem; Who but Paul? None but he: But now a great part leave him, and admire others. Learn hence, What great levity, fickleness, and inconstancy, may be found in good men in general, and what great mutability and changeableness of affection in particular to their ministers and spiritual guides, though never so sincere and faithful. Although St. Paul, with a laborious diligence, and divine success, had planted and propagated the Christian faith amongst them, yet now, not only his person, but his very office falls under contempt by many of them. None more than ministers do experience this truth, that nothing is so mutable as the mind of man: Though ministers are the same, and their message the same, though they continue burning and shining lights, though they burn out and consume life, health, and estate, among and for their people, yet it is only for a season, for an hour, for a short time, at their first coming amongst them, that they rejoice in their light: *You have acknowledged us in part.* Observe, 2. That notwithstanding the contempt cast upon St. Paul by some in the church of Corinth, yet there were others among them who did greatly rejoice in him, and bless God for him, and he for them! *We are your rejoicing, and ye are ours*, as being converted by us; and I trust we shall be a farther joy and mutual rejoicing each to the other in the day of our Lord Jesus. Learn hence, What unspeakable rejoicings and joyful congratulations there will be in the day of Christ, between laborious faithful ministers and their believing obedient hearers. "Lord! (will the Christian say) this was the blessed instrument, under God, of my happy illumination and conversion; by the blessing of thy Spirit upon his ministry, my soul was begotten unto Christ." But, on the

other hand, if we be ignorant or lazy, unskilful or unfaithful, in our office, our people will come in against us as swift witnesses in the day of Christ: And, Lord! what an intolerable aggravation will it be of our misery in hell, to have any of our people thus upbraiding us? "Oh cruel man! that sawest my soul in danger, but never dealt faithfully and plainly with me; the same time that we spent together in sin and vanity, in sensual mirth and jollity, might have been instrumental to save us both from this place of torment." Let ministers consider themselves as witnesses for God, and their people as witnesses for or against them; and under that consideration, so study, preach, and pray; so live, walk, and act, that they may with this great apostle, take God to record, that they are free from the blood of all men.

15 ¶ And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

Observe here, 1. The apostle's steady purpose, and fixed resolution to come and spend some time amongst the Corinthians: "I was minded to come unto you." Where a faithful minister has good hopes and confidence of doing good amongst a people, there is great encouragement for coming to them, and abiding with them. When the ministers of Christ find that God has farther converting work, or edifying work for them to do in a particular place amongst his people, they will not, they must not, yea, they dare not forsake them for outward advantages. Observe, 2. The end of St. Paul's purpose and resolution to come to them, "That they might have a second benefit." The first benefit was their conversion, the second benefit was their confirmation; confirmation in the faith, and reformation, both in life and manners. It is not sufficient, that by our ministry we plant a church, and gather a people out of the world by external and visible profession; but there is farther need of daily industry, and continual care, to water what we have planted, to cultivate and dress that corner of our Lord's vineyard, which is under our particular inspection and care. Oh that our people had hearts to cry out, and say, Lord, not the first time only, but the second, yea, all my life, make me partaker of this benefit.

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.

Observe here, 1. How the heart of this holy apostle was carried forth in the service of God and souls, and how accordingly he orders all his journeys from one place to another, and determines his continuance and stay, longer in one place than another, as the glory of God, the advantage of the gospel, and the church's necessities did require: "I design to pass by you into Macedonia, &c." It is the duty of the ministers of Christ, not only to lay out themselves for the glory of God, and the good of souls, but to project, forecast, and contrive how they may do it in the best and most advantageous manner, for the furtherance of the gospel. Yet, 2. Observe, The difference between this extraordinary apostle then, and ordinary pastors of the church now. The apostles had an universal commission to plant churches in

all places; they were to be in constant travels up and down the world, itinerary preachers from place to place: But the office of an ordinary pastor now is, to watch over a particular flock, and to keep constant residence amongst them. Yet though by actual relation he is tied and bound to a particular flock, he is, by habitual and aptitudinal disposition, a minister of the universal church, and a debtor to the public good thereof. He is first made a minister to the universal church, and then a pastor of a particular congregation: and accordingly, though he seeks to serve the interest of his own flock first, yet it is his duty, by prayer, by study, by preaching, by writing, by all other edifying ways and methods, to promote the universal good and benefit of the whole church of Christ, according to his power, both far and near.

17 When I, therefore, was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there shall be yea, yea, and nay, nay?

Here our apostle begins to make his apology and defence for himself for changing his purpose in coming to Corinth according to promise, and to free himself from the imputation of levity, inconstancy, and falsehood, cast upon him by his back friends, the false apostles, for promising to come to Corinth, and not performing it; for they aggravated the matter so far, as if he were one that said and unsaid, one that took no care about keeping his word; and thence inferred, that no regard was to be had to any thing that he delivered. "He that is not to be relied upon, say the false apostles, in his ordinary promises, how can you depend upon what he says to you in his preaching?" Hence learn, That lightness and inconstancy is a great sin and reproach in any, but especially in the ministers of the gospel, who yet are often charged with it, when they are in no degree guilty of it. Observe, 2. As our apostle frees himself from the charge of inconstancy, so from the suspicion of acting for worldly advantage: "The things which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh?" that is, for carnal ends or secular interest, that with me there should be now, Yea, yea; and anon, Nay, nay. Behold here! what truth and steadiness was found in and with our holy apostle; how his words and intentions, his tongue and his heart, his pen and his purpose were one, namely, in reality to come unto them, though he was providentially hindered and obstructed. Here let us remark and note, What little things the men of the world will take advantage from, to vilify and lessen the reputation of God's faithful servants, especially his ministers. How many persons might have promised to be in such a place, at such a time, and have failed, without being reproached for breach of promise? The world would have been so charitable to another person, as to have excused it; by saying, "The man spake according to his present intention and resolution, but was hindered by the providence of God;" but if Paul fails in a tittle, he must be loaded presently, upbraided for his inconstancy, or, which is worse, charged with playing fast and loose for sinister ends, and worldly advantages. Lord, give thy servants, especially thy ministers, wisdom to walk with exactness and circumspection before the men of the world, who are their watchful ob-

servers, and bold censurers, that they may cut off all occasion from them that seek occasion against them.

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

By the word here, some understand St. Paul's promise to come to Corinth, that he did very sincerely intend to come unto them; as if he had said, "As God is true to his promise, so has he taught me to be true to mine." Others understand by the word, St. Paul's preaching, that his doctrine was not mutable and changeable, but always the same. Here note, How ready and forward the adversaries of religion are from any real or supposed imperfections in the ministers of God, presently to blame and burden their ministry, to charge their private errors and mistakes upon their doctrine. There is a mighty propensity, and great forwardness in bad men, to cast all the imperfections of the ministers of the gospel upon their ministry and doctrine.—The devil is glad of an opportunity, by the failings of preachers, to bring the doctrines they preach either into doubt or disesteem. But though it be a great reproach for a minister to be mutable and contradictory in his doctrine, yet the wicked world do often accuse them of it, and charge them with it, when there is not the least occasion for it; "Verily, as God is true, our word was not yea and nay."

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Sylvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

This verse contains a new argument for the constancy and immutability of St. Paul's doctrine, drawn from the subject-matter of his preaching; namely, Jesus Christ. As Christ is always one and the same, whom himself and other ministers did preach, so is our doctrine one and the same also. Note here, 1. The subject-matter of St. Paul's preaching, what was the sum of his own and his companions' sermons, (Sylvanus and Timotheus,) it was not his own imaginations, or the Jewish rites and ceremonies, but Christ in his nature and offices; "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you by us." Note, 2. The happy unity and accord, which was found among all these ministers, St. Paul, Sylvanus and Timotheus, in preaching Christ. O blessed agreement! when all the ministers of God with one consent conspire and agree to advance and extol our Lord Jesus Christ. Note, 3. That the course of St. Paul's and his assistants' preaching, was like the great subject of their preaching, *Christ Jesus*, fixedly and unchangeably the same; not yea at one time, and nay at another. Learn thence, That it is a proper note of God's truth, and the true preachers thereof, that they are always one and the same, always yea, and not yea and nay; there is no change or contrariety in their doctrines.

20 For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Our apostle had proved in the foregoing verse the constancy of his own doctrine, which he preached from the immutability and constancy of Christ, the subject of it. Here

he proveth Christ to be unchangeable, in that all the promises which God hath made to us, are fulfilled both in him and by him. "All the promises of God in him are Yea, and Amen;" that is, verified and fulfilled in him, and confirmed by him to us. Learn, 1. That God has made promises, many promises to his people. 2. That all the promises which God has made to his people, are made in Christ, and ratified by him. Christ acts the part and office of a surety; he undertakes, and engages for God, that all which he hath promised shall be made good to us.—Learn, 3. That the promises made by God, and ratified and confirmed in Christ, do all tend to the glory of God. They shew the sovereignty of his grace, in making promises to his creatures, of mercy, who deserve nothing but flaming vengeance, and implacable fury. They shew the amplitude of his grace; for if grace did not flow abundantly from the heart of God towards us, we could never have received so large a stock of promises from him. Let us then glorify God, by setting a just value upon his promises, as the unchangeable assurances of his love and grace.

21 Now be which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God:

22 Who hath also sealed us; and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

In these two verses we have four very great and noble privileges, which the apostle declares God had conferred upon the Corinthians: namely, his establishing, anointing, and sealing of them, and giving the earnest of his Holy Spirit to them. First, their establishment: "He which established us with you is God." Learn thence, That a people's establishment in the doctrine of the gospel, and in the faith of the promises, is alone the gracious work of God. We are naturally like the reeds shaken with every wind; it is the establishing grace of God that makes us pillars in the church. Again, secondly, Their anointing, this is from God; the sanctifying grace of God is often in scripture compared to oil, in regard of its effects. It refresheth the weary, it healeth the wounded, it comforts the heart, it beautifies the face, it strengthens the limbs. Such internal virtues and excellencies bath the sanctifying grace of God in the hearts of the people. Thirdly, their sealing; "Who hath also sealed us." God's sealing of his children doth imply his high valuation and esteem of them: what is sealed is esteemed very precious: It implies their safety and security: what is under seal, is not in danger of being lost. Again, Sealing doth imply secrecy and privacy; that which is sealed is secret and hidden; it is the new name, which none knows but he that receiveth it. Finally, Sealing is for confirmation: contracts and bargains among men are confirmed by hand and seal. Thus the graces of the Spirit, which sanctify us, do also witness and seal to us the assurance of God's love and special favour in Jesus Christ. The fourth privilege here conferred by God upon the Corinthians, is "his giving the earnest of his spirit" in their hearts: Grace wrought in the heart here, is a sure earnest of glory hereafter; there is a great deal of difference between a shilling, a single piece of money, and a shilling that is an earnest of a greater sum. It is joy to find grace in the soul, as grace mortifying our

corruptions; but it rejoices much more to look upon grace as an earnest of glory, as the first-fruits which insure the full crop.

23 Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

In these words, our apostle doth assure the Corinthians, in a very solemn manner, that it was not any inconstancy or carnal respect in himself that made him delay his coming to them, but it was purely to spare them, as being unwilling to come with his rod among them, and to use severity upon them. Here observe the apostle's manner of speech, it is by way of adjuration; *I call God to record upon my soul.* The words are an assertory and execratory oath, wherein God is called to witness the truth of what he said. Learn hence, That it is lawful for Christians under the gospel to swear upon a necessary and great occasion. But what great occasion was here for St. Paul to do it? *Ans.* Very great; the false apostles did accuse him for a vain glorious and inconstant man. This accusation did redound to the discredit of his ministry, the dishonour of the gospel, the destruction of the church; therefore he solemnly protests, that no inconstancy or worldly motives did cause him to delay his promises: but a wise and spiritual consideration of their good, a willingness to spare them, and an unwillingness to use severity upon them. Hence learn, That the ministerial power which God giveth the officers of the church ought to be managed with much holy prudence, and Christian commiseration: The end of their power should always be in their mind, which is edification, and not destruction.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

As if the apostle had said, "Though we have a ministerial power, yet we have not a magisterial dominion over you, to treat as we please the professors of the gospel, or to punish those that walk not according thereunto." Learn hence, That though Christ has invested the officers of the church with a ministerial power, yet they have not thereby any dominion over the faith of believers; *Not that we have dominion over your faith:* He adds, *But are helpers of your joy.* He doth not say, We are helpers of your grace, helpers of your faith, helpers of your holiness, though this is necessarily implied: but helpers of your joy and comfort. Note thence, that a special part of the minister's work, consists in administering to the comfort and consolation of such as stand in need of it, and are qualified for it. Our first work is to help the graces, our next to help the comforts, of our people. The Spirit of God is a sanctifier, and then a comforter: Joy is not the first stone in God's building; grace and holiness is first, comfort and consolation next. *For by faith ye stand;* ye have stood and do stand steadfast in the faith; that is, the generality and body of you; though some among you deny the resurrection, yet the best and greatest part of you are found in the faith, and steadfast in the faith. Our apostle doth not unchurch them, because of some disorders among them, nor because of some heretical doctrines found with them, but endeavours to reform their disorders, that so when he came unto them, he might not come with his rod, but in the spirit of meekness.

CHAP. II.

Our apostle having, in the former chapter, vindicated himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy charged upon him by the false apostles, because he resolved to come to this church at Corinth, and promised so to do; but contrary to his intention, was providentially obstructed in the performance of his promise: He comes in this chapter to vindicate himself from the aspersions of too much rigour, and too great severity towards the incestuous person; assuring them that it was no pleasure to him to make them sorrowful; and that no manner of severity should be exercised by him, any farther than was absolutely needful in order to the reforming of evil manners that were found amongst them. Accordingly, he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1.

BUT I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

The occasion of St. Paul's writing again to the Corinthians, and deferring for the present to come unto them, is here intimated. There was an incestuous person in the church of Corinth who had married his father's wife; if she were his own natural mother, the sin was prodigious and unnatural, that the child of her womb should be the husband of her bed; if she were his mother-in-law, it was against the law of reverence, and an heinous sin for the son to uncover the father's nakedness. And it was an aggravation of the sin, that the person committing it was a Christian, a member, and, as some think, a minister of the church of Corinth. St. Paul, in his former epistle, chap. v. commands them to excommunicate this incestuous person, which accordingly they did; and this spiritual physic, applied to the offender, had a good effect upon him; for, being punished by the church, he punisheth himself; and being cast out of the church, he casts away his sin. Happy is it, when the church's censures are so executed, as to bring offenders to a sight and sense of their sins, in order to a deep humiliation, and thorough reformation. Now, says the apostle, *I determined not to come unto you in heaviness:* that is, one great reason why I put off my journey to you, was this, that my coming amongst you might neither occasion sorrow, nor create heaviness, either to you or myself; for I delight not in censuring and chiding, when I can otherwise avoid it: *For if I make you sorry, and myself with you, who is it that can make me glad, but he that is made sorry by me?* that is, nothing can make me glad, but the reformation of the fallen person. Where note, That nothing adds so much to the joy and

comfort of the ministers of Christ, as the recovery of revolted souls from under the empire and dominion of sin and Satan. We joy with them, and rejoice in God for them; we live as we see any of you stand fast in the Lord, we die as we see others stick fast in their sins.

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy of you all*.

As if the apostle had said, I gave you a sharp reproof in my former epistle, but it was in such love, and upon a good design: namely, to procure such a reformation of life and manners among you, as might prevent my sorrow when I come unto you: For as your grief is my grief, so my joy is the joy of you all. As the ministers of Christ and their beloved people are one, so their griefs are one, and their joys one; they rejoice together, and mourn together; their griefs and sorrows are mutual, and their joys and comforts are reciprocal.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

Here our compassionate apostle tells them, That what he had wrote in his former epistle with some severity and sharpness, concerning the incestuous person, was so far from being written with any intention to grieve them, that it was a real affliction to him, a very heavy pressure upon his heart, which fetch abundance of tears from his eyes, and consequently was an effect of the greatest love imaginable. Hence note, That when the ministers of Christ do execute church-censures, if they do not dispense them with tenderness and compassion, so as to let the offenders see that what is done is not of abundant love unto them, they will never be the better for them, nor be bettered or reclaimed by them. Doth a civil judge weep when he passes sentence upon a malefactor? Much more should an ecclesiastical judge mourn, when he pronounceth the censures of the church upon notorious offenders. Behold the apostle here declaring with what anguish of spirit, and grief of heart, he wrote to have the sentence of excommunication executed and inflicted on the incestuous Corinthian; "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears."

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

As if the apostle had said, This incestuous person, who hath caused so much grief to me by his sin, hath caused no little grief to you also, to the sounder part of you, even to all but those who were partakers with him in his sin; he hath grieved me in part only: you, as well as myself, having been grieved by him, and afflicted for him. Not only the

ministers, but members of the church are affected with, and afflicted for, the scandal of professors' sins. St. Paul grieved but in part for the incestuous person's sin; the sounder part of the church mourned with him. Or, secondly, "He hath grieved me but in part, that I may not overcharge you;" It is as much as if he had said, "The grief and sorrow which I have had for the sin and scandal of this notorious offender, I am far, very far from charging upon the whole church; I dare not load you all with that imputation, as if you were involved in the guilt of it. 'Tis not only injurious, but very unjust to cast the dirt of professors' sin upon the face of their profession, or to charge the guilt of a particular person's mis-carriages upon the whole church or Christian society to which he doth belong. As religion justifies no man's faults, so no man's faults should condemn religion."

6 ¶ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

Observe here, 1. The nature of that punishment which the holy apostle thought, and adjudged to be sufficient for the guilty person's sin, and that was excision, not destruction: excommunication, not death: The rejection of such a sinner from the communion of the church, by church-censure and discipline, was the punishment pronounced. Observe, 2. By whom and before whom this punishment of excommunication was executed and inflicted, namely, by the officers and governors of the church, (who had and have the power of the keys) in the presence, and with the consent of the whole church. In the primitive church, we have reason to believe, when any offender was to be excommunicated, the people were acquainted with the crime; the guilty person pleaded in their presence, they judged as your jury-men do of the matter of fact, they consented to the condemnation; but the sentence was not pronounced by them, but by the governors and officers of the church before them, and in their presence: And as the church or body of the people consented to the offender's rejection, so likewise to his re-admission to the communion of the church; but their actual admission was by the pastor and governor of the church, and not by the people. Contrary to this primitive practice is the modern practice of those, who have snatched the keys of the hands of the pastors (where Christ placed them) and put them into the hands of the people.

7 So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

Observe, 1. The great duty which the apostle directs the Corinthians to the performance of, towards this sorrowful offender, *to forgive him, to comfort him, to confirm him*: that is, to absolve him from the sentence and censure of the church: no longer to continue their aversion to him, but to restore him to the church's communion, to re-admit him to their fellowship and society, to comfort him with the notice of God's pardoning mercy, and to confirm their love to him, by shewing, that their excommunicating of him was with design to reform, not to ruin him: to recover him by re-

penitance, and not to drive him to despair. This is the importance of the three several words which are used here, *Forgive him, comfort him, confirm him*. From whence note, That in notorious crimes, which give great cause of scandal to the church, the comfort of the offender depends not only upon his peace and reconciliation with God, but also upon the relaxation of the censures of the church, and his re-admission to the church's fellowship and communion; Forgive him, and confirm your love towards him. Observe, 2. The reason offered by our apostle why this penitent offender should be forgiven and comforted; namely, "Lest he should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow." Learn hence, 1. That sorrow even for sin itself may be excessive and over-much. 2. That excessive and over-much sorrow swalloweth up a person; it may swallow him up in the gulph of despair, and, as a consequent of it, in the gulph of death. As worldly sorrow causeth death, so may religious sorrow also even sorrow for sin. We may dishonour God by an excessive mourning, even for God's dishonour. Sorrow is not of any worth in itself, but only as it serves to a spiritual end and purpose: and when it is excessive, not only the comforts, but the gifts and usefulness of the person sorrowing, are in danger to be swallowed up by it. *Quest.* But when is sorrow for sin excessive and overmuch? *Ans.* When it obstructs the exercise of our graces, when it hinders the performance of our duties, when it hurts our health and overwhelms nature, when it perverts reason, swalloweth up faith, hindereth our hope, prejudice our joy, and unfits us both for doing and suffering the will of God: in a word, that sorrow for sin which keeps the soul from looking towards the mercy-seat, that keeps Christ and the soul asunder, and renders a person unfit for the service of God, and for the communion of saints, is a sinful sorrow.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle declares what was his end in writing his former epistle to them, namely, this amongst others, to exercise their obedience, and to make trial what regard they would shew to his apostolical authority; whether they would be as obedient to his directions in absolving of penitents, as they were before in inflicting church-censures upon bold offenders: "For this end did I write, that I might have a proof of you." Observe, 2. The apostle declares his own forwardness to forgive penitent offenders himself, as well as make known his desires that they should do it: "Whom ye forgive, I forgive also in the person of Christ;" that is, as you forgive him, so do I; and I absolve him by Christ's authority, as I excommunicated him in Christ's name, 1 Cor. v. 4. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* As he delivered the incestuous person to Satan in the name of Christ, so in the name and person of Christ he releases him,

and relaxes the sentence against him. The power of excommunication and absolution, of binding and loosing, of casting out, and receiving into the church, is by Christ committed to church-governors, who are to execute this power in the person of Christ; that is, in the name, and by the authority of Christ. Observe, 3. The arguments with which, and the motive by which, he presses the church at Corinth to forgive the incestuous person, and to re-admit him into their society, *lest Satan get an advantage over us*. What advantage? *Ans.* An advantage to lead them into sin thus, by their abusing that power which God had given them for edification, to the destruction of a person, by making them guilty of spiritual murder by their over-rigorous proceeding against him, by driving him to despair, by tempting him to apostacy. Satan sometimes, by too great slackness of discipline, seeks to lull sinners asleep in the bosom of the church; and sometimes by too great severity endeavours to drive them to despair. The force of the apostle's words lies thus: I advise you to continue the severity of discipline no longer towards this penitent offender, but receive him again into your communion with all tenderness and speed, lest Satan should circumvent you and over-reach you, and make use of your rigour to your own ruin, by rendering your doctrine hateful, and your discipline detestable; *for we are not ignorant of his devices*, his contrivances, plots and stratagems laid against us. Learn hence, 1. That Satan is a master in the art of deceiving souls: He is full, very full of cunning methods and devices, to circumvent persons, and catch them in the net of his deceits. Learn, 2. That it concerns all persons, but especially the ministers of the gospel, to be well acquainted with, and not ignorant of any devices or plots of Satan. Satan has a multitude of devices, by which he undoes, entangles and deceives souls; and no Christian ought to be ignorant of them, lest he be circumvented and undone by them: Many are his devices for drawing us into sin, for drawing us off from duty, for drawing us into temptation, for drowning us in despair: our wisdom will be, not to dispute, but to resist, for by resisting, our temptations will be fewer, and our strength greater, James iv. 7. *Resist the devil and he will fly*. Where note, that the promise of conquest is made to resisting, not disputing with Satan; to parly with him, is the way to be overcome by him.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

14 ¶ Now thanks be unto God which always cause thus to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Observe here, 1. The unwearied diligence of this great apostle in travelling from place to place, and carrying the gospel with him from one city and nation to another: *I came to Troas, and from thence to Macedonia*. Observe, 2. The success which the holy apostle had in preaching the gospel with unwearied diligence in those places: *A door was opened*

unto him of the Lord. This either signifies, 1. The free liberty which he had to preach the gospel in those places; the door of his mouth was not shut by persecutors, the enemies and opposers of the gospel; but the word of the Lord had a free course in the labours of its ministers. Or, 2. This opened door may signify and import the great and gracious success which God gave the apostle in his work; as God by his providence opened the apostle's mouth to preach and publish the glad tidings of the gospel, so by his holy Spirit he opened the people's hearts to receive and entertain the glad tidings of salvation which the gospel brought. Acts xvi. 14. "The Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the words which were spoken of Paul." Observe, 3. How careful the apostle is to ascribe the entire praise, and to return the whole thanks to Almighty God for all the gracious assistance and success which he had received in his ministerial service: "Thanks be to God which causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." As if the apostle had said, "Blessed be God, although our enemies have been many, and our difficulties great, yet God has given me and my fellow apostles such resolution of mind, that we have not only encountered with them but triumphed over them, in a powerful conversion of so many from Heathenism to Christianity; and has enabled us to spread the sweet odour of the gospel far and near, by our laborious preaching of it from place to place." Then is the word, and God in the word, glorified, when the sword of the Spirit is taken into the hand of the Spirit; when he girds his sword upon his thigh, as most mighty, and rides on triumphantly, conquering and to conquer, in the hearts of his people, till he has consummated his victories in a glorious triumph over all the powers of hell and darkness, "Thanks be to God that causes us to triumph in Christ."

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life:

Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel, and to the preachers and dispensers of it; they are a savour, an allusion probably to the ointment of sweet perfume, which the high priests under the law were anointed with. The breath of the gospel is a sweet odour or smell, and God's faithful ministers are they that carry it, and blow it abroad to perfume sinners that lie stinking in their sins. Observe, 2. The contrary effects which the preaching of the gospel has upon those that sit under it; it is the savour of life unto some, of death unto others: Here it was so, the apostle's ministry was a savour of life to the believing Gentiles, of death to the unbelieving Jews; all men to be reckoned in a state of life or death of perishing, or being saved, according as they do, or do not receive the savour, and relish the doctrine of the gospel. But how comes the preaching of the gospel to be the savour of death unto some? Answer. Partly through pride, in not enduring to be reproved by the gospel; partly through prejudice against the ministers of the gospel; partly through slothfulness, in neglecting to come under the sound of the gospel; and partly through

cursed infidelity, in not believing the message which the gospel brings. Thus is the gospel, which was ordained for life, the savour of death unto death. Observe, 3. The sweet support which God gives his faithful ministers in the discharge of their duty, though their doctrine fails of desired success; "they are a sweet savour unto God, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved." Lord! how would thy ministers be of all men most miserable, shouldst thou require the success of their labours at their hands; shouldst thou say, "Either reconcile my people unto me, or I will never be reconciled unto you;" But we shall be rewarded by thee, according to our faithfulness, not according to our people's fruitfulness. The faithful ministers of Christ are a sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved: Though Israel (their people) be not gathered, yet shall they be glorious: God will reward them, *secundum laborem, non fructum*: the nurse shall be paid for her care and pains, though the child dies at the breast.

And who is sufficient for these things?

As if the apostle had said, So great and so weighty is the work of preaching the everlasting gospel to a lost world, that neither myself, nor any of my fellow apostles, are sufficient for it of ourselves; *Who is sufficient?* That is, none are sufficient without proportionable strength and help from God, neither man, nor angel: To preach the gospel as it ought is a mighty work, a weighty work. If any think otherwise, it is either their ignorance or inadvertency that makes them think so. What? Is it an easy matter to search into the deep things of God, the great mysteries of the gospel, which have an unfathomable depth? Is it easy to instruct the ignorant, to convince the obstinate, to resolve the doubting, to reduce the wandering, to know the state of our flock, to visit the sick as we ought, to speak to them, and pray for them, as persons upon the confines of eternity? What! is all this, and much more, a trivial work, and common performance? No, verily: as there is no service more honourable than that of the ministry, so there is none more arduous and laborious; and therefore the greatest men, that ever God employed in and about this work, have been ready to sink under the apprehension of the insuperable difficulties that do attend it. If we consider how a gospel minister ought to excel in knowledge, in utterance, in prudence and conduct, in exemplary piety, in patient contending with a people's frowardness and perverseness, we need not wonder at our apostle's exclamation or expostulatory question in the words before us; *Who is sufficient for these things?*

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Observe here, 1. The character which the apostle gives the false apostles who were crept in amongst the Corinthians; they were corrupters of the word of God; they did sophisticate and adulterate the sincere word of God, by intermixing their own pride and passions, their own inventions and imaginations, with the doctrine which they delivered. False teachers deal with the word, as some vintners deal with their wines; they imbase them in their nature, that they

may advance them in their price, and thereby increase their own profit; they deliver the word of God in subtilty, but not in sincerity. Observe, 2. The declaration which the apostle makes of his own uprightness and integrity in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ: *As of sincerity, as of God, and in the sight of God, speak we in Christ*; that is, we act as men of sincerity in what we do, as men taught of God, and sent by God, as men acted by the power, and guided by the Spirit of Christ, and all this as in the sight of God; we speak as from God, of God, in obedience to his command, and with an eye at his glory. He is a better preacher that speaks with an upright heart, than he that speaks with an eloquent tongue; he that acts from religious principles, for holy ends, as in the presence of the all-seeing God, and with a fixed eye at the glory of God in what he preaches, he is an interpreter, one of a thousand.

CHAP. III.

Our apostle in this chapter intimates to us how much the reputation of a minister's person is needful and necessary in order to the success of his ministry; and because the false apostles did seek by all artifices to lessen St. Paul's esteem among the Corinthians, he shewed that their conversion to Christianity was a full evidence of God's owning and approving of him as his ambassador, and a sufficient commendation of his person and ministry amongst them; which ministry he proves to be far more excellent than that of Moses, as the gospel of life and liberty is more glorious than the law of condemnation.

DO we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men;

3 *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

Our apostle here expostulates the case with the Corinthians, why they would at any time hearken to the false apostles, who, by reflecting upon his person and ministry, made it needful for him to vindicate both from contempt and scorn. As if he had said, "What do I need to begin again in this second epistle, as I did in the first, to commend myself and the effects of my ministry among you? Or

need I commendatory letters either to you or from you, as the false teachers amongst you have? No, verily, you yourselves, by your conversion to Christianity, and embracing the faith of the gospel, are a better attestation and testimonial to the world, of the success of my ministry, than any written epistle is or can be: For you are *an epistle written in my heart*; that is, your conversion by my ministry, is the joy and rejoicing of my heart; there it is that I continually carry a thankful and honourable remembrance of you, and bear you upon my heart, whenever I go in and out before the Lord. And as my epistle, *you are known and read of all men*; that is, all Christians far and near take notice of you as a church which God has eminently blessed my ministry to the conversion and edification of." But, lest the apostle should seem too assuming in calling the Corinthians his epistle, in the next words he calls them the epistle of Christ, ver. 3. *Ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us*; that is, your faith and conversion was the work of Christ's Spirit, though wrought by my ministry; he having wrote his law in your hearts after a more excellent manner than any thing that can be written with ink and paper; not as the ten commandments of old were written, *in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart*; that is, in your hearts made soft and pliable, and ready to obey the word and will of God, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, using my ministry as the pen or instrument in his hand in order thereunto. Learn hence, 1. That it is a very great favour from God, when his ministers can see the success of their labours in the hearts and lives of any of their people; when they can say, *Ye are our epistle*. Learn, 2. That nothing doth so highly commend our ministry as our people's proficiency; their improvement in knowledge, their steadfastness in the faith, their growth in grace and holiness, is beyond all verbal commendations and acknowledgments whatsoever. Sermons fetch not applause from men's renown, the people's practice is the preacher's crown. Learn, 3. That whatever success the faithful ministers of Christ meet with, either in the work of conversion or edification, among a people, they attribute the whole efficiency of it unto God, ascribing nothing more than a bare instrumentality to themselves: *Ye are the epistle of Christ*, says the apostle, *ministered by us*; Christ has written his law in your hearts by my ministry: As if he had said, Christ is the writer, the pen is the minister, the ink the Spirit, the paper or table that receives the impression is the heart, and the law of God the writing writ therein and thereupon.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to Godward;

Observe here, How the apostle encourages himself from the experience he had of the present success of his ministry, to hope for the favour of farther and future success: *Such trust or confidence have we, through the grace of Christ, of the constant efficacy of our ministry, that he will still own and honour it, succeed and bless it.* When God has rendered our labours acceptable and successful amongst a people, either for conversion or edification, it should encourage us to trust in God for the efficacious assistance of our ministry, and rendering us yet more successful amongst them, and a greater blessing to them.

5 Not that we are sufficient of our-

selves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency *is* of God ;

6 ¶ Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit : for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle having made an apology and defence for himself, and his ministry, against those that did calumniate him, in the former verses : In the verse before us, he acknowledges his own inability for this work, and that his whole sufficiency for service was from God ; and this without doubt he mentions not only out of humility, but out of prudence also, in order to stop the mouths of those who might be apt to think he had too high an esteem of himself : As if the apostle had said, " Far be it from me to think that I could procure the success of my ministry, that I have any such sufficiency of myself to convert souls ; no, no, my sufficiency and success is all from God ; for alas ! there is no proportion between such a sublime and supernatural service as that of the gospel-ministry is, and the impotency and weakness of man : " *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Observe, 2. The free and full acknowledgment which the apostle makes of the great things which God hath done for him and by him : He did not find, but made him a minister, an able minister ; yea, an able minister of the New Testament, or new covenant ; not a preacher of the law of Moses, but of the gospel of Jesus : *Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.* To be a sufficient and successful gospel-minister is a very great favour from God to any person : The clay of the gospel is better than the gold of the temple ; the rags of the evangelical, more rich than the robes of the Levitical preacher : It is a great honour to be, and a greater favour to hear, the meanest gospel-preacher, than to hear all Moses' lectures. Observe, 3. How our apostle here insensibly slides into a comparison which he makes between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, in which he magnifies and prefers the latter above the former ; the law he calls *the letter*, the gospel *the Spirit* ; that is, a ministration of the Spirit. *The letter killeth* ; that is, the law condemneth and curseth the sinner, the transgressor of it ; but the Spirit of Christ revealed in the gospel, enableth, as well as directeth, to obey, and so *giveth life*. Note, here, How false the Quakers and others gloss is upon these words :—They by *the letter*, will understand the whole written word of God, contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the law and gospel both ; and by *the Spirit*, will have to be meant the inward and immediate teachings of the light within them. Others by *the letter*, understand the literal and historical sense of scripture in general ; and by *the Spirit* giving life, they understand the mystical and spiritual sense of scripture ; but it is evident from verse 3, that by *the letter* he understands the law engraven in stone, the law as delivered by Moses with an appearance of the glory of the Lord upon mount Sinai : And by *the Spirit*, is meant the blessed Spirit of Christ given to the apostles to enable them to preach the gospel, and conferred upon all believers that did obediently hear and receive it.

7 But if the ministration of death

written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was to be done away :

8 How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ?

Our apostle, in this and the following verses, goes on with his comparison betwixt the law and the gospel, and shews the transcendency of the latter above the former.—Where note, 1. He calls the law again a killing law, or a ministration of death ; because it condemns men for the breach of it, to temporal and eternal death, without opening to them any door of hope. Note, 2. This law (he speaks of it by way of diminution) was only written upon, and engraven in stone ; whereas the gospel is written in the fleshly tables of men's hearts. Note, 3. How the apostle declares that this ministration of the law was glorious, glorious in the minister of it, Moses, who had such a lustre upon his face, that the children of Israel could not bear the sight of it ; and glorious in the manner of giving it : There was a great deal of the glory and majesty of God attended the giving of the law to Moses ; the ministration of the law was glorious. Note, 4. The comparison which the apostle makes between the law and the gospel, and the preference which he gives to the one above the other. 1. As the glory of Moses' face ceased after a while, so the glory of the law ceased at the coming of the gospel. 2. The law was delivered by angels to Moses, but the gospel was delivered to the apostles by the Son of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. 3. Whereas the glory of Moses did more and more decrease ; the glory put upon the apostles, and derived from Christ, was still more and more increasing upon them. But, 4. The chief glory of the gospel, which the apostles here insists upon, is *ministration of the Spirit*, in the large effusions of it under the gospel-dispensation, giving spiritual and eternal life to believers, instead of death spiritual and eternal coming by the law. Well therefore might our apostle here say, the ministration of the Spirit, or the gospel, is much more glorious ; and consequently a greater reverence and honour is due to it, and to the ministers of it.

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which is made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Observe here, 1. The different titles given to the law, and to the gospel ; the former is called *the ministration of condemnation*, because it condemns men eternally for the

violation of it; the latter is called the ministration of righteousness or justification, because it discovers to us the only way for a sinner's justification before God, namely, by the righteousness of the Mediator. Observe, 2. That the apostle comparing the law and the gospel together, acknowledges that there was surpassing glory in the latter above and beyond the former. Indeed God's institution stamp an excellency upon the Jewish worship, and the law given them had both an intrinsic glory in it, as it was a revelation of the will of God; and also an accidental and adventitious glory, as it was attended with the solemnity of thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, and a voice like the sound of a trumpet, at the promulgation of it; yet says the apostle, compared with the gospel, the glory of the law, or Jewish worship, had no glory in it at all, by reason of the glory that doth excel; as the moon compared with the sun, is so outshined by it, that its brightness is little taken notice of. True, indeed, the law was a revelation of God's will as well as the gospel, but with this happy advantage on the gospel's side: The law was a revelation of God's will, as to duty and as to condemnation, in case of non-performance of that duty; but the gospel is a revelation of God's will, as to grace and mercy, as to remission of sin and eternal life. Observe, 3. Another argument produced here by the apostle, to prove the ministration of the gospel to be much more glorious than that of the law; namely, because it is much more durable and abiding: Verse 11. *If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.* The force of the argument lies thus: That which is durable and permanent, is far more excellent than that which is temporary and transient. Now the law or Jewish dispensation is vanished; its ministration is ceased, and all the legal ordinances are abolished; but the gospel-state remaineth to the end of the world. It is called a kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28, therefore the gospel-ministration, which is eternal, fixed and abiding, must needs be more excellent and more glorious than the legal dispensation, which was temporary, transient, and vanishing.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.

13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Here the apostle draws an inference from the foregoing discourse; that seeing himself and the other apostles had such hope, that their ministry was thus glorious, such confidence and assurance of the perfection and perpetuity of their ministry, they did now use great plainness, freedom, and boldness of speech in preaching and publishing the gospel; and did not imitate Moses, the minister of the law, who put a veil over his face; which was a sign of the obscurity of the legal dispensation, and of the blindness of the Jews, who could not see the end and accomplishment of that ceremonial and typical administration, which was to be abolished by Christ and his gospel: But their minds were then, and still are, blinded by prejudice and unbelief, and the same veil remaineth to this day spread over Moses' writings, and not taken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is now done away by the doctrines of Christ contained in the New Testament; nevertheless, when the hearts of the Jews shall be turned unto the Lord, and they own and acknowledge Jesus Christ, then the veil shall be taken away from the Jews, and they shall then clearly understand and see what is now concealed and hidden from their eyes. Learn hence, 1. That there is a natural veil of blindness and ignorance upon the minds of men, which hinders their discerning and understanding gospel mysteries. Learn, 2. That there is upon the understandings of the Jews a veil of unbelief and rooted prejudice against Christ and his holy religion; they wilfully shut their eyes, and said, *They would not see*; and God has judicially closed their eyes, and said, *They shall not see*. Learn, 3. That by reason of this veil upon their hearts, they cannot look to the end of that which was abolished; that is, to Jesus Christ, who was the end and scope at which the whole ceremonial law did aim and tend. Learn, 4. That when the Jews shall be called home, and converted to Christianity, the veil shall be removed from their hearts, and they shall then understand the tendency and meaning of the whole ceremonial law, and observe its fulfilling and accomplishment in our Lord Jesus Christ; *When they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

As if he had said, Christ is that quickening and life-giving Spirit, who takes away the veil from off our hearts; and where that Spirit, that all-glorious and all-powerful Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that is, clearness, and no more veil; freedom from the yoke of the legal administration, a liberty and freedom from sin, a liberty unto righteousness, a freeness and readiness of Spirit to do good, a liberty of address and approach to God, a liberty of speech in prayer before God. Thus the Spirit of the Lord is a free Spirit.

18 But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That is, we who live under the light, and enjoy the liberty of the gospel, with open face beholding as in a clear

glass the glory of the Lord Jesus, as Moses did the glory of God in the mount, are by degrees changed into the same image with him, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord working in us, and transforming us into his own likeness. Learn hence, 1. That the word and ordinances of God are the glass wherein we have now a sight of the glory of God. Learn, 2. That the sight of God in his ordinances is transforming, as well as the sight of him in heaven; the glory into which we are changed, is our conformity to that holiness which shineth in the word. Vision, or the sight of God here in his ordinances, assimilates as well as in heaven; perfect vision produceth perfect assimilation; but the souls present assimilation, or imperfect conformity to God here, is gradually carried on by daily communion with him. All sorts of communion among men have an assimilating power and efficacy: He that converses with vain company, grows more vain, and he that delights in holy and spiritual company, grows more serious than he was before: But nothing so transforms the spirit of a man, as communion with God in his ordinances doth; none so like him, as those that converse most frequently with him. Learn, 3. That if the sight of God in the glass of an ordinance be so assimilating, how transforming will be the sight of God in heaven, when we shall there behold and see him face to face? If the vision of Christ here be so influential upon believers, what an illustrious and infallible efficacy will the immediate, clear and perfect sight of his glory have in heaven? 1 John iii. 2. We shall be perfectly like him, when once we shall see him as he is.

CHAP. IV.

This chapter, together with a considerable part of the Epistle, is apologetical or excusatory; in which the apostle vindicates his office and dignity from the prejudices which either his sufferings which attended him in the dispensation thereof, or the suggestions of false apostles, and deceitful workers might have raised up against him. With these men he puts himself in the balance, and without either vanity or vain-glory prefers himself before them in point of fidelity and sincerity in the work of the ministry; as also, in point of diligence in the service whereunto he was in special mercy called. And accordingly thus he speaks:

THEREFORE, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to

every man's conscience in the sight of God.

That is, seeing we have such a glorious ministry, far more excellent than that of Moses, mentioned in the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, as we have received mercy or special favours from God in committing it to us, so we faint not under the difficulties and pressures to which it doth expose us. *Having received mercy we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, all fornication and uncleanness, all ambition and covetousness, which the false apostles allowed themselves in: Not walking in guile or craftiness; nor handling the word of God deceitfully, as they do; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, as persons acting in the sight of God.* Learn hence, 1. That the ministry of the gospel is a very glorious ministry, far excelling the Mosaic dispensation. 2. That it is a special favour from God to be judged faithful, and put into this ministry. 3. That no troubles or trials, no difficulties, dangers or distresses, should cause any of the faithful servants of God to faint, who have received mercy or favour from God to be put into the ministry: *Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* Observe, next, How the apostle, having vindicated and extolled his ministry, does in the second verse declare and assert his fidelity in the discharge of his ministry: *Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Hence learn, That the apostles delivered the gospel, in all things necessary to be known, believed, and practised, with great plainness and sufficient perspicuity; otherwise, they could not be said to manifest the truth to every man's conscience.

5 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

As if he had said, We preach the gospel plainly: But if men do not understand and believe it, will not embrace and obey it, it is not an argument of the gospel's obscurity, but of our hearers incredulity. The gospel is not hid from men for want of clearness, but only by means of their own voluntary and wilful blindness: *If our gospel be hid.* Here note, 1. St. Paul's claim and interest in the gospel which he preached, he calls it *his* gospel; not as if he was the author of it, but because of his instrumentality in the promulgation and establishing of it, it was a divine treasure committed to his care and trust; it was not his gospel, by way of original revelation, but by way of ministerial dispensation. Note, 2. The Corinthians non-proficiency under the gospel, specified, or at least supposed. *If our gospel be hid;* that is, if the word, which we preach with the greatest plainness, in the greatest simplicity and sincerity, if it be hidden from the minds and understandings of men, so as to miss of its convincing power, and converting efficacy, the fault is not in the gospel, but in them that sit under it. Note, 3. The heavy doom and judgment which the apostle passes upon all such persons as sit under the external dispensation of the gospel, and yet are no ways enlightened nor improved by it, but remain blind and ignorant, obstinate, and unreformed. It is a sad symptom and foreboding sign of a lost people. Learn hence, 1. That there are many, very many, who sit under the external dispensation of the gospel, unto whom the gospel is an hidden gospel. Learn,

2. That the gospel being hid from a people who have long enjoyed the light and benefit of it, is a sad symptom, yea, a certain sign of a lost people. Such blindness, under the clearest light, is like the covering of the face, or tying the handkerchief over the eyes, in order to the turning off the obstinate sinner into an eternal hell.

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Observe here, 1. The title given to Satan, he is styled the god of this world; not properly, but because the honour and homage of a god is challenged by him, and by a multitude of sinners given to him. He is called by our Saviour the *prince of this world*, and by the apostle the *ruler of the darkness of this world*; because he ruleth over a great part of the world, and they are his subjects, or rather his slaves. Observe, 2. The way and course which Satan takes to secure his subjects obedience to himself; he blinds their eyes, that they may never know a better prince, see a better way, or understand a better state, than he hath drawn them into.—Satan blinds the understandings of men by the efficacy of divers lusts, which are bred and nourished in their hearts. Now the streamings of sensual lusts from a corrupt heart, do blind the understanding, and beset the judgment, that the sinner can neither see nor know the excellency of spiritual objects. O bloody and barbarous prince, that puts out the eyes of all his subjects, darkens the mind and understanding, takes away the thinking, considering, and reasoning power of the soul, that they neither see nor consider spiritual things, nor have any distinct apprehensions of them! Observe, 3. The character of the persons whom Satan the god of this world, have blinded; Such as believe not; that is, both such as want the means of faith, and such as enjoy the means, but want the grace of faith: The former is the cause of the Pagan, the latter of the Christian world. Lord! how many live under the light of the gospel, that never had heart to receive it, or will to obey it! How great a part of the Christianized world do reject Christ! though called by his name, yet will not own his authority, or submit to his government. The nobles of the world think themselves dishonoured by submitting their necks to Christ's yoke; the sensualists of the world will not lay down a lust for him that laid down his life for them; the worldlings of the earth prefer their dirt and dunghill before the pearl of great price. O how few amongst them that profess Christianity do love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Observe, 4. The great end and design of the devil's agency, in blinding the minds of men with ignorance and error, with passion and prejudice; "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts," to the ruin of him and his kingdom. As the sun casts its beams upon blind men, but they receive not the light of it, so, though the light of Christ's glorious gospel shines before the eyes of them whom the god of this world has blinded with the hopes and desires, with the possessions and enjoyments of this world, yet they receive it not. Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to Christ. *The image of God*; that is, 1. His substantial and essential image, being God of God, very God of very

God. Christ considered with respect to his divine nature, is the express image of his Father's person. 2 Christ is his image as Mediator, and with reference to the gospel, in which he has given us glorious demonstrations of the power and wisdom, of the grace and holiness, of the mercy and goodness of God towards us; all which, as in a glass, are represented to us, and presented before us. In both these respects Christ is called, the image of God.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

In these words, our apostle further manifests his fidelity and integrity in preaching the gospel, by shewing that he sought to advance Christ, and not himself, in preaching of it. Here note, 1. The duty practised by St. Paul: *We preach*. How mean and ignoble soever this office of preaching is esteemed by some men, who value not their own or other men's souls, and therefore no wonder that they undervalue the means of making them happy; yet will the faithful ministers of Christ magnify this part of their office, not by pomp and state, nor by scorn and superciliousness, as thinking it beneath them to preach, but by an humble and painful attendance upon the ministry, which they have received of the Lord; and will dispense the word with evidence and perspicuity, with faithfulness and sincerity, with power and authority, with courage and boldness, and with exemplariness of conversation; not preaching angelical sermons, and leading diabolical lives. Observe, 2. The subject matter of the apostle's preaching; *not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. But when may persons be said to preach themselves? *Ans*. When they make themselves the authors of their own ministry, running before they are sent, and are self-created preachers; when they make themselves the master of the preaching, venting their own passions, and prejudices, and private opinions, instead of the doctrine of Christ; and when they make themselves the end of their preaching, aiming rather at pleasing others, and profiting themselves, than at the glory of God, and the good of men's souls. But what is it to preach Christ? *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. *Ans*. When he is the author of our ministry, and we receive our mission from him; when we make him the object of our preaching; when the subject-matter and substance of it is Jesus Christ, either explicitly or reductively; and when we make him the end of our preaching, designing to promote the honour and interest of Christ by our ministry, that his people may be gathered, his body edified, his saints perfected, his enemies subdued, his gospel propagated; and he finally admired in all them that believe. Observe, 3. In what capacity the apostle looked upon himself in the church of Christ; not as a lord, but as a servant: *Ourselves your servants*. There is an honour belonging to Christ's ministers, but verily that honour consists in service which we owe to the church of Christ: Servants we are to the souls of men, but not to the humours of men; at the same time that we are servants to them, we are to rule over them, and they are to obey, and submit unto us as those who watch for their souls. Therefore it is added, *Servants for Jesus' sake*: that is, servants in order to the promoting of his honour, and his church's interest:—"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

(Observe here, The faithful and humble acknowledgment which the apostle makes, how himself and his fellow-apostles came to preach Jesus Christ so convincingly to others; namely, That Almighty God, who at first by his omnipotent word produced light out of darkness, by no less efficacy and power brought him, a lost sinner, out of the darkness of Pharisaism and sin, and shined into his and their hearts with a glorious light, to the intent that he and they should communicate and impart this divine light of the knowledge of God, which shineth in the face of Christ unto others. Learn hence, That ministers must know Christ themselves, before they can make him known to others; Christ must be revealed in them, before he can be revealed by them; he must shine into their hearts by his Holy Spirit, and give them an experimental acquaintance, in their own souls, with what they deliver and make known to others. Every truth ought to be the transcript of our own experience, and be preached first to our hearts, and then to our hearers. Who can savingly enlighten others, that is in the darkness of ignorance, or sin, himself?

7 ¶ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

In the foregoing verses we find the apostle magnifying his office, extolling his ministry, and vindicating his fidelity in the discharge of his duty. In this verse, observe, 1. He compares the gospel he preached to a treasure: *We have this treasure*; a treasure for the enriching and edifying of the church. The gospel is a treasure for its worth and dignity, for its abundance and variety, for its closeness and secrecy. This treasure Christ keeps under lock and key, only intrusting those with it whom he calls to it, and furnishes for it. They are no better than thieves and sacrilegious robbers, who without a mediate call or warrant from Christ, do assume this trust, and break open this treasure. Observe, 2. The repository in which this treasure is laid up, in *earthen vessels*: So the apostles and ministers of the gospel are called. Where note, The word of description, they are *vessels*; and the word of diminution, they are *earthen vessels*. 1. The preachers of the gospel are represented by a word of description, they are *vessels*: Thus vessels are not natural, but artificial instruments. No man is born a Christian, much less a minister, but made such. Vessels are not of equal capacity; some are less, others greater: Thus the ministers of the gospel have gifts and graces of different degrees and excellencies. Again, *vessels* are not for reception only, but for effusion also; as they receive and retain, so they let out what is put into them: The ministers of Christ are not only to receive and lay up, but to lay out this heavenly treasure, which is not impaired by imparting. Finally, vessels are not the originals of what they have, but all they contain is poured into them, and received by them. A mine has treasure in its own bowels, but it is put into the chest. Thus the preachers of the gospel are not the authors, but the receivers only, of those truths they publish: 1 Cor.

xi 23. "I have received of the Lord what I also delivered unto you." Note farther, The word of diminution, they are *earthen vessels*. The preachers of the gospel are divine in regard of the sublimity of their doctrine, but human and earthen in regard of the frailty of their condition. Their being called *earthen vessels*, may denote the meanness of their condition, which for the most part is little and low in the world: As the poor receive the gospel, so are they very often poor and low that publish the gospel, necessitous and indigent, *earthen vessels*. Again, it may denote the frailty of their persons, and the contemptibleness of them. Earthen vessels are little set by, stand in open places, used by every hand, and at every turn; while plate, gold and silver vessels, are laid and locked up with great carefulness. Thus it is often with the preachers of the gospel, they are objects base and vile, contemptible and despised in the eyes of the world, vessels wherein there is no pleasure; yea, with some, not only our persons are despicable, but our very office and function is contemptible. In a word, as our mean condition and base estimation, so our bodily constitution proclaims us earthen: our bodies are earthen, because formed of the dust of the earth, because subject to flaws and cracks, and to be broken in pieces; we that preach eternal life to others, are dying men to ourselves; and whilst the word of life is in our mouths, many times death is in our faces. Observe, lastly, The reason assigned why this treasure of the gospel is committed to earthen vessels, men; not to heavenly vessels, angels; namely, *That the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us*: From the weakness of man, the instrument, there redounds great honour to God, the agent. This precious treasure of the gospel is lodged in such weak and worthless vessels, that as the power is from God, namely, the awakening, convincing, quickening, heart-changing power of the word is from him: So the glory, the entire glory and complete praise, may be attributed and described to him, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us."

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed:

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

The false apostles and some weak Christians having taken offence at the manifold and great sufferings which St. Paul, with his fellow apostles, had met with in the course of their ministry: In these verses, St. Paul shows the church at Corinth, that there was no reason at all why any should be offended at his sufferings, or any cause why the false apostles should object, that if he had preached the gospel sincerely, Almighty God would never have suffered him to be persecuted and afflicted so severely; namely, because all his afflictions were so graciously moderated, and himself so powerfully upheld by God, that he sunk not under the weight and burden of them. We are troubled, says he, on every side, but not overwhelmed with our troubles; we are often perplexed, but not so as to despair of God's help and succour; we are persecuted by men, but not forsaken of God; cast down indeed, but not killed by the fall. So that there is in our sufferings a resemblance and representation of the death and sufferings of Christ Jesus. We bear in our bodies a memorative conformity to our dying Lord, that it may appear how mightily we are supported by the quickening power of the Spirit of Christ, under all our afflictions. As if the apostle had said, "Behold and admire in us the almighty power of Christ, exerted towards us, in upholding these earthen vessels (our frail bodies) notwithstanding the many thousand knocks they have met with in carrying about that heavenly treasure, the holy gospel, with which God has intrusted us." Observe next, He rejoices in the cause of his sufferings: *We are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake*; for our owning, preaching, and practising the doctrine of Jesus. Blessed be God we suffer not as evil-doers, but for well-doing; we suffer for the sake of the best person, and in the best cause that ever the world was acquainted with. He adds, "We are delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh;" that is, the infinitely wise God suffers us to be thus afflicted, that in and by the sufferings which our mortal flesh does sustain and undergo, he might make it evidently manifest that Christ is risen from the dead; and, as a living Head, conveys the necessary influences of strength, support, and comfort, as to all his members, so more particularly to us his ministers; by which we are enabled, without fainting, to suffer the hardest things with patience, courage and constancy. Observe, lastly, He declares to them the great advantages which they reaped by his afflictions: *Death worketh in us, but life in you*; that is, the preaching of the gospel exposes us to death, but unto you it brings eternal life. Our death is your life, our sufferings are your advantage, we having the same faithful spirit which was in the saints under the Old Testament, and particularly in holy David, Psal. cxvi. 10, who says, "I believed and therefore spake; I was sore afflicted." Now as he believed and trusted in God for deliverance out of his many and great troubles, so, in like manner do we believe and trust. From the whole, note, 1. That a perplexed, and persecuted, and afflicted, and distressed condition, was the lot and portion of the members, but especially of the ministers of Christ, in the first and purest ages of the church. Christ espoused his church to himself upon the bed of his cross, his head begirt with a pillow of thorns, his body drenched in a bath of his own blood: And if the head was crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses. Note, 2. Though all Christ's followers have drank of the same cup with himself, yet the dregs of the cup have usually been put into the hand of the ministers of

the word; *We that live are always delivered unto death*: Most of the apostles were by the rage of tyrants, put to cruel deaths, and offered up a bloody sacrifice. The calling of ministers is honourable, but their outward condition is deplorable; their embassy is glorious, but their usage is often grievous: God sends them forth with renown, the world entertains them with reproach. Note, 3. God doth not bring his people into a suffering condition, and then leave them; when they suffer for him, they are not forsaken by him: The voice of despair is not heard in the dark night of their calamity: But God has either the castle of providence, or the ark of promise; the all-sufficiency of his power, or the abundance of his grace: These, every of these, and all these, are for his people's retirement in the greatest storms and tempests: "We are troubled, yet not distressed; persecuted, but not forsaken."

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

A double reason is here assigned, why the apostle bare his sufferings with such invincible courage and Christian patience. The first is drawn from the advantage which would redound to the church by his sufferings: *All things are for your sakes*; that is, all the straits we are put to, turn to your advantage: If we die, it is to confirm you by our sufferings: if we be delivered, it is for God's glory and your good, "that the abundant grace might by the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Whatever we meet with, tends to the confirming of your faith, and the increasing of your thankfulness. A second reason is drawn from the joyful issue of his sufferings: He and his fellow-apostles steadfastly believed, that Almighty God, who raised up Christ from the dead, would in like manner raise them from the grave of their sufferings, yea, from the grave of death; and both soul and body shall be presented with them, to be eternally glorified together. Learn hence, That how different soever the lot and portion of God's children and servants be in this life, some more, others less afflicted; yet having all, at the same time, faith in God for a joyful deliverance out of their afflictions, they shall all meet in the morning of the resurrection, and be by Christ presented unto God as persons redeemed by him, and shall eternally be glorified with him: "He which raised up Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The original word for *fainting*, signifies to shrink back, as cowards in war, or to sink down as a porter, under the pressure of some heavy burden: *For this cause, we faint not*. For what cause? Namely, this, that though their bodies were weakened by affliction, and they were daily decaying as to the strength and vigour of the outward man; yet as

to their inward man, the strength and vigour of their minds and spirits, were day by day renewed. Oh happy apostle! the cold blasts of persecution beating upon thy outward man, did, by a spiritual antiperistasis, increase the heat of grace within; thy soul is made fat with blows upon thy body, and battens with pricking and beating; every stone thrown at thee knocked thee nearer to Christ, the chief corner-stone: Under all the storms and billows of affliction, thou, like Noah's ark, wert lifted up nearer heaven; and after every encounter, thy salvation was nearer than before. Well therefore mightest thou declare and say, *For this cause we faint not.*

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory.

Still our apostle proceeds in assigning reasons why all the afflictions which himself and others met with, were not only tolerable, but joyous; namely, because, 1. His afflictions were light. 2. Because they were short. They were light; But how? Not considered in themselves; so they were hard and heavy; thrice was he beaten with rods, five times he received forty stripes save one; but light compared with the glory expected. Again, they were short; but for a moment compared with eternity. Mark the gradation: For affliction there is glory; for light affliction, a weight of glory; and for light affliction, which is but for a moment, an eternal weight of glory. Observe farther, The apostle doth not barely say, that glory will be the consequence of affliction, but that affliction will be the cause of glory; *it worketh for us.* But how? Not as a meritorious cause: For alas! how can our afflictions deserve this happiness? What proportion can there be betwixt light and momentary afflictions, and an eternal weight of glory? But they work for us, as they are sanctified by God to us. His infinite mercy and goodness, his covenant truth and faithfulness, make his saints' afflictions a whipping-post to their corruptions; they purge out iniquity, and take away our sin, if we belong to God as his covenant children. But for wicked and obdurate sinners, alas! it is much otherwise: Instead of being refined from their dross, and purged from their filth, by being in the furnace of affliction, it boils their scum and impurity more into them; and, like flints in the fire, they fly in the very face of God their refiner.

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The last reason is assigned here, why the apostle was kept from fainting in and under the pressure of the most heavy afflictions: He looked not at present, but future things; not at things seen, but unseen; not at things temporal, but eternal. Observe here, 1. What it was that the apostle, when on earth, made his main scope, his chief aim, grand design, and grand end. This is signified to us in the original word σκοπεῖν, which signifies to look as the archer doth at the mark he shoots at. There were some things which he, his fellow apostles, and all serious Christians with them, looked at. This is specified, first, negatively,

We look not at things seen; at the things of this life, at sensible objects, be they bitter or sweet, be they comforts or crosses: Temporal things are temporary things; and we mind them not, as the men of the world do, who make them their chief and principal aim, and scope: No, we leave the world to the men of the world: We look not at things which are seen. But, secondly, This is specified affirmatively, *We look at the things which are not seen; the things of another life, things which are objects of faith, and not visible to fleshly eyes; we look at these, we make these our aim and scope.* And the reason is subjoined why they made these things the matter of their choice, the objects of their desire and endeavour. This is intimated in the word (*for*;) *For the things which are seen are temporal; that is, all the visible things of this life, whether comforts or crosses, whether prosperous or adverse, be it health or sickness, liberty or restraint, poverty or riches, honour or disgrace, life or death, they are all προσωρινὰ for a while, only for a short season, as the word signifies; therefore we do not much eye them, we trouble not our heads much about them; they are things of an higher nature we look at, such as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard; and these are the durable things; for the things which are not seen are eternal.* Learn hence, 1. That temporal things are things that are seen, do take up the heads and hearts, the minds and thoughts of the men of the world, and are the sum of their desires, and the substance of their endeavours: *We look not at the things which are seen,* but there are those that do; *we make them not our aim and scope,* but others look at them, wholly at them, can see nothing beyond them, and desire nothing besides them. Learn, 2. That things unseen, the things of eternity, and the invisible encouragements of another world, are the mark and scope which every real Christian is aiming at, and contending for: *We look at the things which are not seen,* and make them our aim and scope. Learn, 3. That the things not seen, or the things of another life and world, are eternal things; that is, such things as admit of no changes and alterations, of no gradations or successions, of decay or consumption, of no future hopes and expectations, of no mixture or moderation, of no recovery or revocation, of no period or conclusion. Oh eternity! eternity! that vast, that boundless ocean of eternity! how does it swallow up our thoughts with wonder and amazement! God help us daily to consider of it, duly to prepare for it, and not to prefer the trifles of time before it, but make the wisest provision for the longest duration. Learn, 4. That which puts the weight upon things not seen, and renders them the proper objects of a Christian's aim and choice, is this, because they are eternal: That which chiefly casts the scale, and maketh things not seen to preponderate, is because they are eternal things. It is eternity which transcendeth all expression, all conception, much more all our comprehension, that puts an infinite weight upon unseen things: *The things which are not seen are eternal;* This meditation, well digested, would work in us an holy indifferency towards all temporal things; it would moderate our esteem of them, our desires after them, our delight in them, and our grief for the want and loss of them; and sweeten all those troubles and trials, all those sufferings and afflictions, which we meet with in our passage through time unto eternity. Lord, take off and turn away our eyes, from things which are seen, and help us to "look at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having at the latter end of the foregoing chapter, recorded the sufferings of himself and other believers for the sake of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience; he comes in this chapter to give a reason why he did so courageously and perseveringly labour in the work of the ministry, notwithstanding the many difficulties and great dangers which he met with on every side, for commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And he tells us, it was the well-grounded hopes of a future immortality which did support and bear up his spirit under all the pressures of human life. From whence we learn, that the difficulties and distresses of good men in this life, although they should end in death itself, are matter of no great terror to those who have a well grounded confidence and good assurance of their blessed immortality. For thus our apostle speaks :

FOR we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle compares the body of a believer to an house, to an earthly house, and to an house of tabernacle; to an house, because of its comely fabric and composure, as also in regard of the inhabitant that dwells in it, the never-dying soul; to an earthly house, in regard of the matter of which it is composed, and in regard of the means by which it is sustained; and to an house of tabernacle, because such buildings consist of slight and mean materials, they are soon set up, and as soon taken down — Observe, 2. The necessity of this earthly tabernacle of the body's dissolution by death, it must down and be dissolved. 3. The believer's future happiness, after the body's present dissolution asserted and declared; "They have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Learn hence, 1. That it is the pleasure and will of God, that his people should for a short time remain in this earthly tabernacle of the body. Learn, 2. That this earthly tabernacle of the believer's body, sooner or later, must by death be dissolved. Learn, 3. That after the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle of the body, all the faithful have an eternal habitation, a building of God, not made with hands, in the highest heavens. Learn, 4. That it is both the duty

and interest of every sincere and serious Christian, to labour for the certain knowledge and full assurance of this happy privilege, and be able to say, *We know, &c.*

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven :

For in this, that is, in this ruinous earthly tabernacle. Observe here, 1. The strength and vehemency of the saint's affection, we groan; the word signifies such a groaning as of a man that has a load or burthen lying upon him, which makes him fetch his wind from his very bowels: As there are groans which proceed from sorrow, so there are groans which arise from desire and hope. Thus here, We groan, earnestly desiring. Observe, 2. What is the subject which the apostle's groaning-desires were carried out after; namely, to be clothed with a celestial body, instead of that clogging body of earthly corruption which here they carried about with them, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon, &c. Learn thence, That such as do believe and wait for a blessed immortality, do groan for it, and earnestly desire it, because of the miseries and pressures by sin and sorrow in this present life, because they have already a taste of the happiness and glory of the life to come, and because the Holy Spirit doth excite and stir up these groaning desires in the hearts of believers: Rom. viii. 23. "We also, that have the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan within ourselves."

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

That is, If so be at our passage hence, we shall have the happiness to be of the number of those who are found clothed with glory, or clothed with holiness and good works to fit us for our clothing in glory, that we may not be found naked, in our natural turpitude of sin and spiritual nakedness, which will render us abominable in the sight of God. Learn hence, That none can groan or long for heaven but such as are clothed with a gospel-righteousness, that of justification, sanctification, and new obedience: None shall be clothed upon with glory hereafter, but such as are clothed with grace and holiness here.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Note here, That this groaning desire, again mentioned by the apostle in this verse, with respect to the burthen of the body, to get rid of it, is not either an unnatural desire, or a discontented desire, or a desire of death as death, or a desire to be unhoused, and without clothing for the soul; but he would be better clothed with a celestial body, that his mortal part might be swallowed up by immortal glory. As if the apostle had said, "As weary as I am of life, by means of sin and sorrow, by reason of corruption and affliction, yet I would not barely, for the sake of that, desire a dissolution, but for the hope's sake of eternal and immortal life." — Learn hence, 1. That whilst the saints live in this earthly, mortal body, they are burdened with a heavy load of sin and affliction. 2. That believers thus burdened, do, in an

holy manner, groan and long for a better state. 3. That in that better state, mortality shall be swallowed up of life. 4. That in that life, we shall be clothed again with our own bodies, glorious and heavenly: "We groan, not to be unclothed but clothed upon."

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

That is, He that hath wrought and appointed us, he that hath prepared and fitted us for this glorious change, and hath set our souls a-longing for this immortal state, is God; who hath also given us by his Spirit those holy affections, fervent desires, and faithful endeavours, which are the earnest of heaven before we enjoy it. Learn hence, 1. That Almighty God doth fit and frame his people for that happy state of bliss and glory, which he has designed them for, and appointed them unto. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God." Learn, 2. That to the intent his saints may look and long for that glorious and immortal state with the greater vehemency and desire, he has already given them an earnest and foretaste of it, by his Holy Spirit in their hearts.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

We are confident, that is, by the Holy Spirit comfortably assured of a better state. They who have the earnest of the Spirit, may be confident of their future glorious state; or we are confident; that is, we are of good courage, fearing neither death nor danger in the way of our duty. "Knowing that whilst we are at home here in the body," that is, whilst sojourning in the body as pilgrims and strangers, *we are absent from the Lord*: That is, we are detained from the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, and kept out of the possession of that happiness which makes heaven. Here the apostle plainly intimates, that whilst we remain in the body, we are detained from our happiness, and that as soon as we leave the body, we shall be admitted to our happiness. Learn, 1. That a Christian is not in his own proper home whilst he sojourneth in the body, and lives in his earthly tabernacle here below. His birth and parentage is from heaven, his treasure and inheritance in heaven, his kindred and relations and best friends are there, and there shall he longest abide. Learn, 2. That the true reason why the saints count themselves here not at home, is because they are absent from the Lord whilst present in the body: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight:

That is, our condition here in this world is such, that we cannot see God face to face, but by faith only: whilst we are in the body, we do not see and enjoy, but believe and expect. Faith is the thing in expectation, sight is the thing in fruition: Faith is a cloudy discovery of things at a distance, sight is a clear view and apprehension of things that are present. Learn, 1. That faith is for earth, and sight is for heaven. 2. That till we have sight, it is a great advantage that we have faith. 3. That if we now have faith, we may be well assured, that ere long we shall have sight.

8 We are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

The original words for we are confident and willing, denote first courage and undaunted boldness, with respect to death, and complacency and satisfaction in it. *We are willing*; The translation is too flat, *ευδοκουμεν*, *we are well pleased*. It is a grateful and desirable thing to us to leave the body, yet not in an absolute, but comparative consideration. We are willing rather; that is, rather than not see and enjoy the Lord, rather than be always here sinning and groaning. "We had rather be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Learn, 1. That our happiness in the world to come, lies in our being present with the Lord. 2. That we are present with the Lord, as soon as the soul quitteth and takes its leave and farewell of the body. 3. That a state of separation from the body, is much more preferable to the saints than that of dwelling in the body. 4. That this desire, preference, and choice, arises from that confident assurance which they have of a better state, and of their interest in it. *We are confident, I say, &c.*

9 ¶ Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.

The word signifies to labour ambitiously, as an ambitious courtier labours for his prince's favour. We labour, whether present in the body, or absent from the body, whether living or dying, that our persons and our services may be accepted with him, whenever we appear before him. Learn, 1. That to be accepted with the Lord, is a very high honour: To have our persons accepted, and our performances acceptable, are high favours; the former is the ground of the latter, and Christ is the foundation of both, Ephes. i. 6. Learn, 2. That it is a gracious person's great ambition and desire, his aim and scope, his design and endeavour, that living and dying he may find acceptance with God, and his actions be such, as God may well like and approve of. "We ambitiously labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

10 For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

These words are fully descriptive of a future judgment. In which observe, 1. The necessity of a future judgment. We must, willing or unwilling. 2. The universality of this judgment. We must all. 3. The person by whom, and before whom, we must be judged, Christ. 4. The manner of this judgment, *All must appear*, and be made manifest, both persons and actions. 5. The matter about which we shall be judged, *The things done in the body*. 6. The end of all this inquisition, to be punished or rewarded, according to our actions. Learn, 1. That there will certainly come a day, when every person that ever lived in this world, shall certainly be judged by Jesus Christ: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Learn, 2.

That every man's judgment and sentence at the great day, shall proceed and be pronounced according to what he has done in the flesh, be it good or bad; *That every one may receive the things done in his body, &c.*

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

That is, knowing the terror and dread of that terrible and dreadful day, in which Christ will judge the whole race of mankind; and being persuaded of the truth and certainty of it ourselves, we endeavour to persuade all men, by all means, to fly from the wrath to come, by repentance and faith, that they may be found of God in peace in that solemn hour. Learn hence, That the knowledge and consideration of the present terrible judgments of God, and the future terrors of that great day, should move the ministers of God to persuade, and their people to be persuaded, to a careful and serious preparation for it. Such ministers as know and consider the terrors of the Lord, will both persuade others, and be persuaded themselves, to look after reconciliation and acceptance with God; that when Christ comes terribly, they may appear comfortably: *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.* It follows, *but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.* As if the apostle had said, We hope God hath discovered our sincerity unto you in some measure, as he is an observer of it, and witness to it himself.— Learn hence, That then a minister has the full assurance of his sincerity, when he has the approbation of God, and his own conscience, and also a testimony in the consciences of his people. This is gained by the purity of our doctrine, by the piety of our lives, and by the prudence of our conduct: When these are evident and manifest to the consciences of our people, how convincing is it to them, and comfortable unto us!

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

As if our apostle had said, "We commend not ourselves to you upon our own account, as if there were any need of it, with respect to us; but only to give you an occasion to vindicate us, and to glory to others on our behalf, when need requires, that you may have wherewith to answer the calumnies of the false apostles, who gloried much in outward appearance of piety and zeal, but not in purity of heart and upright intentions." Learn hence, That though the ministers of Christ have no itching desire to exalt themselves in a way of self commendation, yet they are sometimes constrained to it in a way of self-vindication, and this is not only lawful but a duty; because scandals cast upon a good man reach farther than himself; they reflect upon others as well as himself, yea, they reflect upon God himself, therefore to be wiped off and rolled away.

13 For whether we be besides ourselves, *it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*

The holy apostle was sometimes so zealously transported, and carried forth in his high actings for Jesus Christ, that the false apostles represented him as a frantic person, crazed, mad, and what not: "Be it so, says the holy man, it is unto God, and his cause, and to propagate his glory, and not my own: Or if I be sober in my words and actions, it is for your benefit, not my own." Learn hence, That wicked and carnal men account and represent the holy servants of God as a sort of madmen. Workings of grace are sometimes so far above reason, that they seem to be without reason:— There are several acts of holiness, which the profane world esteem as madness; as eminent self-denial, great seriousness in religion, their burning zeal, their holy singularity, their fervours of devotion, their patience and meekness under sufferings and reproaches.— All these acts of holiness represents the saints as madmen to carnal man.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us.

That is, the infinite love of Christ, in dying for us, constraineth us to live unto him, and do the utmost services for him. Some understand it passively, for the love that Christ beareth us; others take it actively, for the love which we bear to him. Now, this love is said to *constrain*. Some think it a metaphor from a woman in travail, that strives to be delivered of her burthen; others, that it signifies to have one bound, and so much under power, that he cannot move without leave. The expression denotes the absolute empire which the love of Christ had over him, ruling all the inclinations of his heart, and the actions of his life. It signifies the sweet violence and force of love, by which the soul is overpowered, and cannot say nay; it does wholly possess us, rule and command us, keep us in its power, and make us do whatever it would have us to do. Learn hence, That the love of Christ has such a constraining power, and obliging force and efficacy, upon the soul, that it inclines it to a willing performance of all duties, though attended with the greatest difficulties and dangers. Love is the spring of action, 'tis a forcible and compelling, 'tis an invincible, unconquerable affection: And it has such an influence from the consideration of what Christ is in himself, and of what he has done for us, and designed for us.

Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

If one died for all, then were all dead. Some understand it of a death in sin; all were in a state of sin and death, when Christ died for them. Others understand it mystically, when Christ died for all, all were then dead; that is, dead in Christ unto sin; intimating that when Christ died, all believers were dead in him to sin and the world. As Christ died for sin, so ought all to die unto sin. Farther,

Christ dying once for all, proveth the verity of his satisfaction, and the sufficiency of his satisfaction. What virtue was there in that death which merited life for all! And what love was there in our God to appoint one for all, and to accept one for all! That one so worthy in himself, that one so dear to God, should die, should die so willingly, should die so painfully, should die so shamefully, should die under a curse, to absolve from guilt, and discharge from condemnation! *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!* Observe next, The great end and design of Christ in his death and resurrection for us; namely, 1. Negatively declared, that we should not *live unto ourselves*, to our own ease, profit, or honour; gratifying our own wills, inclinations and corrupt desires, serving our own interest and ends; but positively, *to live unto him*, according to his word and will, in obedience to his commands, and with an eye at his glory, *who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*. Had Christ only died for us, the favour had been inexpressible and unrequitable, and required us to live to his name and glory; but when he not only died for us, but rose again, and lives for ever in heaven, to pour down fresh benefits upon us, and to do good offices daily and hourly for us, how endearing are our obligations to love him, and to live unto him! Learn hence, 1. That by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, Christians are both obliged to, and have obtained the grace of newness of life, and holiness of conversation. Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and will be the endeavour, of all those that are quickened by the Spirit of Christ unto newness of life, to refer all their actions not to themselves, but unto him: None can do both, live to Christ and self together. His we are already; by creation, by redemption, by sanctification, by voluntary resignation, we live by him. Our spiritual life is from him, we expect hereafter to live with him; let us therefore now live unto him, even unto him that died for us, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

These words, probably, were spoken by the apostle, to rebuke the carnal boastings of some Jews, who gloried in their having seen Christ in the flesh before he died. The apostle directs them to a more spiritual knowledge of him, now since his resurrection, as more suitable to his glorified state: *q. d.* "What though you have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence when on earth, all that corporeal familiarity is ceased; 'tis his spiritual gracious presence which now you are to depend upon, and value yourselves by." For *henceforth know we no man after the flesh*; we value no man for his outward advantages, for his wisdom, riches, or learning. Yea, *though we have known Christ after the flesh*, seeing and conversing with him when here on earth, yet *must we know him so*, and enjoy him as such, *no more*. Our carnal affections and relations to him must ever cease, now he is exalted into a spiritual and glorious condition. Learn hence, 1. That a bare knowing of Christ after the flesh, ought to cease among Christians. There is a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, since his ascension into heaven; namely, by a naked profession of his name, without a conformity to his laws, and by acts of sensitive affection: Some by reading the history of our Saviour's passion, others

by seeing in the sacramental elements, a tragical representation of his crucifixion, do find their human passions stir and move; but, if it rests here, without drawing forth our love to his person, and quickening our obedience to his commands; all this is but knowing Christ *after the flesh* to no spiritual or saving purposes. Learn, 2. That bare knowledge of Christ after the flesh will do us no good, be of no comfort or advantage to us, as to our eternal salvation: It is not a fond affection to his person and memory, but obedience to his laws that Christ values. It is observable, that an outward ceremonious respect to our Saviour's person was very little regarded by him, when he was here upon earth; a serious attention to his doctrine was infinitely preferred by him before all that. Our love to Christ is better shewn by religious services, than by passionate affections. We find, St. John xx. when Mary fell at Christ's feet, after he was risen, and embraced him, when she held him by the feet and worshipped him, when in an humble and affectionate devotion she lies prostrate before him, Christ forbids it, *Touch me not*. He rejects all these external testimonies of her love, which proceeded only from human affection; but he directs her to a more acceptable service, namely, to run and carry tidings of his resurrection to his disconsolate disciples; *Go to my disciples, and say, &c.* From whence I infer, That it is much more acceptable to Christ to be about his service, and doing good in our place and station, than performing any offices of human love and respect unto his person. Seeing then, that this ceremonious respect pleased Christ, neither when on earth, nor now he is in heaven, *henceforth know we no man after the flesh*: Yea, *though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth we know him no more*.

17 Therefore, if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.

As if the apostle had said, If any one amongst you pretend to be a Christian indeed, engrafted into Christ by baptism and regeneration, and is a member of his body, he is by regeneration made a new man, all the faculties of his soul are renewed, his principles, affections, and practices are all new: *Old things are passed*, or passing away daily, the old carnal inclinations of mind are wearing off, the old will is changed, the old life is reformed; and, in a word, whatever was old and carnal, is now become new and spiritual, *Behold, all things are become new*; new affections, new inclinations, new dispositions, a new course, and a new conversation. Nothing is new physically; he is the same person, he has the same faculties: But all things are new qualitatively, he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Learn hence, 1. That all such as call themselves the disciples of Christ, and own themselves to be his followers, are and ought to be new creatures. This implies a real and inward, a thorough and prevailing change both in heart and life; not a civil change, barely from profaneness to sobriety; not a sudden change, only under some great affliction or awakening providence: not a change from one sect or party of professors to another: But the change of the new creature consists in a new mind, a new will, a new judgment, new affections, in a new conversation, not in a new form or profession; the change of the new creature intro-

duces the life of God, and produces the nearest likeness to God. Learn, 2. That this new creation, wrought in a man by the word and Spirit of God, is an indubitable evidence of his interest in Christ, and title to salvation; for where the new creature is, there all the saving graces of the Spirit are, as a pledge and an earnest of glory and happiness.

18 And all things are of God,—

That is, all those things fore-mentioned belonging to this new spiritual creation, are of God, as the author and efficient cause of them. Learn, that God is the original author of the new creature, and of all things belonging thereunto. This appears partly from the nature of the work. 'Tis a new creation; and partly from the objects of this work, the persons wrought upon. They are averse from God, in enmity to him, and rebellion against him, dead in sin, under the dominion of Satan. Well, therefore, might the apostle say, *All these things are of God.*

—Who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

In these words the apostle gives us a short, but full account of the grand doctrine of a sinner's reconciliation unto God by the death of Christ, which is the principal subject and substantial part of the gospel. Where observe, 1. The privilege itself, *reconciliation*; this is twofold: *Fundamental*, in the death of Christ, he is our peace; God laid the foundation of our peace and reconciliation with himself in the death of his Son: *Actual*, in the application of it, on our part, by faith. The death of Christ rendered God reconcilable: Faith renders him actually reconciled. Observe, 2. The author of this reconciliation, God the Father; he was the person wronged by sin, declaring his anger against the sinner: Hence we are said to have access to the Father, through Christ, and by the Spirit. The Son brings us to the Father, and the Spirit directs us to the Son: Christ takes away God's enmity against us, and the Spirit takes away our enmity against God. Observe, 3. The medium or mean by which we become reconciled to God, *Jesus Christ*. Christ was the meritorious cause of this privilege: Christ is the centre of that agreement between the justice of God, and the mercy of God. Observe, 4. The parties at variance, and made one by reconciliation, God and the world, God and mankind. Almighty God, in consideration of Christ's death, did so far reconcile and forgive the offending world, as to offer them pardon of sin, and salvation by a Redeemer, upon a condition of their believing acceptance: But none are actually reconciled but believers, who actually accept the terms and conditions of peace and reconciliation by faith, which is a necessary receptive qualification. Learn hence, That there is a happy peace and reconciliation made in and by Jesus Christ, between an offended God, and an offending world.—Reconciliation is a

repairing of decayed friendship, or the making up of a breach between two that were formerly friends, but now at variance. The reconciliation is mutual, because the enmity is such; yet the scripture speaks more of our being reconciled to God, than of God's being reconciled to us, because we are in the fault, and not God; we the cause of the breach, we offended God, not God us; and because we have the benefit of this reconciliation, and not God, 'tis no profit to him that we are at peace with him; and because all the difficulty of being reconciled lies on our part, and not God's.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Observe here, 1. The minister's office and employment declared: they are *ambassadors for Christ*, ambassadors from God to man; and, as ambassadors, they have their mission, their commission, from a great Prince, about great concerns; they must be faithful to their instructions, they are inviolable by the law of nations, and their embassy must be received, upon pain of displeasure. Where let us remark, the wonderful goodness and wisdom of God, in appointing men, of the same level with us, and not angels superior to us, to dispense the mystery of reconciliation to us. As God deals more familiarly with us in this way, (for we cannot bear the voice of God or the sight of angels) so there is more certainty in this way, because ministers must deceive their own souls, if they deceive us: And herein God magnifies his own power, and lets us know, that the efficacy of the gospel is from him the author, and not from man the dispenser. Observe, 2. The minister's duty discovered; in God's name, and Christ's stead, to intreat, beseech and persuade sinners to become reconciled unto God. Here note, 1. That God and man were once friends, 2. That God and man are now enemies. 3. That man, and not God, first made the breach of friendship, and occasioned that unhappy controversy, which is now depending between God and man. 4. That though man was first in the breach, yet God is first in the offer of reconciliation. 5. That therefore it is the highest duty and chiefest interest of man to accept of terms of peace, and reconciliation with God. 6. That in order to all this, the great duty incumbent upon the ministers of the gospel is this, with all earnestness to press upon people the doctrine of reconciliation, and to use all arguments with them, to persuade them to become reconciled unto God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Observe here, 1. The spotless innocency of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, declared: *He knew no sin*, that is, practically and experimentally; he knew it not so as to commit it in the least degree; he was a pure, innocent, and sinless person: But theoretically and speculatively he did know sin: He well understood its nature, its effects, and fruits: None knew the bitter fruits of sin so well as our blessed Saviour. Observe, 2. God's ordination of Christ, with reference unto sin: *He hath made him to be sin*; not made him a sinner, but a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin.

Made; that is, ordained a sacrifice to expiate sin, and to bear the punishment due to sinners. Observe, 3. The end of this ordination with respect to us, *That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Here note, The righteousness of the Mediator is called the righteousness of God; because, 1. It was the righteousness of that person who was God. 2. Because the only wise God found out and appointed it. And, 3. Because it is accepted by God; and the penitent believer, for the sake of it, looked upon as righteous and justified. Learn hence, 1. That sin must have a sacrifice. *He hath made him to be sin;* that is, a sin-offering, or a sacrifice to expiate sin. Under the law the sacrifice was called sin, because the sin of the person was laid upon the sacrifice: there was a sort of a translation of the sin from the sinner to the sacrifice. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ was made a sacrifice for our sin: Our guilt was imputed to him, and our punishment was borne by him: which made Luther call Christ *the greatest sinner in the world*; not that he had any sin in his nature, or in his life, but because the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ's being made sin for us, is the meritorious cause and means of our being made the righteousness of God in him. Surely God may be as just in pardoning us, who have no righteousness of our own, as in condemning his own son, who had no sin of his own. Have we broken his royal and righteous law? yet Christ has kept it, and fulfilled all righteousness. Have we sinned against mercy? yet Christ has suffered without mercy; And all this by the ordination and appointment of God the Father, who made his own and only Son "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

CHAP. VI.

Our apostle having dispatched the apologetical or excusatory part of his epistle, comes now to the hortatory part of it. St. Paul's epistles excel both in matter and method. Their matter is principally reconciliation with God, and justification through faith in Christ; what subjects either so sweet or so profitable? Their method is by way of doctrine and use; a method, which, if it be despised, St. Paul's writings cannot be duly valued. In the last words of the foregoing chapter, he positively asserted the great doctrine of reconciliation through Christ. Now, in the beginning of this chapter, he draws inferences from that doctrine, by way of application. The first of which we have in the following words:

WE then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Here note, 1. The nature of the ministerial function: The ministry is a work; an arduous and laborious work:

neither angels nor men are of themselves sufficient for it, without proportionable assistance from God. Ministers are workers. Note, 2. They are workers together, they join together with one voice, with one cry, beseeching sinners to be reconciled unto God. All the ministers of Christ are fellow-labourers, workers together in God's harvest-field; that which is the work of one, is the work of all; they should all join in it, and rejoice together in the success of it: not only labour with, but bless God for the services and successes of each other. Lord! how sad is it to see the ministers of God divided in their work and way, when one rejoiceth in that which to another is the cause of mourning! Note, 3. Ministers are workers together with God, as well as with one another; they are subordinate instruments working by him, but not co-ordinate causes producing with him the work of conversion in the souls of men; not as if they could communicate any power or strength to the working of grace, by the preaching of the word, 1 Cor. iii. 5. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" Observe, 4. The exhortation, or cautionary direction given, *We beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain*; where, by the grace of God, is meant the doctrine of the gospel: because it is graciously and freely bestowed upon a people, and because the matter and message which it brings is grace. The law discovers God's will, the gospel discovers his good will: And by receiving this grace in vain, is meant, the receiving the gospel unfruitfully, unprofitably, and ineffectually; when we do not receive it with a due estimation, with fervency of affection, with a fiducial application; when it doth not purify the heart, reform the life, and save the soul. It is not the receiving of the gospel into our houses, into our heads, into our mouths; but into our hearts, that will bring us to heaven.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

These words are taken from the prophet Isaiah, xlix. 8. They are a promise which God the Father made to Christ as Mediator, That in the great work of saving his church, the Father would accept and succour him, as the Head of the church: *I have heard thee in an accepted time, in the day of salvation.* Here note, There is a two-fold day of salvation; the one was Christ's day, for the purchase of salvation; the other is our day, for the application. 1. Christ had a season assigned him for the impetration or purchase of salvation: And he set in, and complied with that season, and it became an acceptable time with respect to him. 2. We have also our season allotted to us by God, for the application of Christ and his benefits to our souls. Behold, now is our accepted time, now is our day of salvation; let us prize it highly, and improve it faithfully. 'Tis a day, and that is but a short space of time: 'tis a day, and therefore continually spending: 'tis a day, therefore when once gone, is irrecoverably gone. Our working day is a wasting day: 'tis a day, and that will be followed with a night, in which none can work, but only lament their folly in not working. Behold, then! now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed :

Observe here, 1. The nature and quality of the work which the ambassadors of Christ are called to; and do labour in a ministry. Observe, 2. What was the desire and aim, the care and endeavour, of the apostle then, ought to be the study of every minister now; namely, to avoid offence, and that universally, both as to persons and things, *giving no offence in any thing*. Observe, 3. What was the ground and reason of this care and endeavour to give no offence, namely, *that the ministry be not blamed*. Learn, That it is the standing duty of all the ministers of Christ, so to perform their ministerial office, that they give no just offence in any thing to any person, that so the ministry committed to them may not be blamed. We must give no offence by unsound doctrine, by personal reflections; no offence by gross, careless, and negligent omissions, or by rude and irreverent indecencies, or by any affected singularities in our administrations; but especially, give no offence by a bad life and scandalous conversation.

4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.

Observe here, 1. The great care which the holy apostle took to approve himself unto God, in the exercise of his ministry: *In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God*. Observe, 2. What an approved minister must do and endure, in order to the obtaining the ends of his ministry: If he be called to it, he must bear up against all discouragements, and encounter all oppositions; let the way be what it will, fair or foul, a green carpet way, or dirty poachy way, he must stick at nothing, but go through thick and thin, patiently enduring afflictions of all sorts, and cheerfully undergoing sufferings of all kinds, and exercising all manner of self-denial, for the gospel's sake. Behold here, how the ministers of Christ, that will approve themselves unto God, must run all hazards, and venture through all extremities: They must work in heat and cold, in fire and frost, in all sorts of providences from God, in all sorts of aspects from men, fearing neither the face nor frowns of any: For though every gospel-minister attains not to St. Paul's zeal, and holy fortitude and courage, yet he has a truth of zeal, and such a firmness of resolution, as will, according to his measure, carry him through a world of evils and incumbrances, in the doing of that good which duty and conscience doth oblige him to, and call for; "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in fastings."

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned.

7 By the word of truth, by the power

of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report.—

The apostle, in the foregoing verses, had declared how many difficulties and dangers must be encountered by him that will attain the ends of his ministry, and approve himself unto God in integrity and uprightness: here he shews by how many ways and means the work of the ministry is promoted, and how the ministers of the gospel must be qualified for it; namely, *by pureness of conversation, by knowledge of divine mysteries, and study of the holy scriptures, by long-suffering under all provocations, by kindness towards all men, by the gifts and assistances of the Holy Ghost, by the word of truth clearly preached, and by the power of God confirming it; by the armour of righteousness, which completely covers and protects us on the right-hand and on the left, both in prosperity and adversity; by passing through honour and dishonour; by going through evil report and good report*. Here note, That the ministers of God do approve themselves, and trial is made of them, as well by the things on the right-hand as on the left. A minister of Christ is tried as well by honour as disgrace, as well by praise as by disparagement. The good report which we meet with in the world, is certainly as great, yea, a more dangerous temptation, than the evil reports we pass under: 'Tis a great trial to a minister to be dispraised and despised, to have dirt thrown undeservedly in his face; but verily, it is as great a trial to be praised, commended, and applauded, to be lifted up in the thoughts and upon the tongues of men. Solomon has an excellent proverb to this purpose, Prov. xxvii. 21. "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise;" that is, a man is tried by his praise, as really as silver is tried in the fining-pot, or gold in the furnace: Whenever a minister is praised, he is tried; his humility is tried, his self-denial is tried; when he is praised by men, he is tried whether he can give the entire praise to God: When people cry up such and such a preacher, they put him into the fining-pot; and he that is but dross, consumes. Let ministers remember there are trials on the right-hand, as well as on the left; that passing through honour, and going through good reports, are great trials, as well as passing through dishonour and evil reports. God prepare us for both.

—As deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

As if the apostle had said, Verily, our life is made up of seeming, but not real contradictions. The wise men of the world look upon us as deceivers, but we are the true dispensers of the word of life unto them; we are looked upon by the world as unknown, obscure persons; but we are well known to God and good men by our doctrine and miracles:

we are as dying persons daily, by our passing through so many perils, and by being exposed to continual persecutions, and yet you see we are still alive, and we are sometimes chastened by God, as well as persecuted by men, but we are not killed, nor given over unto death. Outwardly we are sorrowful, but inwardly always rejoicing in God, and in the testimony of a good conscience; in worldly goods and outward circumstances we are very poor, yet making many spiritually rich in grace and good works. We have nothing we can call our own, yet in Christ all things are ours. Hence observe, What has been the lot and portion of the faithful ambassadors and ministers of Christ from the first beginning of Christianity: the dirt of a thousand scandals had been thrown upon their faces, which in the day of Christ's appearance will be as crowns upon their heads. Observe, 2. That all outward evils are to be received by the ministers and members of Christ, in the same manner, and with the same mind, that good things are received with: Honour and dishonour, good report and evil report, must be entertained with the same evenness and constancy of mind, because God is the same in all variety of estates. Though men change their opinions of us, yet God changes not his judgment concerning us. He loves his ministers and members when poor, as well as when rich; when the world smites, as well as when it smiles upon us: Therefore, if God be the same to us at all times, it is our wisdom and duty to keep the temper of our minds, and to be always the same to him and to ourselves. Whatever we meet with from the world, we have no reason to be dissatisfied if our integrity be safe. Observe, 3. How rich the apostle was without earthly riches, and how abounding in wealth, when he had nothing of worldly treasure to rejoice in: *Having nothing, he yet possessed all things.* But how? and in what sense? *Ans.* He and they possessed all things: 1. In Christ, by whom they had a title to all things. 2. They had all things in the covenant, favour, and grace of God: He hath all things who hath him that hath all things. 3. They had all things virtually, in that contentment of mind which they did enjoy: They possessed all things in possessing themselves, and wanted nothing which they could deny themselves. The contented man is only rich; he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough; that man is poor that covets more. 4. They possessed all things eventually; they had the good of all things, when they had not the actual possession of all things; their poverty was a blessing, and their very wants in the event worked for good. 5. They possessed all things, in future expectation; they looked and longed for heaven and everlasting happiness; which would swallow up their desires with fruition; for he that overcometh, shall inherit all things, Rev. xxi. 7. Thus is this apostolical paradox unriddled, *As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* True faith apprehends and enjoys all things in God, which it wanteth in the creature.

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you. Our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompence in the same (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged.

These words are very pathetic, and expressive of St. Paul's most affectionate and ardent love towards the Corinthians, whom he had been an happy instrument to convert unto Christianity. He tells them, *his mouth was opened to them*, not to receive, but to bestow; his mouth was open to fill them with the treasures of gospel-knowledge, not to be filled by them; and *his heart*, as well as his mouth, was open unto them, and at their service: If therefore they were straitened in affection towards him, who was thus enlarged in heart and mouth, by tongue and pen towards them, it must be through mistakes and misapprehensions on their part; therefore, in a way of recompence, he challenges it as just and fit, that the same reciprocal love be bestowed upon him their spiritual father, as he had manifested towards them his beloved children. Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection, between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, whom they have been happily instrumental to convert to God: *O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged towards you.*

14 ¶ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

The holy apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to avoid all intimacy with idolaters, either in civil affairs, in marriages, or in religious worship, lest they be brought into communion with their idolatry; there being no more agreement between a believer and an idolater, than betwixt light and darkness, betwixt Christ and Satan. And, as we must not join with idolaters in spiritual communion or religious worship, so should we have no communion with them in marriages; that having proved a dangerous snare to the souls of many, our divines have justly pronounced such marriages sinful: Nay, it is both wise and safe to have as little civil communion with idolaters as we can; and when we are necessitated to have civil communion with them, we must utterly avoid all sinful communion with them, that is, all communion with them in their sins. Learn, That to associate with idolaters, or to join in affinity with them, but especially to communicate with them in their idolatrous worship, is a God-provoking and wrath-procurring sin: *Be ye not unequally and unsuitably yoked with unbelievers.*

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This form of questions evidently implies the absolute inconsistency between believers and idolaters, and the danger from communion with them: And the apostle's calling be-

lovers the temple of the living God. represents both their dignity and duty: their dignity, in having the Spirit of God to dwell in them, and work in them; their duty, to be purified and adorned for his habitation. Observe, Believers are a spiritual temple, in which the Holy Ghost dwells: This dwelling implies propriety, tranquillity, security, readiness, and fixity of abode. Observe, 2 That the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in good men as in a temple, being the highest honour and most perfect felicity of the reasonable nature, should oblige them to universal holiness, and to avoid all communion with idolaters.

17 Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you;

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

As if the apostle had said, "Go not then to the idol's temples; join not with idolaters in communion, to avoid persecution: but come out from amongst them as an holy people separated to the Lord, and defile not yourselves with any unclean thing; and while you are pure, and cleave to God, he will own you for his sons and daughters." Observe here, 1. A pressing exhortation to make a full separation from unclean persons and things, particularly from all idolaters, and idolatrous worship; *Come out from among them*: The words are taken out of Isa. lii. 11, where the prophet exhorts the remnant of Israel to come fully out of unclean Babylon. Learn hence, That God expects and requires his saints should make a separation from all uncleanness, but especially from the uncleanness of idolatry. God expects a separation from us, from all unclean courses, from all unclean company, from the presence and appearance of all uncleanness, from communion with idolatrous churches, and from communicating with what is sinful in the truest churches of Christ upon earth. Observe, 2. A quickening encouragement to back this exhortation; *I will receive you, and be a Father to you*. Here is a two-fold promise, 1. Of reception, *I will receive you*. 2. Of adoption, *I will be a Father to you*. God will receive them both into his house and heart. Learn hence, That Almighty God will, as a Father, undoubtedly receive all those into his family and favour who renounce communion with all impurity. As he is almighty, he is abundantly able, and as he is a Father, he is graciously willing, to recompence all the services and sufferings of his children, for the honour and interest of his name and truth. It is sufficiently known how this text hath been misapplied by separatists, to very bad purposes; 1. To justify their schismatical separation from the best and purest of the reformed churches, under pretence of finding greater purity amongst themselves: Whereas nothing will justify a separation from a church, but that which makes a separation between God and that church. If the church's way of worship (in their opinion) be faulty, they presently pronounce it false, and they must not join in false worship; whereas no man offers any worship to Almighty God that is not false worship, if all that is faulty be false worship: If

Christ doth not disown his church for that faultiness, we ought not to desert her for it. 2. Others would seek occasion from these words, to justify their practice, in refusing to come to the Lord's table, where some vicious persons are apprehended to be, lest they should pollute the ordinance, and these touch the unclean thing; whereas the presence of a bad man at the sacrament pollutes the ordinance only to himself; for unto the pure all things are pure; and who will neglect a certain duty, to escape an uncertain danger? True, we must not own such worship as we know God rejecteth; but as God pardoneth the faulty imperfections of other men's worship, and our own also, thus must we bear with our own and one another's failings, that are tolerable, so far as we cannot cure them. Woe unto us, had Almighty God no more charity for us than we have for one another! A defective worship is not a false worship; sinful defects in the administration of ordinances, do not hinder the saving effects of ordinances; a wise and good man is certainly as great an enemy to separation, as he is to superstition: Doctrines crying up purity, to the ruin of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity, as well as for purity.

CHAP. VII.

HAVING therefore these promises, I, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

These words are argumentative, and infer the indispensable duty of Christians to preserve themselves untainted from the idolatrous impure world, by the consideration of the promises specified in the preceding chapter, *I will dwell in you, and walk in you; and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*: A promise which contains the highest honour, and most perfect felicity, of the reasonable nature. Now from hence he infers, That Christians having such promises, such helps and assistances, should cleanse themselves from all sinful pollution, and endeavour after perfection in purity and holiness: *Having therefore, &c.* Observe here, 1. The title wherewith the apostle addresses himself unto them, *Dearly beloved*; this expresses both the truth and also the strength of his affections towards them: by this appellation he recommends his counsel to their acceptance: For, as light opens the mind by clear conviction, so love opens the heart by persuasive insinuation. Observe, 2. The matter of the address, and that is, to cleanse ourselves from all pollution both of spirit and flesh, and the changing of us into the unspotted image of God's holiness. The pollution of human nature is intimate and radical, diffused through all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body; we are therefore to pray for, and endeavour after renewing grace, and to be always advancing in holiness on earth, till we arrive at perfection in heaven. Observe, 3. The motive exciting hereunto; namely, the exceeding great and precious promises assured to us from the mouth of God, *Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves*. Observe, 4. The means to help us therein, *the fear of God*. This grace has an eminent causality and influence in a Christian's sanctification; it is a powerful restraint from sin both in thought and act, by con-

sidering that God's pure and flaming eyes see sin wherever it is, in order to judgment. An holy fear of God, and an humble fear of ourselves, will both restrain us from sin, and engage us to obedience. From the whole, learn, That the promises of the gospel lay the most powerful obligations upon Christians to endeavour after, and strive for the attainment of pure and perfect holiness. As the pollution is universal, so must the cleansing be; and though thankful we must be for the least measure of sanctifying grace received, yet not satisfied with the greatest, short of our perfection; *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

2 Receive us: We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 ¶ I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that you are in our hearts to die and live with you.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Observe here, 1. The duty which St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to, namely, to receive him, their apostle, into their kind affections into the bosom of their love, *Receive us*; that is, into your best affections. The ministers of Christ are very desirous of a large share and interest in their people's love; well knowing, that if they be prejudiced against their persons, they will reap no benefit by their doctrine. Observe, 2. The solemn protestation which the holy apostle makes of his integrity and uprightness towards the Corinthians, "We have wronged no man, corrupted no man, defrauded no man;" that is, we have wronged none in their reputation by slander, we have corrupted no man's judgment by error and false doctrine, we have defrauded no men of any part of their estates, either by force or fraud. Learn hence, That the holy servants of God, especially the faithful ministers of Christ, may justify themselves, and make solemn protestations of their own integrity and uprightness, especially when they fall under jealousy and suspicion by the enemies of religion. As it was the continual practice of the false apostles to discredit St. Paul's ministry, and reflect upon his person; so it was his constant care to counter-work them, by a professed vindication of himself, and all his actions. Observe, 3. The fervour of the apostle's affection towards his Corinthian converts, *You are in our hearts to live and die with you*; that is, you lie and are lodged so near our hearts, that we could live with you, and die for you, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare. Behold how large a room the people of God have in the affections of his ministers, how near do they lie to their hearts; and so passionately desirous are they of their people's salvation, that they could even lay down their lives, and die, to promote their temporal and eternal advantage. Observe, 4. How the apostle gloried in, and was comforted by the Corinthians, in the midst of all his afflictions, by the report he had of their repentance, obedience, and liberality; "Great is my glorying in you: I am filled with comfort,

and exceeding joyful in the midst of all my tribulations." As if he had said, "Verily, the report I have had of your repentance and reformation upon the receiving of my former epistle, has filled me with such a weight of joy, as overbalances all the afflictions and tribulations which I meet with for the gospel." Learn hence, That the repentance and reformation of any of our people, by the blessing of God upon our ministerial endeavours, is matter of great rejoicing and glorying to us the ministers of God, who desire, above all things, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the souls of the people: "Great is my glorying in you; I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful."

5 For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me: so that I rejoiced the more.

Observe here, 1. When the apostle was come from Ephesus to Macedonia, how great a conflict he had, both from without and within: From without, by persecution and opposition both from the Jews and Gentiles; and from within, by fears lest the false apostles should have perverted any of his young converts from the simplicity which is in Christ; or fearing lest the Corinthians, being tender and weak in the faith, the violence of persecution, and the strength of temptation, should cause them to apostatize from their religion, and backslide from their holy profession. Observe, 2. A most endearing title given to Almighty God; *He comforteth all those that are cast down*. This is his dear title: He esteems himself more honoured with the amiable and endearing title of a *Comforter* and a *Father*, than with the glorious title of a *Creator* and a *Sovereign*. He is more pleased in doing us good, than we can be pleased in receiving of it; and can as soon forget himself, as forget his children. Observe, 3. The instrumental means which God made use of, for the apostle's consolation, support, and relief; namely, the coming of Titus. First, *God comforteth us by the coming of Titus*. Mark, he doth not intitle Titus, but God, by Titus, to the comfort he received. Whoever is the instrumental cause, God is the principal efficient cause of our consolation and comfort. It shews an holy flame of heart, when we stay not in creatures, but are carried to God as the author of our comforts and crosses. Secondly, The glad tidings and good news which Titus brought, as touching the Corinthians *earnest desire* to have all things amiss rectified, their *sorrow* expressed for the sin reproved, their *fervent affection* towards the apostle, their grief for offending him, their zeal to vindicate him; all these were matter of

comfort and exceeding consolation to the apostle, under all his disquietness in Macedonia. Learn hence, That when troubles, both from without and within, do oppress the minds, and even sink the Spirits of the ministers of God; if they can but see the success of their labours in the lives of their people, that they are humbled for sin, and turned from it; this is matter of unspeakable consolation at present, and will be their crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ: When Titus told us "of your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind; I rejoice the more."

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

As if the apostle had said, Although in my former epistle I wrote somewhat sharply to you, by reason of the many abuses that were crept in amongst you; I do not now repent of that severity, because it produced a thorough and effectual reformation: Though at first I did repent of it, being unwilling to put you to grief; for I was troubled myself, because I was necessitated to trouble you. However, now I rejoice, not in your grief, as such, but because your sorrow was a godly sorrow, and wrought repentance, which is so necessary to forgiveness; so that my plain-dealing with you has evidently been no damage, but an advantage to you. Learn hence, That the faithful ministers of Christ must by no means omit the duty of sharp reproof, nor neglect to bring the censures of the church upon notorious offenders, how ungrateful soever the work is either to themselves or others. Learn, 2. That there is good ground to hope, that when the censures of the church are duly executed, they will have their desired effects, by bringing the offenders to repentance; and by repentance to remission and salvation: I rejoice, that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye sorrowed after a godly sort.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of:

Note here, That sorrow for sin will be of no advantage or avail upon us, if it be not godly sorrow, or a sorrow according to God, as it runs in the original. Now it may be called a sorrow according to God, when it is a sorrow wrought in us by the Spirit of God, in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye at the glory of God; when it has sin, and not wrath, for its object; sin, as a wrong to God, as a contempt of his sovereignty, and a contrariety to his holiness. Again, It is then a godly sorrow, when it puts us upon an high prizing of Jesus Christ, who became a sacrifice for sin; and prompts us to a cordial and unfeigned forsaking of all sin to such a turning from it, as is resolved against all returning to it.

—But the sorrow of the world worketh death:

The sorrow of the world may be taken two ways, 1. For the sorrow of worldly men, whose sorrow for sin is only a vexing of their hearts, not a breaking or humbling of their hearts; which being separate from true faith, and without any purpose to leave sin, worketh death, by wearing out the natural life lingeringly, and sometimes destroying the natural life violently, as in the case of Judas. 2. By the sorrow of the world, may be understood a sorrow for worldly things, a sorrow for worldly losses and disappointments. This is sinful, when it is excessive; and as it is prejudicial to the soul, so doth it hurt the body, and hasteneth death. Worldly sorrow is a killing sorrow; "Godly sorrow worketh repentance: But the sorrow of the world worketh death."

11 For behold this self-same thing; that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge. In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The apostle, in the foregoing verse, had declared, that godly sorrow, or a sorrow wrought by the Spirit of God, worketh true repentance, and produceth a thorough reformation, not to be repented of: Now in this verse he proves, that the Corinthians sorrow for the incestuous person's sin, was of this nature, namely, a godly sorrow, because it produced such excellent effects and fruits as godly sorrow is wont to do. Seven of which he here reckons up. 1. *Care*, or an holy carefulness to amend what is amiss for time to come, by shunning and avoiding all occasions and temptations that lead to sin. He that truly repenteth, is careful not to sin again. 2. *Clearing of themselves*, that they did not approve the fact of the incestuous person, but did inflict the church's censures upon him, and so put away evil from amongst them. 3. *Indignation* against sin; this is found where godly sorrow is found; the heart rises, swells, and boils against sin; we are then angry and sin not, when we are angry at sin, and with ourselves for sinning. 4. *Fear*; a true penitent fears to offend; and that he may not offend doth nourish in himself an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of himself: There is found with him a fear of reverence, from an awful apprehension of the holiness and Majesty of God, and also a fear of diligence and vigilance, watching and warring against sin, that it may not set upon us and surprize us for the time to come. 5. *Vehement desire*, after a thorough reformation, and to rectify whatever is amiss; a desire to be rid of all sin, and in the mean time conflicting with it and groaning under it. 6. *Zeal*; this is an affection in a true penitent, compounded of love and anger. Be zealous and repent, is Christ's own call, Rev. iii. 19. This will make a penitent persist in the exercise and expression of his godly sorrow for sin, and persevere in his course of mortification, in defiance of all opposition made against him. 7. *Revenge*; this is the result of zeal, when our zeal boils into revenge, and puts us upon self-castigations; not so much upon our bodies with whips and scourges,

but by the abatement of lust which stirrath in us, bulletting the flesh, and bringing it into subjection. And this revenge leads the penitent also to make satisfaction for wrongs done, either by open confession or secret restitution; "In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear of this matter." As if the apostle had said, "By these forementioned acts of yours, the body of you hath shewn that you did not approve of the incestuous person's sin, but evinced by your sorrow for it, that you are clear of it." Learn hence, 1. That there is no way to get clear of the guilt of other men's sins, but by duly mourning for them: *Now you are clear of this matter.* Learn, 2. That true repentance for sin, clears us from the guilt of it, both in the sight of God and man; and if so, it is both uncharitable and unchristian to stigmatize or reproach any person for the sin, which we either know or believe he hath truly repented of.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, not for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Here our apostle tells them, that he did not write so passionately and severely to them, only or chiefly for the incestuous person's sake who had done the wrong, that he might be punished, not for his sake that had suffered the wrong, namely, the injured father, out of a particular kindness to have him righted; but that his general care, solicitude, and concern for them, the whole church of Corinth, to remove sin and scandal from them, might appear unto them.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

That is, in all the forementioned effects and fruits, signs and evidences of a true repentance, which were found in you, and are matter of great comfort to you, we are also comforted with you; and we also had a superadded joy, for the joy that Titus conceived, upon his understanding of your affairs; also your ready compliance with the duties and directions given you in my former epistle, did wonderfully refresh and rejoice his spirit; and in all these your consolations and comforts am I comforted. Hence learn, That such is the intimate and endeared union between the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, that they are comforted with one another's comforts, and afflicted with each other's sorrows and sufferings.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed: but as we speak all things to you in truth, even so our boasting which *I made* before Titus is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.

16 I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things.

Observe here, How the apostle had formerly taken occasion to speak boastingly, and not without assurance, concerning the church at Corinth. "Now says the apostle, whatever I said of you, is as infallibly and certainly true, as what I have heretofore either written or spoken to you." Happy is it when a minister's commendations of his people unto others, are not contradicted or gainsayed by the people themselves, but confirmed greatly. Here, what St. Paul had boasted of the Corinthians, Titus found a truth. Observe, next, With what inward affection Titus did embrace and receive the Corinthians, remembering with what great deference and regard they had received him; he is greatly affected towards you, upon his finding you so obedient to me. Nothing doth more endear a people to the ministers of Christ, than to find them obedient to their spiritual guides in things pertaining to godliness and religion: "The affection of Titus is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all." Observe lastly, What confidence the apostle had, that the church of Corinth would hearken to, and comply with his future admonitions, exhortations, and reproofs: *I have confidence in you in all things.* It is a blessed thing when the ministers of the gospel and their beloved people have a mutual confidence in each other, and when that confidence on either side is not broken, but preserved and increased between them all their days; when they can say of each other, as doth the apostle here, "I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things."

CHAP. VIII.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this and the following chapter, is to excite and stir up the Corinthians to a liberal contribution of their charity towards the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea; and this he does by several arguments; as, namely, by the example of the Macedonians, by commendations of their former forwardness by the example of Christ, and by the special benefit and advantage which would certainly redound to themselves thereby. The former of these arguments is propounded, ver. 1.

MOREOVER, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and

their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

The first argument which our apostle makes use of to excite the charity of the Corinthians, is drawn from the example of the Macedonians, into whose hearts God had poured that excellent grace of charity: insomuch that the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Bseræa, and other churches in the region of Macedonia, though under great trials and afflictions themselves, yet such was their joy in, and their affection to the christian profession, that notwithstanding their deep poverty, they abounded in their liberality towards the necessities of the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea. Note here, 1. The root from which all acceptable charity to the members of Christ must arise and spring, namely, from the grace of God; from an inward principle of love to God, in obedience to his command, and with a pure and fixed eye at his glory. Liberality to the poor distressed members of Christ, as such must flow from that habit of divine love, by which men are taught of God to love one another; for though, from a natural sympathy and compassion men may relieve the afflicted, as men, yet without a gracious inclination they cannot do good to them, as members of the household of faith. Charity then is here called the grace of God, because it proceeds from a gracious disposition wrought in the heart by God, as the root and spring, the motive and attractive of it. Note here, 2. The condition which the churches of Macedonia were in themselves; when they thus liberally and cheerfully administered to the necessities of others, they were first under great affliction, and then in great poverty themselves; and yet the riches of their liberality are here said to abound.—From whence learn, That poverty excuses not from charity: if we have nothing actually to give, God accepts the inclination of the mind, and a willing desire. If we have but little to give, God will accept of our mite, and reward us for that little, if given for his sake. It is not the quantity of the gift, but the good affection of the giver, that God's eye is upon. If we give but a cup of cold water to a disciple, and as a disciple, God accepts it and rewards it, provided we have nothing better to give; for if our charity be not in some degree proportionable to what we have, it will not be acceptable, but we shall miss of its reward.

3 For to their power, (I bear record,) yea, and beyond their power, *they were* willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Three things are here recorded as the glory of the Macedonians' charity. 1. It was profusely liberal, beyond their ability: "To their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were ready." Though, generally speaking, we are to consult our own ability and present circumstances in all our charitable distributions; yet there may be, and sometimes are, emergent occasions as may make it a necessary duty to administer to others' necessities far beyond our own ability. 2. Their charity was purely voluntary: they were will-
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ing of themselves; that is, unsolicited by the apostles, unasked by any other, only prompted to it by the grace of God: they made a collection amongst themselves freely and cheerfully. 3. Their charity was accompanied with importunity to the apostle to receive and distribute it. He was so far from entreating them to give, that they entreated him to receive their collection, and to take care for its conveyance to them, and distribution among them: "praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive this their gift, and fellowship of ministry to the saints."

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped; but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God:

As if the apostle had said, "Verily these Macedonians, in the liberal distribution of their alms to the poor christians, have exceeded our hopes and expectations." Wherein? First, They gave their own selves to the Lord, and then unto us by the will of God. They gave themselves, their own selves, first to the Lord. To give a man's self to the Lord, is more than to give all his estate to him, though, strictly speaking, it is rather a debt than a gift: for we owe ourselves to the Lord. And, oh, how infinitely shall we gain by this giving! he gains all, who gives his all to God: God will return it with advantage to him.—Next, the Macedonians, says the apostle, gave themselves unto us by the will of God; that is, they resigned themselves up to us, to be employed by us in such services as we thought meet. It seems they were ready to assist the poor saints, as well with their persons as with their purses. From the Macedonians giving themselves first to the Lord, and then to the church's service, in all charitable distributions, we learn. That he that does not first dedicate himself, will never dedicate his estate to God; but he that by a deliberate and voluntary dedication gives himself to God, will keep back nothing that he requires from him: yea, he will look upon all that he has and is, as the Lord's: not an inch of his time, not a penny in his purse, but it is to be employed by, and improved for God. He looks upon God as the owner and proprietor of all, and himself as the steward and dispenser only: Oh! let us, in imitation of these noble, though poor Macedonians, first give ourselves to the Lord, and then we shall never withhold any thing that is ours from him.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

Here our apostle proceeds to make use of several other
9 s

arguments to persuade the Corinthians to the exercise of the duty and grace of charity: as namely, 1. Because he had desired Titus to go to them; and as he had in his last visit begun to stir them up to this duty, and to exercise this grace, so he would farther promote and bring it to perfection. And, 2. Because they abounded in other graces and gifts; as namely, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, &c. therefore they ought to abound in this grace also, otherwise they would not be complete in the whole will of God. 3. Because hereby they would testify the sincerity of their love to the saints. It is not good words, but charitable deeds, that evidence the truth of our love to our fellow members in Christ; not saying, *Be ye warmed or be ye clothed*: but distributing to their necessities according to our abilities. Yet, observe, The apostle doth not command their purses, and require so much of them for charity: he mentions no particular sum, much less doth he command them to give away all their estates, and live upon a common stock, and leave nothing to themselves which they could call their own, for if a man has nothing of his own, there is no room for liberality. There must be prudence when in the exercise of our charity, prudence in finding out proper objects for our charity, prudence in timing of our charity, prudence in the measure of our charity, and prudence in the end which we propound to ourselves in the exercises of our charity.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Here we have the grand motive used by the apostle to excite their charity, namely, the example of Christ, who impoverished himself to enrich us, and emptied himself to fill us; therefore should we be ready to administer unto others: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." &c. Observe hence, 1. A description of Christ in his divine nature, as God: he was originally, essentially, and eternally rich: that is, in his Godhead. All the riches that Christ now has in his state of exaltation, he had from all eternity; before his humiliation, with respect to his divine nature, he was rich. Observe, 2. A description of Christ in his human nature, he became poor; that is, in the day of his incarnation, when he assumed our flesh, and was made manifest in our nature, he impoverished himself: though he was rich, yet he became poor. Observe, 3. The persons for whose sake he did thus impoverish himself: "For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Observe, 4. The moving, impelling, or impulsive cause of this condescension in Christ, and that was the graciousness of his nature: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Observe, 5. The use and improvement which the apostle makes of this gracious dignation and condescension in Jesus Christ, and that was by way of argument, to excite the believing Corinthians to exercise their charity towards the poor saints which were at Jerusalem. Learn from hence, That the extensive charity and wonderful compassion of Christ towards us sinners, has both the force of an argument to excite us to, and also the nature of a rule to direct us in, the exercise of our charity towards all our fellow-brethren and members of Christ: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore, perform the doing of it; that, as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

Here the apostle proceeds to a fresh argument for the quickening and exciting the Corinthians' charity, drawn from their own reputation. He had heard, that a year ago, upon writing his former epistle, they had made several collections, at several times, as their gains came in; his advice therefore is, that they perfect and complete the good work which they had undertaken; and that as there was a readiness and willingness of mind then, so there might be a performance of their good resolutions now: for whatsoever is given to God, is accepted according to what a man has, and it is not expected he should give according to what he has not. Learn hence, That God interprets and accepts the charity of men, according to the largeness of their hearts, and not according to the straitness of their fortunes. It is not so much the quantity of the gift, as the good-will and cheerful mind of the giver, that God looks at: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted." Learn farther, That to do any good with a willing mind, be it little or much, is very acceptable to God; if there be little of the purse, and much of the heart in it, provided that little be what we can well spare, The Lord hath a great respect unto it. Learn lastly, That as we must give, so God will accept what is given, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. What is due to another, either by debt or duty, in making provision for those of our own family cannot be charitably given, as being not our own.

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and you burdened:

14 But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be* a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

Observe here, The humble modesty and holy prudence of the apostle, in what he demanded of the Corinthians by way of charity for the poor saints in Judea. He tells them freely, he did not design to lay a load upon them, to ease others, or to make others rich by making themselves poor; but that there might be an equality in supplying the wants

of one another, that now you abound, you may supply them; and when they abound, they may supply you; yet mark, We must not by the equality mentioned here, understand it so, as if the wisdom of the divine providence had ordained levelling, or making all men equal in the portion of the good things of this life: but so far christianity seems to require this equality, that we should not suffer others to lack the necessary comforts of this life, whilst we abound with them, and can spare them, and suffer them to sink in their sorrows, whilst we swim in fulness. Learn hence, There is a debt of mercy and pity, of charity and compassion, of relief and succour due to human nature, and payable from one man to another; and such as deny to pay it the distressed in the time of their abundance, may justly expect it will be denied themselves in the time of want. To confirm this, the apostle draws an allusion from the gatherers of manna in the wilderness; some gathered more, and others less; but they that had more, were to give them that had less: in like manner would Almighty God have it, that they which have great riches, should impart of their abundance, to them that are in want; otherwise, Almighty God will shrink their heap into some equality with them whom they refused to relieve. With what measure we mete, in acts of charity, as well as in acts of justice, it shall be measured to us again.

16 ¶ But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepteth the exhortation; but being more forward of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of your ready mind.*

As if the apostle had said, I thank God that Titus was as forward to move you to this good work as myself; for he did not barely yield to it my request, but of his own accord, was ready to come to you about it. And with him we sent Luke, a beloved brother, whose service for the gospel has made him honorable in all the churches, and who was chosen by the church, to go with us in his deaconary service, namely, the ministration of your charity to the glory of God, and evidencing the readiness of your mind to so good a work.—Here note, 1. The holy apostle's constant custom and practice, to refer all good in us to God as the author and producer of it; "Thanks be to God, that put this into the heart of Titus." Note 2. That a minister of the gospel, who declines being chargeable to his people himself, may yet put on confidence, and be bold and importunate in urging them to charity for the service and supply of others. Note, 3. That St. Paul's importunity for collecting this charity at Corinth,

shows how much the case was altered, since at Jerusalem, Acts iv. they sold all and laid it at the apostle's feet: and as that was not intended for a constant and universal practice, so we see how quickly the love of christians grew more cold. To procure this charity, St. Paul writes, Titus is sent, exhortation is given, arguments urged, and all due means used to accomplish this collection for the poor distressed christians. Note, 4. That amongst christians, renowned for gifts and parts, costly duties come hardly off, else what need this ado? And yet it is not the cheap duties of religion (such are prayer, hearing the word, and receiving sacraments) but the costly duties of charity, that must evidence the truth of our faith and love, which are certainly dead, if barren and destitute of these fruits.

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us;

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you.

Note here, The holy wisdom of this great apostle, in joining some other persons with himself, as Titus and Luke, &c. in the distribution of this charity; lest evil-minded men should suspect him of dishonesty, he takes care to cut off all occasion of suspicion, that he either kept any part of this large contribution to himself, or distributed it unfaithfully unto others; "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us." Note, 2. The reason also assigned by the apostle for this his prudential management; namely, because as a minister and a christian he was obliged to provide and take care that all things be done blamelessly in the sight of men, as well as faithfully in the sight of God. The apostle, by this his example, recommends to all ministers and private christians, a prudential foresight of such scandalous imputations, as they may be exposed to by the world, let their sincerity in their actions be what it will; and let us see how we ought to provide against them: any one of these upright persons alone, either St. Paul alone, Titus alone, or St. Luke alone, were sufficient to be intrusted alone with the distribution of this charity; but the apostle did not know what a censorious world might say; and therefore to cut off all occasion, and to prevent all suspicion, he wisely appoints several persons to be witnesses of this action. If there be not, in some cases, over-much caution, all is too little, and not enough.

23 Whether *any* do inquire of Titus, *he is* my partner, and fellow-helper concerning you; or our brethren *be inquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

Observe here, What pains the apostle takes to answer all cavils and objections that might hinder the free collection and regular distribution of this charity. Some might pretend, possibly, to say, then (as many amongst us do now) "We know not into whose hands this charity-money may fall: we know not whether ever they shall be the better for it, for whom it was intended." Therefore, says St. Paul, if any make that objection, that they do not know Titus, and inquire after him, or his trustiness, tell them he is my coadjutor, my partner, and fellow helper in converting you to christianity; and if the other two be inquired after, they are our brethren the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ; that is, the instruments of his glory: therefore let these messengers see, and the churches which did dispute them, the proof of your love to me, and to the saints, and that I did not boast of your liberality in vain. Note here, The high honor which St. Paul puts upon the ministers of the gospel, in calling them the *glory of Christ*, that is, the glory of the gospel of Christ, the glory of the christian profession, the instruments of Christ's glory, by whom his honor and glory is greatly promoted; persons, who, by their exemplary gloriousness, did bring much honor and glory to Christ. This title, I conceive, shows both our dignity and duty: our dignity in that Christ accounts us his glory when we are found faithful to him: as the faithfulness of an ambassador redounds to the glory and honor of the prince that sends him: and it points out our duty to promote the glory of Christ, to pray and endeavour that he would use us as instruments for the advancement of his glory; that as we glorify him on earth, he may glory in us, and be glorified by us, before his Father in heaven, and we be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

The argument of this is the same with that of the foregoing chapters: namely, to excite the Corinthians to a liberal and cheerful contribution towards the poor saints at Jerusalem, which were then under pressing necessities: and having laid several arguments before them, to quicken them to the duty, he comes now to give directions concerning the right and acceptable performance of the duty, advising them to give liberally, because God had abundantly blessed and increased them; and cheerfully, because the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

FOR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your

mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

Observe here, The holy art and skill of this wise and great apostle, in prompting forward and putting on those Corinthians to this work of pious charity: he insinuates their present forwardness, to provoke them to farther forwardness: he tells them, it was superfluous for him to use farther arguments with them; for their forwardness was known unto him, and boasted of by him to the Macedonians, that the christians in Achaia (of which Corinth was the chief city) had made a proposal to supply the poor saints of Judea a year ago: and that their zeal therein had provoked very many to the like forwardness. It is very happy, when the ministers of Christ find their people forward and ready to every good work, to costly works of charity especially; yet it will be their wisdom, by commending their people for what they have done, to encourage them to do farther; not only for increasing their own reward, but for provoking many to do the like; "I know the forwardness of your mind, and that your zeal hath provoked very many."

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, you) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a *matter* of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

As confident and fully persuaded as the apostle was of the readiness and willingness of mind that was found in the Corinthians towards this charitable contribution, yet he judgeth it both expedient and necessary to send the brethren before to them, to get all things ready, the collection finished and over: that so when he himself, and the Macedonians should come to Corinth, he might not be put to the blush for them, having made great boasts of their charity, but finding no deeds: and also he desires their collection may be ready, with respect to themselves, that so their beneficence may appear to be their own free bounty, and not a collection difficultly extorted from them, as from covetous men, who give grudgingly and unwillingly. Note here, That it is

very lawful for the ministers of Christ to use an holy craft, and innocent guile, to draw men to a speedy compliance with their duty; sometimes by engaging their reputation in it, and sometimes alluring them by just praises to the doing of it. Thus our apostle did here. Note, 2. That the readiness which St. Paul here presses them to, is not the readiness of the mind, but the readiness of the action: he was well satisfied, that they were ready in their preparation of mind long ago, but he presses them to finish the collection of which he had so much boasted to the Macedonians. Note, 3. How the blessed apostle did consult the Corinthians' honor and reputation equally with his own, and was as desirous to prevent reflections upon them, as upon himself; at his coming among them. Note, 4. That a liberal free-giving to the saints in distress, is called here *χαρις και ευλογια, grace and blessing*; we translate it *bounty*: It is called grace, because an heart to give liberally is wrought in us by the grace of God; the world shuts up our hearts till God opens them; and if the heart be open, the hands will not be shut; and works of charity are a blessing of God with our substance, and the way and means to produce his blessing upon our substance. Giving to distressed saints in proportion to what God has given us, is by Almighty God, accounted a blessing of him, and a blessing of our fellow brethren; and whoever thus blesses God shall be blessed by him. Note, 5. That the Corinthians being a very rich and wealthy people, the apostle stirs them up to an abundant charity. Where God gives much, he expects much: but how many, alas! grudge God a little of his own! And how difficultly is that little drawn from them like drops of blood! Whereas, to give alms purely to satisfy the importunity of others, or out of shame, misses of its reward before God.

6 ¶ But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Here the apostle comes to direct the Corinthians, how and after what manner they should give their alms; so as to secure a blessing; namely, deliberately. 1. As he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; as he determined and resolved within himself. When a christian gives, he must take care that it be his own act as much as he can. Some men give what they did never intend, and bestow what they did never choose or design to bestow: importunity extorts charity from some; they give, to get rid of the noise, and purchase their quiet with their alms: whereas, the liberal man devises liberal things, the good man lays by in store what he intends, to bestow in alms. 2. Freely, bountifully; for he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully; that is, he that giveth liberally to the poor, shall be liberally rewarded by God; no wise man will pinch his ground of the seed. The proportion, or how much every one should give, cannot be determined, because that must be measured ac-

cording to the ability of him that giveth, and according to the necessity of him that receiveth. 3. Cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, says the wise man; let us give with the same cheerfulness that we would receive, and be as willing to give, as the needy are to receive; nay, it is our duty to seek out objects: for some of Christ's members have as great modesty as they have necessity, and cannot speak for themselves: and let none think that this liberality will prejudice their estates; no, it is men's lusts that undo them, and not their charity.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad: he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Here the apostle tacitly answers the common objection against liberal alms-givings; men are afraid they shall want themselves, what they give away to others; no, says the apostle, God is able to make all grace and mercy shown by you, to abound the more towards you; that you having a sufficiency of the comforts of this life, may abound in every good work of charity towards others. As if he had said, "Be not afraid to give, nor sparing in giving; for hereby you make God your debtor, and you will find him an all-sufficient pay-master; he will repay you both in temporals and spirituals. Thou shalt receive silver for thy brass, gold for thy silver, grace for thy gold, a treasure in heaven for thy dross on earth: nay, your gold and silver will multiply here, as seed sown, when scattered with a wise and prudent hand." The apostle here engages God's all sufficiency for it: God will show his all sufficiency, in giving you an all-sufficiency in all things: only we must remember, that we are to allow time; for Almighty God loves to be trusted upon his word; and those that will not give him credit, let them try if they can improve their estates better, or put them into safer hands.

10 ¶ Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

11 Being enriched in every thing to all thankfulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Some look upon these words as a prayer, others as a promise, that as Almighty God blesseth the increase of the earth so largely, that it sufficeth for the nourishment of men; and for seed to sow again; in like manner would he supply all their wants, and grant them ability to supply the wants of others, and plentifully reward them for all the fruits of their righteousness and mercy: and they being

thus enriched by the goodness of God, and exercising all bountifulness, towards their brethren, much thanksgiving and praise upon that occasion is given unto God. In these last words is couched an argument farther to press the Corinthians to this liberality; namely, that it would cause both the ministers of Christ, the dispensers of this charity, and also the poor saints, the receivers of it, to offer up incessant praises and thanksgivings to God for the same.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God :

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and you for liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men :

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Still our apostle proceeds, by way of motive, farther to excite and stir up the Corinthians to this charitable contribution, from sundry considerations; namely, first, That it would be a very seasonable supply to the church's wants, who were at this time in great want of it: now, the seasonableness of any mercy, adds greatly to the worth and value, to the pleasure and sweetness of it. Secondly, That it would occasion repeated praises and incessant thanksgivings to God, for many persons, and upon many accounts. Thirdly, This distribution of yours, says the apostle, will be a convincing experiment, evidence and demonstration of your professed subjection to the gospel, and that your faith is not barren and ineffectual. No better evidence of our real subjection to the gospel of Christ, than a cheerful compliance, not with the cheap, but with the costly duties of christianity. Lastly, For your alms, you will engage a stock of prayers going for you: this will procure, yea, provoke them to pray night and day for you, day, not only engage prayer for you, but it will also draw forth their love and fervent affection towards you, make them very desirous of your acquaintance, having received such an experiment of the grace of God that is in you.

15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Here the apostle concludes his discourse upon this great argument, with a doxology, praising and blessing God for putting it into their hearts, in so liberal a manner, to relieve the necessities of the saints, by which so much glory did redound to God, and so much honor to the christian religion. This he calls, not barely, an admirable, but an unspeakable gift; because a gift by which God was so much glorified, the gospel adorned, the poor saints so much comforted, and they themselves so plentifully rewarded:—

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. But if the Corinthians' charity was an unspeakable gift, what was the gift of Christ? the gift of God to a lost world to whom this title of unspeakable doth best agree; who is the author and finisher of all grace, and particularly of this noble grace of charity in the hearts of his people; for he sends his holy Spirit, and pours into their hearts his most excellent grace of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues, without which, whosoever liveth, is counted dead before him.—Eternal thanks then be to Christ for this admirable gift of charity, and thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of Christ. *Amen.*

CHAPTER X.

Our apostle having, in the former chapters, pleaded with the Corinthians on the behalf of the poor christians in Judea, he comes in this chapter, to plead for himself, and to vindicate his authority from the contempt cast upon it by the false apostles, who pretended to say, that when he was personally present, he was humble and mild; but when absent, severe and bold: thus unworthily interpreting his gentleness, condescension and winning affability to be no better than a fawning upon them for false ends: wherefore he gives them, in this chapter, to understand, that he was well acquainted with their vilifying reflections and calumnies, which were both unreasonable and unjust, and that he resented them as such.

NOW I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you :

2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

Observe here, 1. The charge brought unjustly against St. Paul by the false apostle, namely, that when he was present with the Corinthians, he was low and humble enough to some degree of baseness; but when absent, that then he writes like a lord to them, and exercises an authority with pride and imperiousness over them. The greatest apostle, no more than the meanest minister of Jesus Christ, cannot expect protection from slander, and false accusation. Observe, 2. The pious and prudent course which the apostle takes for his own necessary and just vindication; he beseeches them, by all that meekness and gentleness, which according to the command and example of Christ, he desired to express towards them, firmly to believe that he desired nothing more, than not to be forced to use his power

with that boldness towards them, which he feared he must use against the false apostles, who accused him of too much servility and meanness in his behaviour amongst them, and reproached his ministry as carnal and self-seeking.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh;

That is, "Although I yet dwell in the body, and consequently am not free from human infirmities and weaknesses; yet neither my ministry nor my life are from fleshly principles, by fleshly means, or fleshly ends." The best and holiest of men in this life walk in the flesh; they are clothed with a mortal body, but they do not war after the flesh, they do not fight under the banner of corrupt nature. Here note, The christian life described; it is a warfare; we war; it is a life of vigorous opposition. The christian has many enemies to conflict with, and to contend against, both outward and inward enemies; in a passive sense, he is a man of strife and contention, his hand is against many, and many hands against him; he doth not manage a war for the flesh, but against the flesh: and in the next verse, tells us with what weapons he managed this war.

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds:)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Observe here, 1. That as the life of every christian is a continual warfare, so the ministers of the gospel are more eminently men of war; they fight against principalities and powers; and the devil draws up his full strength to pull down the office of the ministry, which is erected for the pulling down the strong holds of him and his kingdom. Observe, 2. The weapons which these spiritual warriors, the ministers of the gospel, do make use of in their conflict and combat with sin and satan; *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.* They are not carnal or fleshly weapons, that we use, neither fraud nor flattery, nor force; but spiritual armor, with which we batter the fortresses of sin and satan, namely, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, miracles of all sorts, eminent wisdom and patience, exemplary zeal and courage in executing and inflicting the censures of the church upon the disobedient. Observe, 3. These weapons are called *mighty*; but mighty through God; that is, as quickened by the power, and presence of God's Spirit. Then is our ministry mighty, when made mighty through God. The spirits of darkness cannot be conquered but by spiritual weapons. It is as possible to make an impression with your finger upon a wall of brass, as for the best sermon in the world to make an effectual impression upon a sinner's will, without the co-operation and concurring assistance of the Holy Spirit: "The

weapons of our warfare are spiritual and mighty through God." It is the Spirit that gives them their success and efficacy: there is a real spiritual power and energetical presence of Christ, in his own institutions and appointments. When the sword of the Spirit is taken into the hand of the Spirit, it works wonders. Observe, 4. The great and good execution which these particular weapons do effect and accomplish, when thus accompanied with the power of God; they are mighty to the pulling down of strong holds. By which some do understand a particular beloved lust: a special sin, by which satan keeps and holds possession of the sinner's heart. Others understand it more generally of every thing that opposeth, resisteth, and hindereth the success of the gospel; and particularly the stubborn will of the sinner, which is so strong an hold that no power short of an Almighty power, can influence it to surrender: *Casting down imaginations or reasonings, and proud conceits, and particularly unbelief, in which sinners fortify themselves against the convictions of the word, disdaining to submit themselves to the abasing, humble, and self denying way of the gospel.* But behold the glorious conquest which the gospel of Christ obtains over sinners thus fortified against it; "It casts down imaginations, and pulls down every strong hold." Thus the ministry of the gospel spoils satan of his armor, in which he trusted, by showing the sinner, that all this can be no defence to his soul against the wrath of God. Observe, 5. The improvement of the victory: the gospel doth not only lead away these enemies spoiled, but brings them into captivity and obedience to itself. O happy and blessed conquest! Sinners do not only lay down their arms, and fight no more against Christ, but they repair to his camp, and fight for him with those reasonings of theirs which before were employed against him. O! blessed victory! where the conqueror and conquered both triumph together.

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

That is, having in a readiness that which will revenge all disobedience upon refractory and stubborn offenders (namely, the power of excommunication) and both authority and ability to inflict such corporal punishment as he judged fit, by delivering them unto satan; which power he resolved to make use of, when the greater part of them were, by their obedience to his admonitions, reduced to good order again. Where note, That the apostle defers the excommunicating and censuring the offenders amongst them, they being very many, till he had, by exhortation and argument, brought over as many as possibly he could unto obedience. There is no place for severe remedies, when the diseases have taken and infected the whole church: the offenders in the church when very many cannot be easily punished; for when great multitudes are concerned, they are like to draw great multitudes after them. The apostle's practice in this case here, is a good pattern for our imitation, not to be too forward, rash, and hasty in denouncing the censures of the church, but to proceed prudently and gradually: first using all fair means and gentle methods, and waiting with all patience for the reducing them to their duty who will be reduced, and then revenging the glory and honor of God only upon such as will by no means be reclaimed or reduced.

7 Do we look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

Because the false apostles had taught the Corinthians to despise St. Paul, upon the account of his mean appearance: he here expostulates with them, and desires to know whether they would judge of men by outward appearance, or by inward worth? As if he had said, "Are ye so weak as to judge of me by my outward person, by my bodily presence, by the meanness of my garb, by the smallness of my stature, by my outward aspect and countenance? but if you will judge of me, and the pretended apostles, by ministerial gifts and authority received from Christ, surely I have as much to show of these, as they can pretend to show; for in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles. There is no judging of men, much less of ministers, by outward appearances. Much real worth sometimes lodges within, when nothing but what is despicable and contemptible appears without.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.

As if the apostle had said, I have not only an equal power and authority with those which despise me (the false teachers) but I have an authority and power which they can not, dare not, will not pretend unto; namely, the power to inflict corporal punishment upon obstinate and contumacious offenders, and delivering them up to satan; which power, if at any time I make use of, it is for edification, not for destruction. This rod is not to be used rashly, but discreetly, by me. Observe we, and learn from hence, an excellent rule, Never to handle the censures of the church (those edge-tools) but with care and caution, with an intention to reform, not to ruin; to save, not to destroy: the church's power is for edification, not for destruction.

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For *his* letters (say they) *are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *we will be* also in deed when we are present.

Our apostle here goes on, vindicating himself from the aspersions and reflections which the false teachers cast upon him. They told the Corinthians, that St. Paul's letters were indeed severe and authoritative, terrifying and affrighting: but his personal presence was weak, and his speech contemptible. Tradition tells us, that Paul (according to his

name) was a man of a very little stature, and his voice answerably small; whence probably, the false apostles took occasion to raise this report of his presence and speech. St. Chrysostom saith, that St. Paul's stature was low, his body crooked, his head bald; and when it is added, that his speech was contemptible, it cannot be understood as if it were so for want of eloquence, but it is thought, this refers rather to some infirmity, or natural impediment, which the apostle might have in his speech. The gift of knowledge and learning, and the gift of utterance and elocution, as they are distinct in their nature, so they are separable in their subject, and do not always go together; a person of the profoundest knowledge is not always happy in elocution and utterance. However, in these false teachers we see the constant method and practice of impostors and seducers; namely, to asperse and lessen all that stand in their light. This is an old way of insinuating into the people. The false apostles feared they should never reign at Corinth, but by bringing St. Paul into disesteem with the Corinthians; therefore they say, "his letters are weighty, but his bodily presence weak." But the apostle, ver. 11, gives them to understand, that they should find him the same both absent and present: and that his deeds then should appear as awful as his words now; that when he came again, he would not spare but punish all disobedience. Note here, That the thing which St. Paul would have his accusers fear, was, that by the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost given to him to inflict corporal punishments upon disobedient persons, they should speed as Elymas did, Acts. xiii. 8. who was smitten with blindness, &c.

12 ¶ For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ.

Observe here, 1. St. Paul's just charge, which he brings in against the false apostles, for their pride and vanity, in commending themselves, and comparing themselves with such as were like themselves: "The measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise." The reason why many think themselves wiser than they are, is, because they compare themselves with those that are below themselves, and not above them in understanding and knowledge. It is an excellent mean to keep us from pride to consider how many are above us in know-

ledge: and there are thousands so much excelling us in understanding, that our knowledge is but ignorance, our feeling but weakness, our faith but unbelief, our fruitfulness but barrenness, compared with theirs. Observe, 2. As the pride and vanity of the false apostles, so the great modesty and humility of St. Paul, the true apostle of Christ Jesus: "but we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure which God hath distributed to us." Where note, The apostle makes his apostleship or preaching of the gospel, to be, as it were, his spiritual exercise, or running a race, to which he here alludes: declaring that he kept his providence, his stage, his compass of ground which God had marked out to him; beyond or out of which line, whosoever pretends to run, doth over extend himself, and boast without his measure. Observe, 3. That the apostle's line, or measure, reached as far as Corinth, where Christ never had been preached; thither he came, and there he first planted the christian faith amongst them; and he takes occasion from thence, to advance himself above the false apostles. 1. That he could show a commission to preach to the Corinthians; a measure by which God had distributed the Corinthians to him, as his proper province, which none of them could pretend unto. 2. That whereas they went out of their line, leaping from one church to another, he went on orderly in the conversion of churches to the faith, from Judea, through all the interjacent provinces, till he came to Corinth. 3. That whereas they came to those churches where the gospel had been already preached, and so could only boast of things made ready to their hands, he preached the gospel where Christ was not named before.

-15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors: but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly.

16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

Here the apostle tells the Corinthians, that he would not boast of other men's labors, nor pretend any title to those christians at Corinth, nor any where else, whom others had converted, as the false apostles did; notwithstanding he declares his hope, that when the gospel should have an eminent success amongst them, and thereby their faith be increased, that the increase of their faith would increase his joy and comfort, his present advantage and future reward; because it was the fruit and increase of the seed which he had himself sown amongst them. The apostle also doth farther declare his hopes, that he should preach the gospel beyond Corinth in the regions of Achaia, where it had not been preached before; he being unwilling to enter upon other men's labors. Here note, That though ordinary ministers are fixed in particular places, and confined to particular churches; yet the apostles had a commission to go into all places, and preach the gospel over the whole world, and were tied to no certain place or people. Note

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farther, That the apostle seems to prefer an instrumentality in the work of conversion, before being instrumental in the work of edification. The false apostles could only pretend to build upon other men's foundations, and carry on a work by others made ready to their hands: but the apostle preferred preaching the gospel where Christ had never been heard of, as being unwilling to build upon another's foundation, to boast of another man's line. It is a special favor now vouchsafed by God to us his ministers, if he puts the honor upon us, to make us instruments in his hands, either for conversion, or edification, either for bringing home, or building up a people. Happy we, if when our predecessors have labored before us, we enter into their labors, and see the seed, which they sowed with a laborious hand, flourishing in the lives of our people, to the joy of our hearts. Ere long, both he that sowed, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

These words are a reasonable exhortation to all the ministers of the gospel. 1. To take heed that they glory not in themselves, or in any services or performances of their own. As it is the highest act of grace to make our boast of God all the day long, so it is the highest act of corruption, to make a boast of any thing we either have or do, though but for a moment. Alas! what have we, that we have not received? Or what do we, wherein we have not been divinely assisted? And if so, why should we glory? Verily, when man is most bent and set upon these gloryings, God delights to check him therein, and spit upon his glorying; and so jealous is God of his glory, that he seldom suffers a proud minister, that assumes and arrogates to himself, to be either serviceable or successful in his work. 2. These words are an exhortation to all the ministers of the gospel, as not to glory in themselves, so to glory in the Lord; that is, 1. To glory in the work of the Lord, that we promote his kingdom, his honor and interest, in the world. 2. To glory in the help of the Lord: the Lord is a master in covenant with us, and that a covenant of grace, in which every command hath a promise annexed to it, a promise both of assistance and acceptance. 3. To glory in the reward of the Lord, expected by us, and secured to us, by purchase and promise, the private christian's labors shall not be in vain in the Lord, much less his faithful ministers, who have borne the burden and heat of the day; let them then glory in the Lord and not in themselves, seeing all the good that is in them, and their actions, comes from him, and their recompence of reward is secured by him.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Three things are here observable, 1. The proneness which is in human nature to admire, applaud and commend itself. Man is a proud piece of flesh, and a little apprehended excellency in himself presently puffs him up, and he looks big with conceit: it is rare to see a man rich in gifts, and poor in spirit; poverty of spirit is better than all the riches of gifts: yea, it is the truest riches of grace. Observe, 2. Though a man is prone to commend and admire

himself, yet self-commendation is no unjust praise, but rather disparagement, a shameful indication both of pride and folly. He that commendeth himself, is not approved either of God or wise men; the same word in Hebrew, signifies *to praise yourselves*, and *to be foolish*, because there is no greater evidence of folly than self-commendation; yet sometimes, a wise man is forced to boast of his own performances, rather in a way of self-vindication, than by way of self-commendation. Observe, 3. That it is God's approbation, and not our own commendation, which is matter of true praise and real honor. When God and conscience bear witness to our sincerity, we need neither our own nor others commendation; the open-testimony of God, and the silent applause of our own conscience, is above all commendations whatsoever.

CHAPTER XI.

Our apostle is forced, in this chapter, for his own vindication, to enter upon a just and necessary commendation of himself; he gives us a large catalogue of his sufferings and services, not to grace himself, but to glorify God thereby; not that his person might be had in any undue admiration, but for the vindication of himself and his apostleship, from the contempt of those who preferred the false apostles before him. And accordingly, he bespeaks the Corinthians to bear with his seeming folly a little, in commending of himself after this unusual manner. Thus he addresses them. verse 1.

WOULD to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me.

2 I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Observe here, 1. That which the apostle calls his folly is his speaking so much in his own commendation and praise, because ordinary self-commendation has a very great show of folly in it, though not always. As if he had said, "I would you could bear with me a little, in that, which looks like a foolish boasting in me, namely, my glorying in my performances, in my services and sufferings, amongst you; and indeed, you must bear with me herein. Where note, That although the apostle lay under a necessity to commend himself for the vindication of his office, which made him free from folly in this matter; yet because, generally speaking, self-commendation usually proceeds from folly and vanity, and such as did not know the necessity which lay upon St. Paul thus to speak, would be apt to impute folly to him for thus speaking, he therefore calls it folly himself first, and tells the Corinthians, they did and must bear with it. Observe, 2. The reason assigned, which con-

strained the apostle thus to do it, was his holy jealousy for them. He had, by preaching of the gospel, brought them to know and believe in Christ, and so, by converting them to the christian faith, has espoused them to Christ: he earnestly therefore desired that he might present them a pure and chaste virgin; that is, a spotless church unto Christ. As the Jews say, that Moses espoused Israel to God in Mount Sinai, when he made them enter into covenant with him there; so says the apostle here by converting you to the christian faith, I have espoused you to one husband, even Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, with a rhetorical insinuation, begged their pardon and their patience, whilst by a just and necessary commendation of himself, he vindicated his person and office from contempt; and having shown, that what he did and said, was the fruit and effect of a pious jealousy, or holy love mixed with fear: accordingly, he tells them very plainly in this verse, that he was really afraid of them, lest as Eve was seduced by the subtilty of the devil, so their minds should be corrupted by false apostles, and seduced from the pure doctrine of the gospel; for as the noblest and most generous wine is adulterated by mingling it with water, so is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted, by mixing with it either philosophical speculations, or Jewish traditions, or any sort of human inventions. Well, therefore, might the apostle say, "I fear lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

As if the apostle had said, "It is one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, and not many which we have preached, and you have received; now, if your new teachers, the false apostles, have another Christ to set forth, more excellent gifts of the Spirit to boast of, another gospel to preach unto you, which I never preached amongst you, let them be heard and received;" but this being impossible, they might well bear with him in his modest boasting and glorying in what he had done and suffered amongst them, by whose ministry they were at first converted to christianity.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chief apostles.

6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

Observe here, 1. The great modesty of the apostle in

this expression; "I suppose I was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles." He might have said he was equal with them and in some sense superior to them, even the most eminent of them, Peter, James, and John. Indeed the apostleship, as an office, was of equal honor in all the apostles; but even amongst them, some had more excellent gifts, and greater enlargements, and did more signal services than others. Thus one of those stars differed from another; in brightness and glory. But, observe, 2. Before whom it is that St. Paul thus compares himself with the chiefest apostles: it was not before the true, but the false apostles, that he makes this modest boast. He did not contend with any of the apostles of Christ for the upper hand, nor say, I am not behind any of you, or I am better than any of you; but he only gives check to those false apostles, who undervalued him, and poured contempt upon him. He who said at another time, "I am not worthy to be called an apostle," says here, "I am not behind the chiefest apostle." From whence we learn, That the ministers of Christ may stand upon terms of credit with those that vilify their persons, disparage their function, and discredit that honorable work which God hath called them unto. Though all ambitious contending with others is odious, yet no man ought to betray either the truth of God, in his own integrity, lest he should be counted contentious. He purchases the opinion of an humble and peaceable minister too dear; who either pays the faith of God for it, or his own credit; something of reputation being absolutely necessary in a minister, to render his labors successful. Observe, 3. The objection which the false apostles, those proud boasters of their eloquence, made against St. Paul, namely, that he was *rude in speech*. That the apostle had some imperfection in his speech or utterance, is the opinion of many. Others affirm, that he was an eloquent preacher, from Acts xix. 12. where he is compared to Mercurius for it; but he did not think fit, in his ministry, to use the Grecian flaunting way in ostentation thereof, that so the power of the gospel might not seem to be placed in human wisdom. "However, says the apostle, though I be *rude in speech yet not in knowledge*; if my language has nothing extraordinary in it, yet sure nothing can be objected against my skill in the mysteries of salvation. But I need not tell you of this, who have had the proof of it in my ministry amongst yourselves." Note we here, The manner and method of St. Paul's preaching; it was grave and serious, pious and ardent, plain and profitable. No doubt he could have acted the orator in the pulpit as well as most. But he chose rather to speak close and home to the consciences of men; in a plain and familiar style, delivering all his evangelical and apostolical precepts so plainly, that the weakest capacities might understand and receive them. Plain truths, without any art or varnish may be conveyed with more warmth and vigor to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not: God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for satan himself is transformed into an angel of light:

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul, in his former epistle to the Corinthians, abundantly proved the lawfulness of his taking maintenance from those to whom he preached the gospel: yet here he tells the Corinthians, he preached freely to them, without putting them to any charge, though at the same time, he had subsistence from the brethren of Macedonia. From whence learn, That one church ought to contribute towards the furtherance of the gospel in, and amongst other churches. Here the brethren in Macedonia supplied the apostle with maintenance, whilst he preached to the church at Corinth. Observe, 2. The reason why St. Paul did preach the gospel without receiving any thing for the same at Corinth; namely, to cut off occasion from the false apostles, who sought occasion to traduce and slander him, as a poor indigent fellow that preached for bread, and gloried that he preached freely. Where note, That it is very probable, that these false apostles were some rich men, who took no pay of the churches for what they did, but preached, or rather deceived freely, and would have reproached the apostle as a mercenary preacher, had he taken any thing. From the whole learn, 1. That it is agreeable to the mind of Christ, that the ministers and dispensers of his gospel should be maintained. A maintenance for the ministry, is certainly of divine right. Learn 2. That the apostles themselves did not all work, at least, not at all times, for their livelihood, but generally speaking, did always receive maintenance from the churches: ver. 8. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them." We do not find the eleven apostles, after the Holy Ghost came upon them,

wrought afterwards with their hands for their livelihood, but gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, Acts vi. 4. Learn, 3. That though St. Paul did labor with his own hands at Corinth, and refused maintenance, for the reason forementioned, yet his example doth not enjoin us to work for our subsistence, with the labor of our hands, nor forbid us to take maintenance, when the churches we serve are able to maintain us. St. Paul tells us, when he wrought with his hands, he had then a power to leave working, 1. Cor. ix. 6. He had a right to a maintenance from the church at Corinth, though upon prudential consideration, he did forbear it, and no law of Christ restrained him from it. Learn 4. That there have been persons, all along, from the first planting and preaching of the gospel, who have sought occasion, and taken all occasions, though very unjustly, to charge the ministers of Christ with covetousness, worldly mindedness, and with preaching for filthy lucre sake. It was St. Paul's own case here; and therefore, says he, *will I glory in this*, that at Corinth, and all Achaia, I have preached freely, to cut off occasion from them that desire occasion, to charge me with covetousness and worldly mindedness, which he would by no means give them an handle for. And thus it continues to this day: let a minister be never so laborious in his office, or inoffensive in his life, if he expects but a moderate part of what is his just due, there are those that will cheat him of one half of his right, and then charge him with covetousness for demanding the other. Observe, lastly, The description and character here given by St. Paul of the false apostles, "They transform themselves into the apostles of Christ." That is, they pretend themselves to be Christ's apostles, and act as if they were such indeed: they take up the doctrine of Christ in some things which the holy apostles taught, but it was that they might weaken the estimation of the true apostles in the hearts of the Corinthians, and set up themselves there.— These false apostles were Judaizing christians, who mingled Judaism with christianity, and endeavoured to bring the christians under the bondage of the ceremonial law. Behold here the first heresy with which the wisdom of God was pleased to exercise the church, even in the apostles' days, that no church, and no age of the church, might pass without some temptation and trial; "they transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, even as satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Then is satan an angel of light, when he suggests good for evil ends, and under specious pretences of bringing glory to God, doth tempt persons to transgress the will of God. Thus the false apostles would preach error with as great zeal and industry, as the apostles of Christ did preach truth, and use their utmost arguments, persuasions, and motives for embracing of error, which the holy apostles did for the entertainment of truth, seeming to do the same things that the true ministers of Christ did. It is very possible for men to be really satan's instruments, animated and taught by him to do his work, against the interest of Christ and his truth, and yet at the same time, pretend to excel and go beyond Christ's faithful ministers in preaching truth and holiness. So that the highest pretences to truth, orthodoxy, free grace, purity, and unity, are no sufficient evidences of a true ministry. Satan and his ministers, who love to transform themselves sometimes into angels of light, may pretend to all these, and are, notwithstanding, the sworn enemies of Christ and his kingdom.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

Here our apostle returns again to his own just and necessary vindication of himself: he acknowledges it unbecoming and unseemly in itself to boast much: and that boasting is the usual mark of a fool; but it is no folly when the interest of God and souls require it: it was only seemingly, and not really, his folly; though it had the appearance of folly, in ostentation; yet with respect to the scope, the aim, and end, and design of it, it was needful and necessary. But yet he tells them, that what he had before spoke, and was now farther about to speak, *he spake not of the Lord*: that is, as if the Lord commanded any such boasting and glorying in ourselves as for ourselves. He did not pretend to have any special command from God, to enlarge so conspicuously in his own commendation: for the Spirit of God nowhere advises us to commend ourselves, or to glory either in the sufferings we have undergone, or the services we have done: yet what the apostle here said and did, though not after the Lord, yet was it not contrary to the Lord, or to the direction of his word, which nowhere commands us to conceal what grace God has wrought in us, or the good done by us, upon a fitting occasion, and with a sincere design, that he, and not ourselves, may have the praise and glory of it.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing you yourselves are wise.

20 For you suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak: howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

Here our apostle, with some kind of salt and smartness, reflects upon the Corinthians (whom ironically he calls *wise men*) for suffering themselves to be imposed upon by their false teachers, to be tyrannized over, to be spunged upon and exhausted, to be brought again into bondage to Jewish ceremonies, to be *smitten on the face*; that is, to be upbraided to their very faces, because they had subjected themselves to so mean and weak a person as Paul, a tent-maker. However, he assures them, that in any thing according to the flesh, wherein the false apostles could glory, he could glory also. Here note, That by *glorying after the flesh*, is meant glorying in any external privileges and outward advantages, particularly in glorying that they were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; for the Jews

had a very high opinion of themselves, as being the seed of Abraham, and the only people of God, by visible profession, at that time in the world; having contemptible thoughts of all others, whom they called the *profane*, and the people of the earth, likening them to dogs. Now the apostle tells the Corinthians plainly, That although there is nothing after the flesh which deserves greatly to be gloried in, yet seeing that the false apostles did pride themselves in these things, he could boast of the same carnal privileges with them, and glory after the flesh as well as themselves; and accordingly thus he speaks in the following verses:

22 Are they Hebrews? [*speaking the Jewish language*] so am I: are they Israelites? [*descended from beloved Jacob*] so am I: are they the seed of Abraham? [*and not proselytes*] so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant [*than any of them,*] in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

That is I have suffered more for Christ, by stripes, by imprisonments, by daily dying, than any of them have done. Here note, that these false teachers, the Judaizing doctors, were most certainly of the Jewish race; and that they were not only converted to, but did preach up the faith of Christ; but withal, the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the Jewish rites. These teachers went from Judea, and gave great disturbance to all christian churches; as Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi; and we often find St. Paul complaining of them, by the name of those of the circumcision; because they required of such as did embrace christianity, to submit to circumcision and the Jewish law.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

The law in Deut. xxv. 3. allowed forty stripes to be given to them that were worthy to be beaten, but forbade them to exceed that number: but it being their custom to beat them with a whip that had three cords, they must either stop at thirty-nine, or exceed and go to forty-two:—Here observe, That the apostle contending with these false teachers, proves the truth of his ministry and apostleship; not, as elsewhere, from the miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, which did accompany his preaching, but from his sufferings, as being the things which these false apostles could not pretend unto, and so could not glory that they were like unto him in them.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep.

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by

mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Behold what a catalogue the apostle here gives of his sufferings and services: he was scourged by the Jews with whips, beaten by the Gentiles with rods, stoned by the rabble, thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day tossed to and fro upon the sea, and in great danger of perishing; in journeyings often from one country to another, to preach, plant and propagate the gospel; in perils at sea and land by pirates and robbers; in perils by his countrymen the Jews; in perils in the cities, Damascus, Ephesus, and Jerusalem; in perils in wildernesses and deserts; in perils amongst false brethren, men of the christian profession; in weariness and painfulness, by travelling from place to place; in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, that is, in necessitated hunger often, and in voluntary fastings frequent, for spiritual purposes; in cold and nakedness, that is, very poor and thin in clothing. Lord! what tongue can utter, or what heart can conceive, the pains which the apostle took, or the hazards which he run in preaching the gospel to a lost world? And yet the good man heartily thanks our Lord Jesus Christ for all that, who had counted him faithful, and put him into the ministry. Verily none of the ministers of Christ have any reason or cause to repent of the choice of their office, whatever services they undertake, or whatever sufferings or reproaches it either bath or may expose them to. Alas! what is all that we feel, to what this apostle underwent? And what is all that he underwent for Christ, compared with that transcendent reward which is in the hand of Christ, both for him and us.

28 Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

The apostle's burden of outward trouble was discovered before: his burden of inward care is declared now. Besides those things which were afflicting to him from without, the care and business of all the new planted churches was daily upon his heart and hand: besides all his bodily labors by journeying and travelling incessantly from place to place; his solicitous care and thoughtfulness of mind, for the prosperity and happiness of all the churches of Christ, both near and afar off, was great and pressing; the holy man felt as much by sympathy as he did by sense. Many were the personal troubles which he had felt, but more were the church's troubles of which he had feeling; concerning which, he thus expresses himself in the next verse:

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

That is, "What particular church, or what particular christian in any of the churches of Christ, is weak in faith or wavering in their profession? Where is the person that

is assaulted with inward temptations, or outward troubles, and I do not sympathize with him, yea, both with holy zeal and fervent desire for his settlement and establishing: Sympathy among all the members, but especially in and among the ministers of Christ, is a great christian duty: they ought to have a tender compassion to the whole flock, and also a quick sense both of the sins and of the sufferings of every particular and individual member and part thereof. As Christ, our Head, is afflicted in all his church's afflictions; so ought we, as his ministers and members, to be afflicted in the afflictions of our fellow-brethren. He that has no cross of his own, must take up and bear his brother's; yea, he that has many of his own, must yet bear a part of all his brethren's crosses. Good men ever have been, and are men of tender and compassionate dispositions, ready to mourn over, and lament for, both the sins and sufferings of others, from the overflowings of a christ-like spirit in them. True goodness evermore promotes compassion.

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

By *infirmities* here, we are to understand sufferings, reproaches and disgraces, afflictions and persecutions, for the sake of the gospel. Where note, That the apostle chose rather to glory in what Christ had enabled him to suffer, than in what he enabled him to do for him; he had wrought divers miracles, could speak divers tongues, had done very great and eminent services for Christ; but not a word of these, because these indeed were evidences of the power of God in him, and of the favor of God towards him, but no demonstration of any inherent grace or goodness in him: whereas his patient bearing of such sharp, long, and continual sufferings for the sake of the gospel, were undeniable proofs of extraordinary measures of faith and patience, of holy self-denial and eminent love to God, and consequently were a truer and greater cause of boasting, than extraordinary gifts, and miraculous operations.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

Observe here, How the apostle, in a most awful and solemn manner, appeals to the all-knowing and heart searching God, that the foregoing account of his sufferings for Christ and his gospel, was the exact truth, and no lie. He calls God to bear witness to the certainty of all that he had said of his sufferings and services: and calling him the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, affords an undeniable argument to prove the Godhead of Christ; this doxology, *blessed for evermore*, being a term of honor usually annexed by the Jews at the naming of God.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket,

was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

The apostle concludes this chapter, containing a relation of his sufferings, with a remarkable deliverance which God gave him from danger and death, at the city of Damascus, soon after his conversion, of which mention is made, *Acts ix. 24, 25.* The Jews whom he confuted and confounded with his arguments at Damascus, sought to kill him: to effect which they had, by some means or other brought over Aretas, who was king under the Roman emperor at Damascus, and he engages, with the Jews in persecuting the holy and innocent apostle: he shuts up the gates of the city, keeps his soldiers in arms, and uses all possible means to prevent the apostle's escape. But what saith the psalmist? *Psal. cxxvii. 1. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain;* either to keep out those whom he will have in, or to keep in those whom he will have out. All the walls shall be an open gate to those whom divine providence will have to escape; as here to St. Paul, being let down over the wall by a rope in a basket: neither was it any evidence of cowardice that the apostle now fled, nor in the least degree sinful: our Lord having given us a particular licence in the case, saying, *When they persecute you in one city, fly to another.* Besides, the persecution now raised was directly levelled against the apostle in particular: it was therefore piously done in the disciples, and prudently done in himself, to attempt the means of his own preservation. As the husbandman doth not commit all his corn to the oven, but saves some for seed; so doth God in persecution. All are not martyrs: and none shall be so presently: they must first finish their course of obedience, before they finish their course with joy. Happy soul, that can say with this great and good man, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I am ready to be offered up: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory, which fadeth not away." Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

The argument of this is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, namely, the apostle's just and necessary vindication of himself, his person and ministry from the aspersions of the false apostles, which were certain erroneous Judaizing teachers, who every where disturbed the church's peace, and gave the holy apostle great disquiet. In the former chapter he gloried in his infirmities, that is, in his sufferings, called infirmities; because the best of christians are apt to betray much weakness, and to discover much passionate infirmity in and under them: but in this chapter he comes to another kind of holy glorying, namely, in those extraordinary visions and revelations which he had from God: concerning which he thus speaks:

IT is not expedient for me doubtless to glory, I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

That is, "I acknowledge it neither decent nor advantageous, with respect to myself, to go on in farther boasting and glorying, but since it may be necessary with respect to you, I will declare what visions and revelations I have received from the Lord; in which I shall give such an evidence of the favors of Christ to me, and such a testimony of my mission from heaven, as none of these false apostles or deceitful workers can pretend unto." Learn hence, That although glorying or boasting, in itself is so expedient a thing, savors of pride, and is an evidence of folly, when it is not necessary and just, and therefore all christians should be backward to it: yet that which is so inexpedient in itself may, upon a just and fitting occasion, be not only lawful, but laudable, both a necessary and commendable duty. Observe, 2. The present subject matter of St. Paul's glorying; it was heavenly raptures and visions which he gloried in. Learn thence, That divine revelations, acquainting the soul with heaven, are matters most worthy of humble and modest glorying. Oh! if God would vouchsafe to favor us with the sight of what St. Paul saw, what little things would crowns and sceptres, empires and kingdoms, seem to us? How would it make us long, groan and cry, to be with Christ! But though none of us must expect such raptures and ecstasies as the apostles had, blessed be God for that clear revelation of his heavenly glory which the gospel gives, and for that assurance which faith gives, that Christ as our forerunner is entered into, and keeps possession of it, in the name and stead of all believers: he has prepared it for us, and is daily preparing us for that, and in his own appointed time will put us into the actual possession of it; not for a few hours (which was all the apostle enjoyed) but for eternal ages.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell: or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell:) God knoweth.

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Observe, 1. That the person here spoken of was doubtless himself, otherwise it had been no cause or ground of glorying to him at all; yet he speaks in the name of a third person. Thence note, That they who know most of God, are most modest when they come to speak of themselves. Observe, 2. The description of the person, a man in Christ: that is, a man actuated by the Spirit of Christ, above himself; and also a description of the place: he was caught up into paradise, the seat of the blessed. Learn thence, That there is a third heaven, or heavenly paradise, where are the concerns and hopes of holy souls: and souls are not so closely tied to the body, but they may whenever God pleases, be wrapt up into paradise, or the third heaven. The apostle

not being able to tell whether he was in the body, or out of the body, sheweth that somehow the soul was there, though he could not declare nor discover the manner how. Observe, 3. What St. Paul heard when thus wrapt up into paradise, namely, *unspeakable words*, such as cannot be uttered; or, if uttered, cannot be understood. Learn thence, That the things of the heavenly paradise are to mortal men unspeakable; there is no human language that hath words fit to reveal that part of the heavenly things which God hath shut up as secret from us. Observe, lastly, St. Paul's great humility, both in concealing formerly this extraordinary favor, and now not without some difficulty and disguise mentioning it, though for defence of the gospel, in a manner, constrained thereunto; contenting himself with such a fame as his deportment and outward actions, in serving the interest of Christ, could procure, and no way avoid.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool, for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

Here the apostle declares, that although this foretaste of the heavenly glory was worthy to be gloried in, and though he might boast of himself as thus exalted, yet he being purely passive in it, and advanced freely by God to it, he chose rather to ascribe unto God the entire glory of that, and content himself with glorying in such infirmities, and debasing sufferings, as he could strictly call his own, being undergone by him with an invincible courage and constancy of mind. However, he assures them, that if he had a mind to glory of this rapture and revelation, he might do it without folly or vanity, it being most certainly true: but he chose rather to forbear, lest he should thereby give occasion to any to over-value him, and to think more highly of him, than his common behaviour, his ordinary words and actions gave them reason to do. A wise and good man is not ambitious of more applause or commendation than what his personal worth or merits deservedly challenge; he desires no man to think or speak of him above that which he appeareth to be, which is always as he really is, being that in reality, which he is in appearance.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Observe here, The great and special sin which St. Paul was in danger of by the abundance of revelations, namely, the sin of spiritual pride. Learn hence, That heavenly revelations may be matter and occasion of unmeet and sinful exaltation. The holiest christians, after their most hea-

venly acquaintance, are not out of danger of spiritual pride, or being too much exalted. Pride is such a sin as the holiest saint is not too fully secured from; no, not when he hath been hearing unutterable words, and seeing the heavenly paradise itself; no, not if he came down from the third heaven, newly from converse with angels, yet bringing an imperfect nature with him, he is not out of danger of this sin, much less is he so when he cometh off his knees from prayer, &c. Observe, 2. The way and means which the wisdom of God made use of for preventing St. Paul's falling into this dangerous sin of spiritual pride, and that was, the giving him a thorn in the flesh; a bodily pain, say some; a bitter persecution, say others; something that was very afflictive to the flesh, say all. Learn hence, That spiritual pride is so dangerous a sin, that it is a mercy to be freed from it, even by bodily pain: God seeth our danger when we see not our own, and will hurt the body to save the soul of his dearest children. Oh, how much better is it that the body should smart, than that the soul should be overmuch exalted! It is an happy thorn in the flesh, which lets the pestilent and corrupt blood of spiritual pride out of the soul. Lord! why do we contend and quarrel with thee for every sickness, bodily pain, or afflictive cross? Can sin be prevented or killed at too dear a rate? Observe, 3. This thorn in the flesh is called the messenger of satan, from whence St. Chrysostom concluded that it was some evil angel that was permitted and empowered by God to scourge and buffet him. The sufferings of the best and holiest persons in the flesh, may be the buffetings of a messenger of satan, and yet be from God. Satan certainly intendeth our hurt, but God overrules him as an instrument to do us good: it is no proof that a man is not a child of God, because satan has a permission to torment his flesh. The messenger of satan was sent to buffet me, says St. Paul, lest I should be exalted.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

Note here, 1. The person prayed to, the Lord: that is, the Lord Jesus, as appears by the two next verses, that the *power of Christ may rest upon me*. Here is an instance of prayer directed to Christ, therefore here is an instance of Christ's divinity: prayer made to Christ at all times, in all places, and for all things, is an evidence of his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, and consequently of his being truly and essentially God. Note, 2. The subject-matter of this prayer, and that was, for the removal of the affliction; *I prayed that it might depart from me*; together with the reiterated frequency of it, *I besought the Lord thrice*. Learn hence, That peace with God doth not make the flesh insensible; a good man may groan under bodily pain, and lawfully pray for the removal of it; yea, be oft in prayer for it; earnest and frequent prayer is not unsuitable to sharp affliction; *For this I besought the Lord thrice*. Where mark, St. Paul's conformity to his Saviour, who in his agony prayed thrice that the cup might pass, but both of them with profound submission. Note also, That the apostles' gifts of healing were not to be used at their own pleasure (then St. Paul might have healed himself) but for the confirmation of the faith, when it pleased the Holy Spirit.

9 ¶ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:—

Observe, In this answer that is given to St. Paul's prayer, that the mercy prayed for, is not in kind given unto him, but the promised grace and strength, which is better than the mercy he prayed for. Learn hence, That the frequent and earnest prayers of the most holy and eminent saints, for deliverance from outward troubles, may not be granted in the kind or thing desired. We are not lords, but beggars, and must leave it to God to determine the matter, the manner, the measure, the time of our afflictions. Note farther, That as in the prayer, so in the answer, St. Paul was conformed to Christ: the one was heard, but not by the passing of the cup; the other was heard, but not by removing the thorn in the flesh; but both were heard by assurance and supply of divine strength; and sufficient grace to help in time of need; *He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee*. Learn hence, That the grace of Christ is sufficient for his people in all their afflictions; sufficient for their preservation, to keep them from falling away from God and godliness, by the temptation which always attends affliction; sufficient for their sustentation, to uphold and support them in and under their heaviest pressures and afflictions; and sufficient to render their afflictions truly advantageous and serviceable to them, to make them more holy, humble, heavenly, conformed unto Christ, &c.

—For my strength is made perfect in weakness.—

This is not to be understood as if our weakness added any thing to God's power, or could make his power perfect: but our weakness renders God's power more illustrious, he delights in and under our weakness, to manifest most of his helping power; as the stars never shine so gloriously as in the sharpest frosty night, so the power of God never appears so signally and conspicuously, as in and under our weakness. Learn hence, That when God, upon our prayer doth not deliver us from bodily sufferings, he will be sure to come in with sufficient grace, and manifest his strength in our pain and weakness. We never thought how much or how long we could bear and hold out, till God made manifest his own strength in our weakness. More of the power of grace is seen in the sufferings of believers, than ever was seen in their prosperity: beg then, O christian! more importunately for divine strength, than for the departing of the thorn: grace is better than ease or health; the one is proper to saints, the other is common to wicked men and brutes.

—Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here our apostle tells the Corinthians, that most gladly he chose rather to glory in his afflictions and tribulations, than in his visions and revelations, because by them he had greater experience of the power and presence of Christ with him, and supporting of him under all his pressures. Learn hence, 1. That the people of God are supported under, and carried through all their sufferings and afflictions, by the power of Christ: a divine power above their own strength, like everlasting arms, is underneath them in the hour of trial. Learn, 2. That to glory in afflictions and tribulations, is an high pitch of holiness and grace; but

attainable. To glory in tribulation, is; 1. To rejoice in it. 2. To express that joy outwardly, upon a fit occasion. 3. To express it with a great degree of exultation and boasting: many of the martyrs were so far from changing countenance at the stake, that they sung and triumphed in the midst of flames. *Question*, But can any comfort be derived from this text for sinful infirmities? *Answer*, From the power of Christ, in the text, there may. Thus the powerful mediation and intercession of Christ is magnified, in procuring the acceptance of our persons and services, notwithstanding the sinful infirmities cleaving to them; also the power of his grace, will at death be magnified, in purging and purifying his people from all their dross and dregs. There is nothing uneasy to a child of God, but there is something in Christ to alleviate it; affliction is uneasy, temptation uneasy, death uneasy, the wrath of God uneasy, the law, as condemning, is uneasy and displeasing; but Christ has delivered from the curse of the law, satisfied the justice of God, sanctified the cross, sweetened death. Oh, how adorable is the power, how desirable the grace of Christ!

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: when I am weak, then I am strong.

Observe here, 1. The high and heroic pitch which St. Paul's spirit was raised to, *he took pleasure in reproaches, and persecutions*. Pleasure is a degree beyond joy; though these sufferings were painful to the flesh, yet were they pleasing to the spirit: a christian may not love that which he bears, yet may he love to bear; to bear, is the patience of necessity: to love to bear, is the patience of virtue; to delight to bear reproach or persecution for Christ is expressive of the highest affection towards Christ, and lowest subjection to him. If nature suffers not a saint to take pleasure in reproaches, as such, yet grace enables him to take pleasure in what he is reproached for. Observe, 2. The cause assigned why the apostle took such pleasure in his sufferings and abasements, because they gave him such experience of the power of Christ: inasmuch that when he was most weak in himself, he was then most strong in him; *When I am weak, then I am strong*; which words are a divine paradox or riddle: the apostle affirms one contrary of another: weakness is contrary to strength; how then can a weak man be strong, when he is weak: the meaning is, that when a christian is most sensible of his own weakness, and most diffident and distrustful of his own strength, then the power of Christ rests upon him, and he experiences divine strength coming in unto him. Christ fills none but the hungry, nor doth he strengthen any but the weak; only by going out of our strength, do we get strength; when in an humble sense of our weaknesses we rest upon Christ, the power of Christ rests upon us.

11 ¶ I am become a fool in glorying: ye have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended of you, for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were
(No. 52.)

wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Here again does our apostle excuse his boasting, and tells the Corinthians that they had compelled him to it, and ought to have saved him the labor of it, by defending him themselves: for he had done and suffered as much as any of the most eminent apostles, though he looked upon all as nothing; and consequently, his services and sufferings, his miracles, signs and wonders, were sufficient arguments, and undeniable demonstrations that he was indeed an apostle of Jesus Christ. He farther adds, That the church at Corinth had as great and excellent gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon them by his ministry, as any church whatsoever; all the difference was, that whatever was done for them, was done freely: he spared their purses, and put them to no charge. Now, says he, if that be a wrong, I hope you can easily forgive it. Corinth was a very rich and wealthy city; but they loved a cheap gospel: the apostle spared their purses, not because they were unable, but unwilling to draw them. Here Observe, That the people ought to give testimony to their minister's integrity, and do all that in them lies, to support and maintain the honor of his ministry; *I ought*, says the apostle, *to be commended of you*. Observe farther, That when the people omit and neglect this necessary part of their duty towards their ministers, it is lawful, and not discommendable, for the ministers of Christ themselves, in a modest humble manner, to declare both what they have been, and what they have done; *In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing*. As if the apostle had said, Verily, I am as much an apostle as they who think themselves more than apostles, though you and they, through envy count me nothing, and though I in humility account myself nothing." Thus the ministers of Christ may stand upon terms of credit with any who lay their persons low, that they may disparage their work, and lay that service low to which God hath called them: though the ministers and members of Christ ought in lowliness to submit to one another, yet must they not submit to the pride of lusts of any, how high soever in their own, or others account.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be beloved.

The apostle here acquaints the Corinthians, that he prepared himself a third time to come unto them, being providentially hindered twice before, yet with a firm resolution
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not to be any ways burdensome to them: for he coveted not their possessions, but was desirous of their salvation: and as a parent lays up for his children, and takes not from them, so he desired as their spiritual father, to enrich them with spiritual good things, and not to take from them any of their temporal riches. Nay he adds that he was willing to spend and be spent; that is, to spend his time, his strength, his pains, his life; although he met with very undue returns from some of them, who loved him so little, because he loved them so much, showing more kindness to the false apostles, than to him their spiritual father. Behold here an imitable pattern of ministerial diligence and faithfulness, love and affectionateness; the apostle was willing to spend and be spent: not only his purse and pains, but time and strength, life and health. Oh, how tender are some of their carcass, how fearful of their skin, how sparing of their pains, for fear of shortening their days, and hastening their end! Whereas, the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven: is it not better that our flesh consume with industry, and usefulness, than wear out with rust and idleness? As it is the duty, so it is the disposition of the faithful ministers of Christ, to spend and to be spent for souls.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you; nevertheless being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you.

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

Here the apostle answers an objection, which, without any just cause, was made against him by some: it was suggested, "That though he was not burdensome to the Corinthians himself, nor took any thing of them for preaching the gospel, yet that he cunningly and craftily sent others to them; and set them at work to take money for him." Now, to wipe off this aspersion, the apostle appeals to themselves, whether any person he ever sent to them, received any thing of them for his use? Neither Titus nor Luke made a gain of them, but with the same generosity and freedom preached the gospel, and communicated the riches of grace to their souls. When the ministers of the gospel at any time call in the assistance of others to help them in their work, their care is to employ such as near as they can judge, who are of the same spirit, and walk in the same steps with themselves. St. Paul, Titus and Luke, all agree together in carrying on a generous design for the preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely, and are of the same mind and practice in every thing.

19 Again, think you that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.

As if the apostle had said, "Think not that for any sinister or by-ends of my own, I excuse myself so often to you, for deferring so long my promised and intended journey among you, for all I do is with an eye to your advantage.—'Tis your benefit and reformation I am at, for, verily I fear, whenever I come, I shall find those sins unrepented of, and unhumbled for, by many of you, which will be matter of humiliation, sorrow, and lamentation to me: and that I must be necessitated, contrary to my inclinations and desires, to inflict censures and corporeal punishments upon many among you, for the schisms, debates and strifes of some; for the uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness of others." Note here, 1. What great disorders and scandalous crimes were found in the church of Corinth, and yet she retained the denomination and character of a true church: the apostle fears, and not without cause, that he should find debates, envyings, wraths and strifes among them, the usual and necessary consequences of schisms and factions in the church. Note, 2. That notwithstanding all these corruptions and scandalous abuses, St. Paul neither separates himself; nor persuades any to separate from them. Nothing will justify a separation from a church, but that which makes a separation between God and that church, namely, heresy in doctrine, or idolatry in worship.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this second Epistle, lets the Corinthians know, that he had a third time resolved to come unto them, and to be sharp against such of them with his ecclesiastical censures, as he found unreclaimed and unreformed amongst them, sparing neither great nor small, one nor other, if involved in the same guilt; which censures of the apostles were many times attended with corporeal punishments, and sometimes with death: what the civil sword is in the commonwealth, that ecclesiastical discipline is in the church, when duly executed, namely, a revenger of all disobedience.

THIS is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretel you as if I were present the second time, and being absent now, I write to them, which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

The apostle having, throughout both his epistles, blamed the Corinthians for several gross enormities found amongst them, and hearing there were some that had not repented of them, he gives them plainly to understand, that he had a full purpose to come unto them with his rod of ecclesiastical discipline and church-censures, and would not spare a man of them, but execute that power on the impenitent, which Christ had given him, by excluding such unclaimable offenders from church communion. Note here, with what wisdom and caution the holy apostle proceeds in the executing and inflicting the severe censures of the church: he uses admonition a first, second, and third time, before he proceeds to the awful sentence of excommunication: "I told you before, I foretel you now, and being absent, I write to you, that when I come, I will not spare." He tells them farther, that they had tempted him hereunto, in that they had required a proof from him whether Christ had owned him as an apostle or not, and would ratify his censures by judgments following them. He shows, that Christ had owned him, and manifested his power in his ministry among them, by converting many of them to the christian faith, by bestowing the gifts of his Spirit upon them, and by many signs and miracles which he enabled him to do in the midst of them. When God calls his servants to the work of the ministry he leaves not either himself or them without witness; he bears testimony to their sincerity, by giving them, in some degree, the seal of their ministry, in the conversion or edification of those they are sent unto: "Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, to you-ward he is not weak, but is mighty in and amongst you." Next, the holy apostle draws a parallel, and makes a comparison between his blessed Lord and Master and himself. As Christ, in his state of humiliation, appeared to be a weak and frail man, by being crucified; but was evidenced to be the great and mighty God, by his rising from the dead: so the apostle, considered in himself, and in respect of his afflictions, appears a weak and contemptible man; but yet they had found, and should farther find, a resemblance of the power and strength of Christ, in his life and ministry; and particularly, they should find him armed with authority from Christ, to execute cen-

tures upon the contumacious and impenitent. Though the ministers of Christ, like their Master, when here on earth, are in a state of weakness, poverty, and contempt, yet they are clothed with divine power in the execution of their office, and their ministry is a living, powerful, and efficacious ministry, in the vigorous effects of it upon the hearts of their people; "We are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you."

5 ¶ Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.— Know ye not your own selves, *how* that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Here the apostle advises the Corinthians, instead of inquiring after the proof of Christ in him, to examine whether they were in Christ themselves: intimating to us, that such are usually most backward to examine the state of their own souls, who are forward to inquire into the spiritual state and condition of others. "You seek a proof of Christ in me, says the apostle; Oh, rather prove and examine yourselves." Where note, 1. A duty expressed; *Examine yourselves; prove yourselves*: the word is a metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who with great exactness try their gold; the truth of it by the touchstone, the weight of it by the scale, and the purity of it by the fire. And the repetition of the command, *Examine yourselves; prove yourselves*; implies the great backwardness that is in men's natures to perform this duty, the great necessity of the duty, and the great diligence and frequency to be used in performing of the duty. Learn hence, That self-examination is an excellent, a necessary and important duty, belonging to every one in the church, and requires great diligence and faithfulness in the performing of it. 'Tis necessary, in regard of our comforts, and also in regard of our graces; for there are counterfeit graces, as well as real; and common graces, as well as saving; and it is a duty that requires diligence and frequency, because the work is difficult, because the heart is backward, because we are apt to be deceived, and willing to be deceived; because many have miscarried without it, and many perish by a negligent performance of it: *Therefore examine yourselves; prove yourselves*. Note, 2. The subject-matter of our examination, whether ye be in the faith; that is, whether ye be converted to the christian faith, whether the faith of Christ be in you, whether the principle of faith be in your hearts, whether the power of faith be in your consciences, whether the practice of faith be in your lives, whether your faith be the parent and principle of obedience, working love, and working by love. Note, 3. The enforcement or motive to this duty, *Except ye be reprobates*; that is, counterfeit, adulterate, unsound, and insincere christians, unaccepted of God, and not owned by him. As reprobate silver hath no worth or fitness in it for trading, so such christians as, upon examination, are not found to have the grace of faith in them, more precious than gold, are unapproved of God, and rejected by him. Note, 4. When the apostle expostulates with them, and says, *Know ye not your own selves?* it implies both the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of the duty, and all the possibility and easiness of knowing whether Christ be in us, or not, upon a due and diligent inquiry, whether we have experi-

enced the quickening and transforming power of Christ in our hearts and lives. Finally, So great is the benefit, and so sweet the comfort, which flows to us by examination and self-acquaintance, that it will abundantly recompense our care and diligence, in the frequent and faithful discharge of it.

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

As if the apostle had said, "Whatever you, upon examination, shall be found to be, I trust you shall know, and be convinced, that we have not dishonoured Christ, nor shall be disowned of him: but whenever I come to you, you shall find that I am not destitute of the grace and power of Christ; whether for advancing your faith, improving your holiness, or correcting your miscarriages. The ministers of Christ, who are faithful to him in contending with the errors and vices of men, in reproving sin, in censuring sin, shall be owned and approved of God, when the reprobate world shall be condemned by him *I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.*"

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

The apostle drawing towards the conclusion of his epistle, shuts it up with prayer, earnestly imploring Almighty God, that the Corinthians might be found doing no evil, which might expose them to his censure, and force him to exercise his apostolical power, in punishing such offenders and offences as he should find among them. And he prayed thus for them, because he had rather have them good, than by punishing their evil manners, have an occasion to testify himself an approved and faithful apostle: for he did not so much regard his own reputation, as their salvation.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth; but for the truth.

The apostle having prayed that the Corinthians might be found doing no evil, in the former verse, and assuring them thereupon, that they would then be secure from his censures and chastisements, he assigns a reason here for that assurance given them; because, says he, *We can do nothing against the truth; but for the truth:* having our power given us only for edification, and not for destruction. Considering the words, without respect to the coherence, Observe, 1. A negative proposition, *We can do nothing against the truth*, Oh blessed impotency! 2. An affirmation, or positive assertion, *but for the truth*. Oh blessed ability? He was as strong as a giant for the truth, but as weak as an infant against it. Learn, That sincere christians in general, and the ministers of Christ in particular, cannot, dare not, will not do any thing against the truth, but for the truth: they cannot, that is, they may not, they are restrained by an outward command from God, who is truth itself: they cannot, that is, they will not, there is a restraint of an inward principle; neither the conviction of their understandings, the clearness of their judgments, nor the holiness of their

hearts, will suffer them to oppose the truth. Again, they cannot attempt it; or if they did, they can never effect it; they cannot do it safely, they cannot do it successfully. We can do nothing against the truth in a way of discouragement; nor nothing against it in a way of disparagement: but all our endeavours are for the truth; we embrace it in our judgments, we hide it in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. Whatever talent God entrusts any of his ministers with, whether of parts, power, or estate, it is an opportunity put into their hands of doing service for the truth, and, as such, to be accepted and improved.

9 For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

The apostle may be understood two ways: 1. We are glad *when we are weak*: that is, when I have no occasion to manifest my apostolical power, in censuring any of you as offenders: *But ye are strong*: strong in faith, and fruitful in good works. Or, 2. We are glad *when we are weak*, that is, when we are weakened by never so many sufferings and infirmities, provided you are made strong thereby: for this is what we principally wish and endeavour, even your utmost perfection in knowledge, faith and holiness. No, thing is more desired by the zealous and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, than to see their people strong in faith, fruitful in good works, persevering in well doing, yea, perfect in holiness and obedience: *This we wish*, nothing like it, *even your perfection.*

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present, I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

As if the apostle had said, "Verily I write thus to you, being absent, purposely, to reclaim you, lest being present, I should be forced to use some sharpness towards you, according to the power which the Lord hath given me, tending to your edification always, and not at any time to your destruction." Observe here, With what tenderness the apostle treats these offenders; he tells them, the sharpness and severity in his letters (if they accounted it such) was upon a kind design, to prevent sharpness and severity in his dealings with them, when he came amongst them; yet withal, he assures them, that if matters should come to an extremity, that he must be forced to exercise his apostolical power, in cutting the contumacious off from the church's communion; he would exercise it with a tender regard to their good, not their hurt; for their edification, and not willingly to their destruction. Learn we from the apostle's practice, to execute the censures of the church with great tenderness and affection, with great pity and compassion, with extraordinary dread and caution; not with rashness and indiscretion, or upon every light and trivial occasion, but like a tender-hearted father, with a rod in our hands, and tears in our eyes.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one

mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you.

Here our apostle shuts up his epistle with a pathetic option and affectionate wish of all perfection, consolation, concord and communion, to his beloved Corinthians.—Where note, 1. What a fervent and unfeigned love here is in all the faithful ministers of Christ to the people committed to their charge, and how desirous they are, when they are taking their leave of them, to leave God with them; *The God of love and peace be with you.* Now God's being with a people, implies and imports these things; namely, the heart of God with them, the help of God with them, and the presence of God with them, and that they shall shortly be with God. Note, 2. What are the particular graces and blessings which the apostle wishes his beloved Corinthians? He doth not wish them earthly honors, worldly riches, sensual pleasures; but perfection of grace, spiritual consolation, mutual love, sweet communion with God, unanimity and concord amongst themselves: sanctifying gifts and saving graces are the best legacies that can be left by the ministers of God unto their people. Be perfect, be knit together: let the schisms and breaches which have been amongst you, be healed: be of good comfort, rejoice in and under all your sufferings for Christ, and the profession of his holy religion. *Be of one mind*, of the same judgment, if possible, in all things: or if otherwise, let no difference in judgment cause disunion in affection; if in some lesser things your heads be different, yet let your hearts be one. *Live in peace*, for the Lord's sake, live no longer in division and strife, in contention and wrath; let me hear no more of those debates, envyings, backbitings, whisperings and swellings, which I have reprov'd you for; but especially, live in peace with your teachers and spiritual guides; cause not them to complain to God of you, nor to groan to God against you, for your factious preferring one minister before another: one crying, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos. Thus doing, *the God of peace and love shall be with you*: that is, he who is the author and enjoiner of love and peace will be with you, and dwell among you with his gracious and favorable presence.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you,

He exhorts them, according to the custom of those eastern countries, to salute one another with a kiss, as a token of mutual and sincere love: and since it was become a practice in sacred meetings and church assemblies, particularly before their receiving the holy communion, to kiss each other, he advises them to use it innocently, chastely; let it not be a wanton, but an holy kiss. However, afterwards, the piety and purity of the church degenerating and declining, it was laid aside. That which is innocent in itself, and pious in its first intendment, may in time, fall under such abuse, as to cause it wholly to be laid aside.

14 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Here are the highest blessings and benefits wished to, and prayed for, in behalf of the Corinthians, which they could possibly be made partakers of; namely, all that love which doth or can flow from the Father: all that grace which was purchased by the Son, and all that fellowship and communion with, and communication from the holy Spirit, which might render them meet for the service of Christ on earth, and for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him in heaven. Observe here, A full text for the holy Trinity: the names of the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are here distinctly mentioned, as in the commission for, and in the form of baptism. Matt. xxviii. 19. Here the apostle calls the Father God, the Son Lord, and the Spirit the Holy Ghost; and as he attributes love to the Father, grace to the Son, so fellowship to the Holy Ghost; so that we have no reason to doubt of the personality of either, or any of them. But when we consider how many at this day, with imprudence and impunity, deny the divinity of the second, and the personality of the third person in the blessed Trinity, we have reason to pray, as our church has taught us for our own establishment, in the collect for Trinity-sunday;

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine Majesty, to worship the Unity; we beseech thee, that thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest one God, world without end.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS.

That this Epistle was written by St. Paul, whose name it bears, I think was never questioned; though it be not writ, as most of his other epistles are, to the Christians of one particular city, but of the whole country, to wit, Galatia.

The Galatians very readily embraced the gospel, upon the preaching of St. Paul, and were at first exceedingly affectionate to his person, and zealous in the profession of what he taught. But, alas! soon after St. Paul had left them, some false apostles from Judea crept in amongst them, perverting some, and staggering others; teaching the necessity, for such as had embraced the Christian religion, to submit to circumcision, and the observation of the Mosaical institution.

To countenance this insinuation of theirs, they alledged, that St. Peter, James, and John, had sent them thither, and that they were of their minds in this matter; and particularly that St. Peter was against the rejecting of circumcision, and did himself practise the ceremonial law, and observe the rites of it in common conversation, separating himself from the Gentiles. Thus these Judaizers opposed the doctrine and practice of St. Peter to that of St. Paul; and to carry on their design with greater success, they magnified the other apostles, and vilified St. Paul, not allowing him the name or right of an apostle, having not seen Christ in the flesh, as the rest had done, affirming, that he never was called by Christ, nor ever owned for an apostle by the other apostles.

Hereupon St. Paul, in his absence from the Galatians, writes this epistle to them; in which 1. He vindicates himself and his doctrine, proving, that he was called to be an apostle by Christ himself, and that he had received his doctrine by immediate revelation from him; and that it was conformable to, and the very same with, what was preached by the other apostles. Next he strenuously proves, that circumcision, and all the ceremonial rites, were certainly abolished by the death of Christ. And lastly, He draws practical inferences from this doctrine, and instructs them in the duties of an holy life, exhorting them to live religiously in every relation; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn protestation of his sincere affection to them; assuring them, that as an evidence thereof, he had written the whole epistle with his own hand, wishing them abundant consolation from Christ, both in life and death.

CHAPTER 1.

PAUL, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)

The penman of this epistle is here described by his name, *Paul*: by his office, *an apostle*; and by his commission to that office, which was not human, but altogether divine, even from *God the Father by Jesus Christ*. Observe here, 1. The great modesty of this great apostle, in setting forth his authority as an apostle; you will find, in the front of his epistles, when he names any others in the salutation with himself (as Silvanus and Timotheus) he mentions not himself as an apostle, when named with them, lest he should be thought to magnify himself above them. But here, because his apostolical office was called in question, he is necessitated to vindicate his authority, and accordingly declares himself *an apostle, not of men, nor by man*; that is, men were neither the authors nor choosers of him to his office: he was not called, as Matthias was, Acts i. by the suffrage of the rest of the apostles: he was not an apostle of men's election, nor by men's instruction; but appointed by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. Learn hence, That no sins before, nor yet after, conversion, can hinder the rich mercy and free grace of God, from using men in the highest employments in the church, if he pleases to make use of them. Paul, after he had been a blasphemer, was made an apostle; and Peter after his conversion, denied Christ with oaths and curses; yet is a chief apostle and an inspired penman of holy scripture. Observe, 2. The high dignity conferred upon St. Paul with reference to his apostolical office, he did not take it upon himself, but was chosen to it; he was not chosen to it for any merit in himself, but it was a grace freely bestowed upon him: and this not by the ministry and mediation of man, but by the immediate resignation and election of Jesus Christ. Thus far he stands upon equal terms with the rest of the apostles; they did not call themselves, nor were they called by Christ for any worthiness in themselves, above others: but behold the peculiar prerogative of St. Paul above the rest of the apostles, in this particular; they were called by Christ, in the day of his humiliation, when he was here upon earth in the flesh; but he was called by Christ after his resurrection, yea, in his highest state of exaltation, when sitting at his Father's right hand in heaven. And as his call was thus very extraordinary, so his gifts were answerable to his call: the gospel which he preached he received by inward and immediate revelation, which made him so much excel all the other apostles; inasmuch, that although, in his own opinion, he was the least of saints when here upon earth: yet in the opinion of others, he was the holiest man when upon earth, and the highest now in heaven, next the man Jesus Christ.

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

That is, "All the brethren which are here with me, and own the doctrine which I preach, send greeting unto the churches of Galatia." Here note, 1. How St. Paul's doc-

trine is justified from the charge of singularity; which the Judaizing false teachers objected against it. What he wrote and taught, he tells the Galatians, was owned by *all the brethren*. This shows the consent he had of the church with him, in that holy doctrine which was delivered by him. Note, 2. The generality of the persons to whom this epistle is directed; not to a single person; nor to a particular church, but unto all the churches in the province of Galatia. There were several christian congregations, called churches, in that country, and all of them being leavened, or in danger of being soured with Judaism, that is, of superadding the ceremonial law of Moses to the gospel of Christ: the apostle and the brethren with him, direct this epistle, not to any single church in that province, but to them all in general being equally concerned: *all the brethren with me, unto the churches of Galatia*. Note, 3. How the apostle doth not say here, as elsewhere, To the saints of God which are in Galatia; or, To them that are sanctified by God the Father; but barely says, *To the churches of Galatia*; thereby declaring his holy indignation against the Galatians, as unworthy of those gracious appellations, because they had sadly corrupted the doctrine of the gospel, begun in the Spirit and ended in the flesh: first owning Christ and the liberty of the gospel, and afterwards pleading for the bondage of the ceremonial law. Yet, note, lastly, As corrupt as these churches of Galatia were, our apostle owns, and acknowledges them to be true churches; they retained the essentials of christianity, and were not guilty either of idolatry, or a total apostacy; therefore though stained with divine corruptions both in doctrine and manners, which he sharply rebukes and reproves them for, yet he doth not deny them the name of churches: *All the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia*.

3 Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

These words are both a christian salutation, and apostolical benediction. As they are a salutation, they express a wish and desire of the best blessings towards and on the behalf of them they saluted. From whence we may learn, That religion doth not abolish and destroy, but spiritualize and improve civility, humanity, and common courtesy. The Heathens wished health to their saluted friends; the Jews, peace; but the christians grace and peace. Again, the words may be understood as an apostolical and ministerial blessing: the apostles were the patriarchs of the church of the New Testament: and as a spiritual father, St. Paul here blesses his children, wishing them first grace, then peace: *peace* must be sought after *grace*; and not expected before it. Peace without grace is no peace. There can be no peace with the Creator, no sanctified peace with the creatures, except through Jesus Christ we are first made partakers of the gracious love and favor of Almighty God. Accordingly, says the apostle here, *Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*. Where note, That grace and peace may be said to be from the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, these two ways: 1. Efficiently, as the authors and causes of both: God the Father is the author of all grace, as he did decree it; and Christ, as he did purchase it. 2. Objectively; that is, this grace and love in God the Father, and this peace and satisfaction that is in Jesus Christ, the more they are by faith

apprehended by us, the more are they increased in us, and upon us. Learn from the whole, That the holiest and best of christians here on earth, stand in manifest need of fuller supplies and farther additions both of grace and peace to be daily communicated to them, and enjoyed by them: *Grace be to you, and peace.*

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

That is, "Our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself unto death, for the remission of our sins, that he might deliver us from this evil world; namely, to separate or bring us off from the evil customs and practices of the wicked men in the world, and engage us to live a life of strict holiness according to the will and command of God our Father." Here note, 1. The priestly office of Christ declared and asserted; *He gave himself for our sins*: that is, an expiatory sacrifice for our sins. So deadly was the guilt of sin, so exact the justice of God, and so unalterable his faithfulness, in executing the judgment which was denounced against sinners, that there was no hope for guilty sinners' pardon, without satisfaction given to the injured justice of God, for sin; and nothing less would satisfy than the blood of God; that is, the blood of Jesus Christ, who is essentially, truly, and really God. Note, 2. A farther end and design which Christ had in giving himself for us, namely, to deliver us from the rage of our lusts, as well as from the wrath of God, to sanctify our natures for us, and to mortify our corruptions in us, to redeem us from our vain conversation, and deliver us from this present evil world; not totally to remove us out of the world, but morally to oblige us to abandon the wicked courses, the sinful practices of the evil men of the world. Blessed be God, that Jesus Christ did not only purchase pardon and remission, but holiness and sanctification also for his ransomed and redeemed ones, and is as willing to free us from the dominion, as from the danger of our sins: *He gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.* Note, 3. As the final cause of Christ's death, deliverance from God's wrath and sin's rage, so the efficient cause of his death, the will of his Father, *He gave himself for us according to the will of God*; that is, according to the purpose and appointment of God. Christ as Mediator, was the Father's servant; and whatever he did in the work of mediation for us, was by the appointment and with the special approbation of God the Father. Eternal thanks be given, that the Son's purchase was the Father's pleasure: Note, 4. The comfortable relation in which God now stands unto us, since Christ gave himself for us, namely, that of a Father; *according to the will of God and our Father*; that is, who is now our Father. Learn hence, That satisfaction being given by Christ to provoked justice for our sins, God, who was before a consuming fire, and a sin punishing judge, is become our gracious and reconciled Father; our Father by adoption, who before was our Father only by creation; *according to the will of God and our Father.*

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

That is, "To God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Redeemer, be given the highest degrees of honor and glory, throughout the present and eternal ages." Note here, 1. The work and duty incumbent upon Christ's redeemed ones, and that is, to ascribe all honor and homage, all glory and praise to God the Father, as the contriver, and to Christ the Son, as the accomplisher of the work of redemption; *To whom; both whom, be glory.* Note, 2. The duration and continuance of this duty; not for a day, or year, but for eternal ages. This duty of ascribing honor and homage, glory and praise to the Father and Mediator, for the glorious work of man's redemption, is such, that it can never be sufficiently discharged, but requires a succession of ages to perform it in: yea, eternity itself is too short for the performance of it: to whom be glory for ever and ever. The glory of the Redeemer, and of him that sent him to redeem, will be the long-lasting, and never-ending song of redeemed ones, through millions of ages, yea, to all eternity; a work begun on earth, never finished in heaven.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Observe here, 1. The heavy charge which St. Paul brings in against the false apostles or Judaizing teachers, they perverted the gospel which St. Paul preached, and taught a new gospel of their own; yet not absolutely so, but by compounding and mingling the gospel with the ceremonial law, and by making circumcision and other things, necessary to salvation, which our Saviour never made so, this the apostle calls another gospel. Whence learn, 1. That it is no new or strange thing to hear of new gospels, or true gospel perverters, and of false gospel teachers. We find such in the primitive and purest churches, planted even by the apostles themselves; no wonder they are found in our days who are fallen into the very dregs of time and error together. Learn, 2. That the addition of any thing to the christian religion, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, is a perverting the gospel of Christ, and preaching another gospel. These Galatians did not renounce christianity, and go over to another religion, but they received circumcision, and the observation of the law of Moses; as an essential part of the christian religion, and as a condition of eternal salvation: whereas the death of Christ having put an end to the Jewish dispensation, there was neither then, nor now, any obligation upon christians to observe the law of Moses; and consequently, the addition of any thing to the christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, is preaching another gospel, and a manifest perverting of the gospel of Christ. Learn, 3. That there is no authority in the christian church, in any, or in all the guides of it, to impose upon christians any thing, as of necessity to salvation, which the gospel has not made necessary. The apostles themselves had no authority to add any thing to the gospel, much less can any that come after them pretend to it: Christ commanded them, Matt. xxviii. to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them.

and had the apostles themselves added any point of faith and practice, not given them in charge by Christ himself, they had fallen under that curse themselves, which here they denounced against false teachers. Observe, 2. The artifice which these false teachers used to draw the Galatians into these new errors, and that was hastily and suddenly to avow and own them both before the world; I marvel that ye are so soon removed. Seducers are for clapping up an hasty match between the mind and error, and press the seduced to quick resolutions; an hasty dispatch being their great advantage, before they consult their spiritual guides, or weigh matters in the balance of impartial judgments. What, says the apostle, are ye so soon removed? Yes, might the false teachers have said, if not so soon, it might never; if not so soon removed they might never be at all: for errors are like fish, they must be eaten fresh and new, or they will quickly sink, and be thrown away. Observe, 3. The true cause from which the Galatians fall into error did proceed: they trusted themselves with themselves; they trusted to the clearness of their own unassisted eyes, and to the strength of their own reason and judgment, without consulting their spiritual guide. Had not these Galatians a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers? Or if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord in remote places, could not they have written to him, or advised with others besides him? Woe to him that is alone, when assaulted by seducers!

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle supposes an impossibility, only for the confirmation of what he had before affirmed. He doth not suppose it possible for any angel in heaven, or apostle upon earth, to contradict the doctrine of the gospel which he had delivered, to preach any thing contrary to it, or besides it, or different from it; making that necessary to be believed and practised, which Christ and his apostles never made necessary. Learn hence, That the written word of God, without unwritten traditions, contains in it all things necessary to salvation; and whatever doctrines are propounded to the church, not only contrary to, but differing from it, or besides the written word, are cursed doctrines. Observe 2. The terrible Anathema which the apostle denounces against those, whoever they should be, be it an apostle upon earth, or an angel from heaven, that should thus pervert the gospel of Christ by making any thing necessary to be believed or practised in order to salvation, which Christ has not made necessary. *Let him be accursed.* Let the church of Rome in general, and the council of Trent in particular, dread the efficacy of this curse, who have added so many new articles to the christian faith, and enforced them as necessary to be believed by all christians; inasmuch that they pronounced, "that no salvation can be obtained without the belief of them," and denounced their anathemas against us who cannot be-

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lieve them: but as their curse, causeless, shall not come, so we believe that they, propounding terms of salvation, nowhere delivered by Christ and his apostles, do bring themselves under the apostle's anathema here in this text: for if the new articles of the church at Rome be necessary to salvation, then what Christ and his apostles delivered was not sufficient to salvation before; and thus the pride of man exalts itself above the wisdom of God. Observe, 3. How the apostle expresses his assurance in this matter; and to show that he did not speak rashly, and in a heat, but upon due consideration, he repeats again, ver. 9. "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach otherwise, let him be accursed." Note here, How positive and peremptory the apostle is in this matter: and doubtless this one Anathema of his, is more dreadful than all the *bruta fulmina*, the freakish Anathemas of an enthusiastic church, who, in a manifest affront to the authority of St. Paul, has presumed to add so many new articles to the christian religion, for which there is not the least ground or warrant, either from the holy scriptures, or any of the ancient creeds.—Observe lastly, How the apostle puts himself in the number, if I, or any man, or any angel preach otherwise, let him be accursed. As if the apostle had said, "Not only the false apostles are to be rejected, but I myself deserve to be anathematized, and accounted an execrable person, should I preach any other doctrine to you, than what you have received from Christ by me; nay, should any angel from heaven attempt it, he ought to be detested for it."—Learn, That no angel in heaven, no person or church upon earth, have power to make new articles of faith, or to impose any thing upon our belief or practice, that is either against or besides the written word, or any ways inconsistent with it, or contrary unto it.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Our apostle in these words discovers the great sincerity used in preaching the pure and unmixed doctrine of the gospel to the Galatians; for he did not persuade that men, but God should be heard and obeyed, that so their faith might be founded upon divine, and not human authority; nor did he in his ministry aim at pleasing men, but Christ. For should he now please men, being an apostle, as he did in times past, being a pharisee, he should not be the servant of Christ. The ministers of Christ must not be men-pleasers; they must not please men either by flattery or falsehood, nor accommodate their doctrines to the humor and dispositions of men; pleasing of God is our great work and business, let us mind that: man-pleasing is endless, and needless, any farther than for their good, and the gospel's gain. Accordingly, the apostle tells us elsewhere, that he was made "all things to all men, that he might gain some;" not to make a present gain of them, but that they might be eternal gainers by him; it was not to exalt himself, but that Christ might be exalted in the hearts and lives of his hearers, that he sought in and by his ministry to please all men; and thus in imitation of him, let us seek to please all men for their good to edification.

11 ¶ But I certify you, brethren, that

the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

14 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The apostle here, as he did before, ver. 1. 2. asserts the divinity of the doctrine of the gospel which he had preached to them; and assures them likewise of his own lawful call to be an apostle, which was questioned by his adversaries, who affirmed, that he had received his doctrine only from others at the second hand. To satisfy them in the divinity of his doctrine, he tells them, it was not after man; that is, it was not human, but divine; nothing belonging to man, but all from God in it: and as for his authority to preach it, he assures them, he had a revelation and commission from Jesus Christ so to do; he learned not his doctrine from any human teacher, nor undertook to preach it by any human authority, but from Christ's immediate revelation. Learn hence, It is a singular satisfaction to ministers of Christ, and that which gives them boldness before their false accusers, when they cannot give good proof of their regular call to the work of the ministry, and of the divinity of the doctrine dispensed by them. Thus did St. Paul here: The gospel, says he, which I preach to you, and the mission I had so to preach it, was not after man, nor from man, nor by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Where note, From Christ's being so often opposed to man in these verses, and in the first verse, that he is not mere man, but God as well as man: why else doth the apostle oppose Christ to man so often as he doth here? Not of man, neither by man, nor after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is God.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it;

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Here the apostle offers several arguments to satisfy the Galatians, that both his commission to preach the gospel, and also the gospel which he preached to them, were not from man, but our Lord Jesus Christ. And the first argument to prove it, as a convictive evidence of it, was his bitter enmity against the christian religion, and his mighty zeal for the Jewish religion, in which he was educated and brought up: all which he mentions as a thing publicly known, leaving them to infer from thence, that so great and sudden a change could not be the effect of human persuasion, but divine revelation; "In time past I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it." Where note, That although our apostle did not shun to make an open confession of his wicked life, before his conversion, that he might thereby make evident, that his conversion was immediately from God, yet he makes an open confession only of his open sins, such as they had heard of in time past, without dis-

covering his secret sins, which had been kept from the knowledge of the world, the divulging whereof would but have multiplied scandals and stumbling-blocks unto others. To confess our secret sins to God, is safe; to confess our open sins to the world, is sufficient. Observe farther, The commendable proficiency which St. Paul made in the Jewish religion, wherein he was educated, "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals." He was also a zealous maintainer of the Jewish customs, and unwritten traditions, "being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."—From St. Paul's example we may infer, That it is a special duty incumbent upon all persons to make religion the matter of their choice; and having espoused it, to be the more serious and zealous in it; to labor to advance and grow both in the knowledge and in the practice of it; and that to a degree of eminency, excelling and outstripping others: "I profited in the Jewish religion above many my equals, or contemporaries."

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood;

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me: but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Here we have a second evidence which St. Paul brings to prove himself an apostle extraordinary, called by God himself unto the ministerial service; and that the doctrine he delivered was not immediately from the mouths of the apostles, but by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ. Thus he speaks: "When, says he, it pleased God, who decreed and determined to separate and set me apart for the work of an apostle, even from my very infancy, and afterwards of his mere grace and good will called me to preach the gospel to the Gentile world, having first revealed his Son in me, and to me, and then by me, immediately I set about the work, and complied with my duty, not consulting any person living, neither my own carnal reason, nor any man's advice; neither went I up presently to Jerusalem to confer with, to receive authority or instruction from them, which were apostles before me; but I went immediately from Damascus, the place of my conversion into Arabia, and preached the gospel three years among those wild and barbarous heathens, and then returned again unto Damascus: from whence it evidently appears, that I neither had instruction nor commission from any of the apostles that were before me, having never seen any of them as yet, but both my mission and my message were immediately received from Jesus Christ." Here observe, 1. The qualification necessary in a minister that reveals Jesus Christ unto his people; namely, that Christ must be revealed to him, and in him. We must learn Christ ourselves, before we pretend to preach him to others: "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, I preached

him among the heathen." As there is no knowledge like the knowledge of experience: so there is no preaching like experimental preaching. Happy those that can say, not only that which we have heard and read, but that which we have tasted, and felt, and experienced from the Holy Spirit's operation in and upon our own hearts, *that declare we unto you. Observe, 2. What haste the apostle made to obey the call and command of God, after he had received it; Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* He consulted neither himself nor others, neither his own heart nor the wisest heads, he consulted not his own safety nor carnal interest, but instantly did what he was commanded to do. The great commendation of duties, is the ready discharge of duties. When once the mind of God is declared, and conscience thoroughly satisfied, we cannot be too quick, and expeditious in the execution of divine commands. Lord! how readily should all men, but especially thy ministers, answer and obey thy call, and execute thy will and pleasure! *Immediately I conferred not,* says St. Paul, *I made haste and delayed not,* says holy David. In a good work it is good to make haste: in God's work we cannot readily make more haste than good speed.

18 Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Here is a third evidence to prove, that St. Paul received his ministry and message by divine revelation from Jesus Christ, and not from man, or by man. He acknowledges that not till three years after his conversion, when he had preached the gospel in the deserts of Arabia, had he ever seen Peter, or any other of the apostles, and consequently could not receive the knowledge of the gospel from him or them, as his adversaries, the false apostles, would insinuate and suggest. True, after his three years preaching in, and his return from Arabia, he went up to Jerusalem, and saw Peter and James, and conversed with them for fifteen days: but the shortness of his stay with them is an evidence that he went not up to Jerusalem to learn the gospel from them, much less to pay homage to St. Peter as the prince of the apostles; for St. Paul often affirms, in his epistles, That he was not inferior to St. Peter, nor came behind the chiefest of the apostles; but it was only a familiar and friendly visit, given by one minister of Christ to another, in token of mutual consent and agreement, in the same truth preached by both; and by no means to receive ordination from Peter, or divine instructions (for he had a higher teacher than him, even Christ himself) or to acknowledge any subjection to him, by owning his supremacy, over all the apostles; as the church of Rome would bear us in hand he did, in defiance of what St. Paul himself declares to the contrary. But we cannot help it, if men who have their credulity at their own disposal, and can believe what they list, will yield their assent to what is contrary to divine revelation, and the reason of things. Very evident it is to any impartial observer, that St. Paul's visit at Jerusalem was a visit of civil courtesy, yet for the spiritual consolation and mutual edification both of himself and the apostles, whom he thus visited. From hence learn, 1. That the ministers of Christ should be so

far from living at variance with, or at any distance in affection from each other, that they ought to maintain correspondence and familiarity with one another, and to give friendly visits to each other, in token of their harmony and mutual agreement in the same divine truths delivered by them. Thus did our apostle here; he took a journey to Jerusalem, to see Peter, and James, our Lord's kinsman. Learn, 2. From the shortness of his visit and stay at Jerusalem, though it was in the most delightful and desirable, yea, most profitable company, yet it was but for *fifteen days*; he hastens away to his charge again. Thence note, That though the ministers of Christ may and ought to visit each other, as an evidence of reciprocal affection, and in order to mutual direction, edification and consolation; yet ought their meetings to be neither so frequent, nor of so long continuance, that thereby their several flocks should suffer prejudice: after a short time spent in visiting, we must return to our business, and mind, above all things, our ministerial charge: "I went to see Peter, but abode with him only fifteen days.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Observe here, That St. Paul, having to do with the false apostles and the seduced Galatians, who, he had just cause to suspect, would not (as they ought) give much credit to his word; he asserts the truth of what he affirmed, upon oath, appealing to the all-knowing and heart-searching God, as witness and judge of the truth of what he said, *Behold, before God, I lie not.* Where note, 1. That it is no new thing for the faithfulest and ablest ministers and servants of Christ to be looked upon as liars, unworthy to be trusted, and to have the truth of what they deliver, though in God's name, questioned and suspected. Our apostle's purging of himself here from lying, doth import, that some did suspect him for a liar. And if an inspired apostle be, what private ministry may not be suspected! Note, 2. The mean which St. Paul makes use of, for purging himself from the imputation of falsehood; it was, by taking an oath in a solemn manner. Learn hence, That though rash swearing, false swearing, and upon every light occasion to take or multiply oaths, be a very great sin; yet to swear, and bear witness to the truth, and to take an oath upon due consideration, and for weighty reasons, and to swear by the name of God, is certainly a lawful, and sometimes a very necessary and important duty.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

The fourth evidence is here produced by St. Paul, to prove that both his ministry and his message, his office and his doctrine, were divine; and that he was so far from learning the christian religion from the christian churches

in Judea, that he was not by face so much as known to them, or they to him: they had heard indeed, that one Paul, a persecutor, was become a preacher, but they had never seen him; and accordingly they magnified the grace of God in his conversion, admiring the wonderful change wrought in him. Observe here, 1. The laborious diligence and indefatigable industry of St. Paul, in planting and propagating the christian faith throughout the world: he travels, as soon as converted, into Arabia, then into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, thinking he could never do service enough for Christ, who had suffered and done so much for him. Oh, how full of life and zeal are young converts! What activity and industry for Christ and souls is found with them! They despise all dangers, they surmount all difficulties, are above all discouragements, in expressing their love to Christ, and venturing their lives for him: but, alas! as they grow older, their affections are cooler; so that they have many times just cause to say, "Oh, that it were with me, as in the months of old, in the day when God converted me, when the secret of God was with me, and when by his light I walked through all difficulties" to subserve his interest, and to promote his glory. Observe, The great and mighty power of the heart-changing grace of God, which turns the haters and professed enemies of religion into friends, and bitter and bloody persecutors into bold and painful preachers of the gospel: "He who persecuted in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." He that "leads captivity captive," can soon make the stoutest enemies of religion to become its strongest friends. Observe, 3. Paul, before his conversion, is said to "destroy the faith," because he intended it, and endeavoured it, though he could not actually effect it, and accomplish it. Sin, and evil, intended by a determinate resolution, are as good as acted in God's account. Bloody persecutors design no less than a total extirpation of the truth, "to destroy the faith;" which though it be out of their reach to effect, yet having deliberately resolved it, it is as actually accomplished in the account of God; "He now preacheth the faith that once he destroyed." Observe, lastly, To whom the glory and praise of converting grace is due, namely, to God, and to God alone; "They glorified God in me;" that is, they owned and admired the grace of God bestowed upon me, which wrought such a glorious and blessed change in me. The converting grace of God, wrought either in ourselves, or others, is matter of admiration, and calls for thanksgivings and acknowledgments unto God; "They glorified God in me."

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle prosecutes in this, the argument which he had begun in the former chapter, namely, to evidence and prove, that both his ministry and his message, his office and his doctrine, were divine, neither of them received from man, but immediately from Jesus Christ. And because the false apostles had suggested, that St. Paul taught divers doctrines which were contrary to the judgment and

practice of St. Peter and the other apostles, he declares in this chapter, how he went to Jerusalem, and communicated this doctrine, which he had preached among the Gentiles, to the most eminent of the apostles, who unanimously subscribed to it, and in a full synod declared their approbation of it: for they perceiving that St. Paul was in an extraordinary manner called of God, to be an apostle, both from that divine assistance wherewith he was accompanied, and from those apostolical gifts with which he was endowed, they acknowledged him for an apostle; yea, that he was inferior to none of themselves: to the great shame of the false apostles, who had misrepresented him, as delivering doctrines which were opposite and contrary to what was taught and practised by the other apostles.

THEN, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 And I went up by-revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain.

Observe here, 1. How the gracious care and good providence of God did watch over St. Paul from place to place, and from time to time, when and wheresoever he went forth to preach, to plant, and propagate the gospel. After fourteen years he went up to Jerusalem, that is, fourteen years after his conversion; soon after which he went about preaching the gospel to the Gentile world. Blessed be God, who is oftentimes pleased, in mercy to his church, to preserve the lives of his laborious ministers, and their liberties also, for the free exercise of their ministry, notwithstanding the joint endeavours of men and devils to the contrary. This good man, this great apostle, whose blood was thirsted after, having obtained help of God, continued fourteen years together, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. The end, design, and intent of St. Paul, in this present going up to Jerusalem, and appearing before St. Peter there: it was not to acknowledge St. Peter's supremacy over him, or to appeal to him as the infallible judge in matters of religion: but it was, in friendly and brotherly manner, to acquaint St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, with the doctrine preached by him; that their concurring approbation being given to it, the mouth of his adversaries, the false apostles, might be stopped, who accused him for preaching contrary to what the rest of the apostles both believed and practised. Observe, 3. The ground upon which St. Paul undertook his journey to Jerusalem at this time; "He went up by revelation; he advised with God about the matter, and received direction from God to undertake the journey. Blessed be God, that although we cannot expect immediate direction and information from God now, as the saints of

old had before the canon of the scripture was completed, yet we have the written word of God "to be a light to our feet, and a lamp unto our paths," to direct and guide us in all our enterprizes: and we ought to regulate all our actions according to it, and to judge of the lawfulness and expediency of our undertakings by it. Observe, 4. With what prudence and holy caution the blessed apostle proceeded in this matter; he imparted his sentiments, and communicated his doctrine to the rest of the apostles privately, for fear of exasperating the zealous Judaizing christians: and to the most eminent of the apostles, "such as were of greatest reputation;" lest if there should be any opposition made to his doctrine, he *should* hereafter run, or *had* run in vain. Nothing more obstructs the success and efficacy of the gospel, than differences of judgment, and strife and debate about those differences, amongst the most eminent preachers of it. Hence it was, that St. Paul endeavoured so much to get the joint consent of the most eminent apostles to the doctrine delivered by him, lest by the calumnies of his adversaries, his preaching should have been rendered unsuccessful, "and he should hereafter run and labor in vain."

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Observe here, 1. The instance and evidence which St. Paul brings of the apostles at Jerusalem, agreeing with him, both in their doctrine and in their practice; and that was Titus, who being a Gentile, born a Greek, and now a preacher of the gospel, and never circumcised, the apostles at Jerusalem would no more compel him to be circumcised than St. Paul had done, but received him into fellowship with them, though he was an uncircumcised Greek. This was a plain evidence, that they did not judge circumcision, at that time to be a part of God's commanded worship; for then they would have compelled Titus to it; that is, constrained him, by the force of ecclesiastical censures, to become circumcised, had they thought circumcision necessary to the Gentiles. Observe, 2. The reason assigned, why the apostle would not circumcise Titus, though he had before circumcised Timothy, namely, because some false brethren crept in, would have taken advantage from it, to bring persons into bondage to the law of ceremonies, and plead conformity to circumcision as an obliged duty. Learn hence, That although the ceremonial law was certainly abolished by the death of Christ, yet, Almighty God, partly with respect to it as his own ordinance, and partly in condescension to the weakness of the Jews, was pleased to tolerate the observation of some part of it, and particularly circumcision, as an indifferent action, though not as a part of religion, for some time; the ceremonial rites being dead, they were to be decently, not over hastily buried. Observe, 3.

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The apostle's undaunted courage, and heroic resolution in this matter; he would, notwithstanding the false apostles' importunity, never yield subjection, or submission to, or compliance with, their commands, in the least measure, by consenting to circumcise Titus; that so the truth and liberty of the gospel might continue sincere and unshaken. Learn hence, That an outward act of compliance must not be consented to, which, in some cases might be complied with, when by making it necessary, we turn christian liberty into servitude and bondage, when things in their own nature indifferent, are urged and enforced as necessary; in that case, the practice of a thing indifferent, is to be abstained from. Thus here, when false brethren urged the circumcision of Titus, as an evidence of St. Paul's receding from the doctrine of *Christian liberty*, he would not obey them, nor consent unto them: "To whom we gave place, no not for an hour;" that is, we refused to use circumcision, though but once, because we would not give the adversaries the least advantage against us, or against the truth delivered and defended by us.

6 But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me.

As if the apostle had said, "When I came up to Jerusalem, thus I behaved myself towards the false brethren, as I have here declared; but now, "for those who seemed to be somewhat," that is, Peter, James, and John, who were of chief reputation among the apostles, and more than ordinary ministers of Jesus Christ, being the foundations of the christian church, laid by Christ himself, although they had some external advantages above me, as being apostles before me, and having conversed with Christ, and seen him here on earth, which I never did; "yet this maketh no matter to me:" for God values no man for these outward favors and benefits: neither in that conference about circumcision, did they add any thing to me, either by their authority or instruction; they added nothing, they corrected nothing, but approved all things, both what I did and said: from whence it evidently appears, that my authority was equal with theirs, and my doctrine the same with theirs also.

7 But contrariwise, when they saw, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter:

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles;

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fel-

lowship, that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Note here, 1. That the ordinance both of Peter and Paul for the office and work of apostles, was alike divine. The former, St. Peter, was to be the minister of the circumcision: that is, to exercise his ministry among the Jews, and St. Paul, by virtue of the same divine ordinance, was to exercise his office among the Gentiles, called the uncircumcision; yet this must not be so understood, as if Paul might not preach to the Jews, nor St. Peter to the Gentiles, which they both did upon occasion, but because their more special and particular province was thus, St. Peter to preach to the Jews, and St. Paul to the Gentiles. Learn hence, That the office of preaching the gospel is a special trust, committed by God himself to such as he qualifies for it; and as none must enterprize it, but such as he calls unto it, so must all that undertake, be accountable to him for it; "The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, and the gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter."

Note, 2. How this great apostle ascribes the success and efficacy of his own ministry among the Gentiles, and of St. Peter's amongst the Jews, alike to God; "He that wrought effectually in Peter, was also mighty in me." It is neither the person nor pains of the minister, nor any natural energy or efficacy in the word preached, upon which the success of the gospel depends, but upon the effectual working of the Holy Spirit; "He that wrought effectually in Peter, was also mighty in me." The word of God works not as a natural agent, but as a moral instrument in the hand of the Spirit. The weapons of our ministerial warfare are then mighty, when made mighty through God, for the pulling down the strong holds of sin and satan. Note, 3. The duty of the ministers of Christ implicitly declared, namely, to be pillars; not seeming to be so, but really so: as pillars, they are to uphold the truth, by their doctrine and diligence; as pillars, to be constant in defending the truth against all the blasts and storms of error and false doctrine; as pillars, to adorn the truth by an innocent life, and instructive example, whereby they ought not only to shine before others, but also to outshine others. "When James, Cephas, and John seemed to be pillars." These three apostles under Christ, were the great supporters of the church of Christ, by their diligence and faithfulness: yet observe, James is here named before St. Peter: which shows the weakness of the Papists' arguments for Peter's primacy, because sometimes first named: but it is evident he is not always so; St. James is here mentioned before him, because, say some, bishop of Jerusalem, and the Lord's brother, or near kinsman: but certain it is, that St. Paul paid not here any deference to Peter, upon the account of his primacy or supremacy, which is now so much contended for, but was not then thought of, because it is the apostle's great drift and design to show that he was in every respect equal with Peter and the rest of the apostles, and in no respect inferior to any of them; and consequently, that neither in his mission nor his message, neither in his office nor doctrine, neither in his external authority, nor his internal

gifts and graces, did he come behind the chiefest apostles, as the false apostles had misrepresented him. Note farther, St. Peter's integrity with James and John, in this matter, they being all very well satisfied, by convincing evidence, that Almighty God had certainly called Paul to be an apostle no less than themselves; they own and acknowledge him for such no doubt, to the grief, as well as to the shame of the false apostles, who had vilified his person, lessened his authority, and disparaged his doctrine: "When James, Cephas, and John, perceived the grace that was given unto me; that is, the grace of apostleship, they, in the name of all the apostles, and the whole church, gave unto me, and Barnabas my fellow laborer, the right hand of fellowship: that is, they owned us to be pillars as much as themselves, and acknowledged us to be apostles no less than themselves; and it was agreed and concluded upon, that we should continue to preach chiefly to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews: so far were the apostles of Jerusalem from condemning St. Paul's doctrine, or undervaluing his calling, which was the thing that the false apostles were so desirous of, and hoped for. Note, lastly, That as an evidence of the happy agreement of Peter, James, and John, with Paul and Barnabas, and of their owning them as apostles and ministers of Jesus Christ, they recommended to St. Paul's charitable consideration, the poverty of the Jewish converts to christianity, desiring him to make collections in the Gentiles' churches for the christian Jews. Here observe, 1. That the Jews were generally poorer than the Gentiles; it is frequently the lot of those who are rich in grace, to be poor in goods, and to be reduced to such straits, as to be forced to live upon some charitable supplies from others. Observe, 2. That although those who are our own poor, and live within our bounds, near us, and about us, are chiefly to be relieved by us; yet in cases of extreme necessity, such poor as live remote from us, whose faces were never seen by us, ought to be sharers in our charity. Observe, 3. That the care of God's poor, and the supplying of the outward necessities of his saints is an employment not unworthy the highest apostle, much less unbecoming the ordinary ministers of Christ; "They would that we should remember the poor." Observe, 4. That the faithful ministers of Christ ought upon just and fit occasions, to excite and stir up their people to duties of charity, as well as piety; to costly and expensive duties, as well as those that are easy and less burdensome; these being no less profitable to the church, and much more evidential of a real work of grace upon the heart. Thus did St. Paul here, the apostles desired me to "remember the poor: the same which I was forward to do."

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Observe here, St. Peter's offence, and St. Paul's rebuke. St. Peter's offence, 1. was this, he declined from the doctrine taught by himself, concerning the abrogation of circumcision and the ceremonial law; he had formerly conversed freely with the christian Gentiles, without scruple, making no objection against them, because they were not circumcised: but at Antioch he withdrew himself from the christian Gentiles, refusing to eat with them, because they

were not circumcised; as if, for want of circumcision they had been unclean, and altogether unfit to be conversed with. This was his fault; whereby it appears, that St. Peter himself was not infallible, whatever his pretended successors, the bishops of Rome, are supposed to be. Learn hence, How certainly and suddenly the holiest and best of men will run into sin and error, if a special assistance from the Holy Spirit doth not uphold them, and preserve them. Observe, 2. As St. Peter's offence, so St. Paul's rebuke; he *withstood him to the face*; that is, rebuked him publicly, because he was blameworthy, and not secretly behind his back; such as sin openly, must be rebuked and reproved openly. Here note, How little St. Paul dreamed of St. Peter's supremacy; if so, he had been more modest than thus to reprove him to his face. Learn hence, That as no bands of friendship must keep the ministers of God from reproofing sin and vice; so when they find the fault to be notorious, they must reprove it wherever they find it, with much boldness and resolution. St. Paul here, in reproofing St. Peter withstood him: it is in the original a military word, signifying to stand against, either by force of arms, as among soldiers; or by dint of argument, as among disputants: 'it is a word of defiance, and signifies an opposition hand to hand, face to face, foot to foot, not yielding an hair's breadth to the adversary. Yet withal, as St. Paul's courage, so his candor appeared, in reproofing St. Peter to his face, and not reproaching him, as some, behind his back. And behold this great and chief apostle St. Peter, submits to his reprover, neither justifying his action, nor reflecting upon St. Paul; he replieth not again.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 ¶ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

A farther account is given us in these verses, of St. Peter's offence at Antioch, in giving occasion of scandal to the Gentiles, by refusing to converse and eat with them, although he had before in a vision, received a divine command so to do. St. Paul calls it *fear*, ver. 12, *dissimulation*, ver. 13, and *not walking uprightly*, ver. 14. He refused to converse with the believing Gentiles, being uncircumcised, for fear of offending the believing Jews, who were so tenacious of circumcision, and the ceremonial law. Learn hence, What weakness and inconstancy is found with the best of men,

especially when fear gets a prevailing power over them. St. Peter was the minister of the circumcision in great honor and esteem with the believing Jews, but fearing the loss of his reputation among them, he falls into a sin against God. Observe, 2. The fatal influence of that sin; it drew others into a partnership with him therein; Barnabas himself was led away with the dissimulation, and the other Jews dissembled with him. Learn hence, That such as are eminent in the church, had need be exactly careful how they walk; for if they fall they fall not alone, many do fall with them. Observe, 3. With what openness and freedom, with what courage and resolution, St. Paul checks and reproofs Peter for his cowardice and timorousness, in refusing to converse with the believing Gentiles, for fear of gaining the displeasure of the circumcised Jews; *I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew livest, in thy ordinary conversation, after the manner of the Gentiles, why compellest thou the Gentiles, by thy example to live, as do the Jews?* Where note, What a constraining power there is in the example of eminent persons. He is said to compel in scripture, not only who doth violently force, but who, being of authority, doth provoke by his example. The errors of those that do rule, become rules of error. Men sin through a kind of authority, through the sins of those who are in authority.

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

St. Paul having fully vindicated his own authority as an apostle, from the imputations of the false apostles, he comes next to vindicate his doctrine, namely, the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, which he had formerly preached to the Galatians, and which, in his absence, false apostles had endeavoured to subvert and overthrow, urging the strict observation of the ceremonial law, as necessary to justification and salvation. Our apostle, therefore, to strike at the root of this dangerous error, excludes all works of our own from having any influence upon our justification. Now, this he proveth, 1. Because they that were Jews by birth, and so federally the holy people of God, found it necessary to renounce the works of the law in point of justification, and to seek righteousness only through faith in Christ, as well as the profane idolatrous sinners of the Gentiles, who were strangers to the covenant of God; "For by the works of the law shall no flesh," neither Jew nor Gentile, *be justified*; that is, acquitted from the guilt of sin, and discharged from obnoxiousness to the wrath of God. Now, no obedience of ours can obtain this, because of the great imperfection which cleaves to it, and because God will have all boasting excluded, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved, through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast;" but that he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord. Observe here, That the doctrine of justification by faith,

and not by works, was early, very early opposed by satan and false teachers. It being *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesie*, a fundamental article of our christian faith, our comfort stands or falls with it; no wonder then it is strenuously opposed.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is, therefore, Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

These words are generally looked upon as an objection, which the adversaries of the doctrine of justification by faith, have been always ready to make against it, namely, "That if persons be not justified by their obedience to the law, then they may live as they list in the breach and violation of the law, and freely indulge themselves in sin, and consequently make Christ, the minister of sin, as if he had relaxed the duty." The apostle rejects this inference and deduction with the greatest abhorrence and detestation, saying, *God forbid*. Hence note, That it is no new prejudice, though a very unjust one, against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by works, that it opens a door to licentiousness, and makes Christ the minister of sin. Observe farther, A second objection here suggested. Some might pretend that he built up by his practice, what he had destroyed: No, says the apostle, I have together with the doctrine of free justification, preached to you, pressed upon you, the duty of mortification, as of indispensable necessity to be practised by you; should therefore my preaching or my practice be otherwise than it has been, I should build again what I have destroyed, and destroy what I have already builded; and thus by encouraging sin, and discouraging holiness and obedience, I should be a transgressor against the law of righteousness. Learn hence, That the doctrine of justification by faith alone, cannot be rightly preached, except the duty of mortification and sin be urged and enforced with it: for the same faith that depends upon Christ for pardon of sin, doth look up unto him for power and strength to vanquish and subdue sin; if we do not the latter, Christ will never do the former.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Here the apostle shows, that believers are so far from being justified by the law; that they are dead to the law, so as to put no confidence in their obedience to it for justification; particularly, 1. They are dead to the law; that is, they are delivered from the rigorous exactions of the law. Perfect, personal and perpetual obedience, is the duty which the law exacts at the believer's hand, and he has performed it, though not in himself, yet in the person of Christ his surety, who yielded as absolute and complete obedience to the law, as it could require or demand. 2. The law is dead to believers, and they to that, in regard to the condemnatory curse and sentence of the law: Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law: being made a curse for them, Gal. iii. 13. True, the believer's violation of the royal and righteous law of God, in the smallest measure and degree, doth in its own nature, deserve the curse and condemnatory sen-

tence; but Christ has discharged him from obnoxiousness to the curse, by being made a curse. 3. The law is dead to believers, as to its authority, to justify and save them. This is that the law cannot do, being made weak through the flesh; though properly speaking, the law is not weak to us, but we are weak to that: the law has not lost its authority to command, but we our ability to obey; it is as impossible for a fallen sinner to keep the law of God perfectly, as it is for a lame cripple to run a race swiftly. Yet, 4. Believers are not dead, but alive to the law, as a rule of life and holy living; the law binds the believer (in Christ's hand) as strictly to endeavour obedience to it, as it did Adam in innocency: but here is the believer's privilege, that God the Father, upon the score of the covenant of grace, which the blood of Christ has ratified and confirmed, doth graciously accept the faithful endeavours of his children, instead of perfect performances; which obedience the law-covenant did rigorously exact and require. Thus may every believer say with the apostle, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," namely, a life of righteousness and true holiness.

20 ¶ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Several things are here observable, viz. St. Paul's spiritual death declared, and his spiritual life described, together with the author and instrument of it. Observe, 1. St. Paul's spiritual death, *I am crucified with Christ*; that is, with Christ I am dead to the law (in the manner mentioned in the foregoing verse, dead to sin, and dead to the world. Learn hence, That all true believers are crucified with Christ Jesus; or that all justified persons have fellowship with Christ in his death: they have fellowship with him, 1. In the merit and value of his death; they are ransomed by it, as a price paid down to the justice of God for them. 2. In the virtue and efficacy of his death; which doth not only merit pardon for us, but mortifies sin in us: *Our old man is crucified*; that is, the power of sin is subdued in us. 3. A justified person hath fellowship with Christ, in the likeness and similitude of his death, and that is a crucifixion: as Christ died a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed death for him, so doth sin die painfully, shamefully, and gradually in him: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24. Observe, 2. St. Paul's spiritual life described, *I live, yet not I, but Christ in me*. Learn hence, That a crucified christian is a living christian: *I am crucified, nevertheless I live*: a life of justification and sanctification at present, in hope of, and as an earnest for, a life of glorification to come. Yet observe, 3. How the apostle corrects, or rather explains himself, after what mind, and in what manner he lives: he denies himself to be the author and root of his own life; and declares Christ to be both, *I live, yet not I, but Christ in me*. Christ is both the author and efficient cause, the exemplary cause, the end or final cause of the christian's life; *a living christian*, lives not himself, but *Christ lives in him*. Observe, 4. As the au-

thor of the christian's spiritual life, *Christ*; so the instrument of it, and that is *faith*: "The life which I live in the flesh," that is, the *spiritual life* which I live as a christian here in the world, "I live by faith in the Son of God;" my life of justification, is by faith in his blood; my life of sanctification, and consolation, is through *faith*, in and by influences derived from his holy Spirit. Observe, 5. How the apostle appropriates to himself in particular, what Christ had done for all believers in general; "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Where note, Though a firm persuasion, and a full assurance of Christ's special love to ourselves, and his dying for us in particular, is not of the essence and being of justifying and saving *faith*, yet it is attainable without an extraordinary revelation; and, as such, every sincere christian ought to aim at it, to labor and endeavour after it.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

The apostle concludes the chapter with a double argument, to prove the christian's justification by faith, without the works of the law. 1. Were it otherwise, we should frustrate and make void the grace of God: for if *justification* be by works, it can no more be by grace; according to the apostle, Rom. xi. 6. 2. Christ's death had been in vain, without any necessary cause or reason at all, if the *justification of a sinner* could have been obtained by his own works. Where note, That as well works done after faith and conversion, as those done before it, are excluded from being the meritorious cause of our justification, either in whole or in part; because the joining of works with faith, in the matter of our justification, is a total exclusion of God's free grace, and a loud proclaiming, that Christ died in vain: "If righteousness come by the law, I frustrate the grace of God, and, Christ is dead in vain."

CHAPTER III.

In this and the following chapters of this epistle, our apostle expostulates the case with the Galatians, who were seduced by the false apostles to relinquish the liberty they were called to by the gospel, and to put their necks under the Judaical yoke again, so far as to observe circumcision; nay, their days, months, times, and years of the ceremonial law. And thus they turned again to the weak and beggarly elements of the law, from which they had a manumission by the gospel

This seduction of theirs, our apostle looks upon as a piece of fascination, accounting them like persons that had been in ill hands, and practised upon by witchcraft: he begins accordingly his holy charm against it in the first verse of this chapter, in which he thus bespeaks them

O FOOLISH Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Observe here, 1. The object of the apostle's sharp reprehension, the churches of Galatia. Observe, 2. The ground of their reprehension, their defection from the truth into a very

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great error, namely, their holding of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, as necessary to salvation; which was a making of the cross of Christ of no effect, and a virtual denial of his being come in the flesh. From hence we learn, That the best and purest of particular churches may err, and have erred fundamentally and dangerously: for what consists such a church of, but persons all fallible? Head, and members, being all sinful, are as unable to secure themselves from error, as from vice. Indeed the church of Rome talks big, and boasts of a false gift, that of infallibility; but could never yet agree where it is lodged, whether in the Pope, or in a general council; however, they are sure they have it. Well, if so, the more wicked and wretchedly inexcusable are they, in not improving their talent of infallibility for the best service of the christian church, namely, by writing one infallible comment upon the whole Bible. What a serviceable performance would it have been in them, to pin the Pope in his chair, and hold down his hands to write, as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands to pray, till all the Amalekite errors and heresies, so much complained of, were routed and ruined! Woe unto them that let such an excellent gift lie idle amongst them, and unemployed by them. Observe, 3. The high and heinous aggravation of this fault in the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among them;" that is, Christ, and their freedom by him from the bondage of the ceremonial law, had been preached to them: and his death and sufferings, with the great end and design of them, as plainly laid before them, as if Christ himself had been crucified in the midst of them. Observe, lastly, The brand of infamy which our apostle sets upon the Judaizing doctors, heretical and false teachers; he calls them spiritual sorcerers, and their doctrines spiritual witchcraft: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Because, 1. As sorcerers, by deluding the senses, make persons apprehend they see what they see not; so heretics, by casting a mist of seeing reason before the understanding, do delude it, and make the deluded person believe that to be truth, which indeed is not. 2. As sorcerers, in what they do, are assisted beyond the reach of their own ability and skill, by the help of satan; so heretical spirits are often by satan's concurrence with them, more than ordinarily assisted by him, in drawing multitudes after them; "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" The original word seems borrowed from the practice of witches and sorcerers, who being assisted by the devil, used to cast mists before the eyes of the people, to dazzle and delude them.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Our apostle having prepared the Galatians' attention, by a very smart and sharp reprehension in the foregoing verse, returns to the object of justification by faith without the works of the law, which he had entered upon in the former chapter, and prosecutes at large in this; and he uses five arguments to prove that we are justified by *faith*, and not by *works*; the first is contained in the verse before us, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" As if the apostle had said, "I appeal to your own experience; you have received the Spirit yourselves, some of you for sanctification, others for miraculous operations; now

I would know by what means you received it? Was it by hearing the law of Moses preached? You cannot say it: for you were heathens, and without the written law; it must then be by hearing of the gospel, the doctrine of *faith*, which I preached to you." Here we have a truth expressed, and a truth implied. The truth expressed is this, That the hearing of the gospel faithfully preached is the instrumental mean by which persons receive the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying gifts and graces of it, to enable them to live an holy and spiritual life: "Received ye not the Spirit by the hearing of faith? Yes, ye did. The truth implied is this, that a people should take great heed, that they never undervalue, much less despise and vilify that ministry, or that doctrine, which God at first blessed for their conversion. How many are there in England at this day, who disown that church, despise that ministry which God blessed to their conversion, if ever they were converted? Sad it is, yet very certain, that like vipers they gnaw out the bowels of her who suckled them at her breast.

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Observe here, The apostle calls the doctrine of the gospel, *Spirit*; because by hearing the gospel preached, they had received both the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. The law, with all its rites and ceremonies, he calls *flesh*; because they were now weak, and being but temporary institutions, were abolished by the coming of Christ and the gospel. Observe next, How the apostle endeavours to convince the Galatians of the folly and absurdity of hoping to perfect that in the flesh, which they had begun in the Spirit: "Are ye so foolish?" As if he had said, "That having at your entrance into christianity begun an holy life, by and according to the Holy Spirit conferred upon you, that now you should think to be made more perfect by the *flesh*, by the external commandments and observances of the law; how unreasonable is it to suppose that your justification should be begun by a more noble, and perfected by a less noble cause?"

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

As if the apostle had said, "To what purpose have you suffered so many persecutions from the Jews, for the cause of christianity? All which sufferings will be in vain, if, after all, you bring yourselves under the bondage of the Jewish yoke; for these might have been escaped, had you owned the necessity of circumcision, and other legal observances: but I hope you will recollect yourselves, and persevere in your first profession, without which all your former labors, your past and present sufferings, will avail you nothing." Intimating, that all the good actions we have done, and the hard things which we have suffered, will be altogether in vain to us, if we do not persevere in well doing, and patient suffering unto the end: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain." Note here, 1. That it has been from the beginning the lot and portion of such as profess christianity, to suffer many things in the defence of it. Note, 2. That it is very possible for some of those who have made an early and long profession of christianity, yea, and suffered hard things for it, after all, to make a foul defection and apostasy from it. Note, 3. That all such suffer-

ings have been, are, and will be in vain, and return to no joyful account, if the persons suffering do afterward apostatize from, and turn their backs upon the truths of God, formerly embraced and maintained by them: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain."

5 He, therefore, that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Observe here, 1. That God did accompany the first preaching and planting of the gospel with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, with a power to work miracles, to heal diseases, and to speak with tongues which were so many attestations and confirmations that the doctrine of the gospel was from God; for here St. Paul appeals to the Galatians, as men that had the Spirit and miracles amongst them. "He that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles;" implying, that Almighty God had given to them his holy Spirit, both in the sanctifying graces, and miraculous gifts of it. Observe, 2. That the Spirit thus communicated in the first and early days of christianity, was not given to the Galatians, or any other Gentiles, by the preaching of the law, but by the ministry and dispensation of the gospel, which is here called "the hearing of faith: he that ministereth to you the Spirit, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Learn hence, That although the gifts and graces of God's holy Spirit are conveyed to the hearers of the gospel by the ministry of the word, yet God is the author, the minister, and dispenser of them, and the gospel only the instrument and mean of their conveyance: "He ministereth to you the Spirit."

6 ¶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

7 Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Here our apostle proceeds to a second argument to prove that persons are justified by faith, and not by works; and that is drawn from the example of Abraham: and the argument lies thus: "As Abraham, the father of the faithful was justified; so must all believers, the children of faithful Abraham, be justified also. But though Abraham did abound in many virtues and good works, yet he was not justified by these, but by faith only; therefore by faith must all his children be justified also. "Abraham believed God;" that is, assented to, and relied upon the promise of God made unto him, that in him, that is, in the Messiah, who was to descend from him, "should all the nations of the earth be blessed;" and this *faith* of his was accounted, imputed, reckoned to him for *righteousness*; that is, was accepted of God for his justification." From whence the apostle doth infer, or draw this conclusion, that such as seek justification by faith, as Abraham did, "are the children of Abraham," as the Gentiles were: that is, the children of his *faith*; a far greater privilege than what the Jews gloried in, namely, that they were the children of his *flesh*. Learn hence, That as the pious Jews under the Old Testament, so are

christians now under the New Testament, justified alike. Were they justified freely? So are we. Are we justified fully? So are they. Was a righteousness necessary for them to be clothed with, in order to their acceptance with God? The same is necessary for us also. Was faith imputed by God to them for righteousness? So shall it be to us also.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 ¶ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Observe here, That because the former consequence from Abraham's justification to ours, might be questioned whether it holds in the Gentiles, who were not of Abraham's posterity; therefore the apostle declares, that the greatest promise made to him, was, *That in him*, that is, in the Messiah, Christ Jesus, who was to come of him, *all nations*, Gentiles as well as Jews, *should be blessed*, God having determined, that all believers indefinitely, of what nation or kindred soever, should be all justified one and the same way, namely, by faith in Christ, without the works of the law. So that all that are of faith, or true believers, whether Gentiles or Jews, do partake of all those benefits and blessings which believing Abraham did partake of, amongst which justification by faith is the chief. Learn hence, 1. That the gospel is no new doctrine, but the same for substance, though not for clearness, with that which was preached to Abraham, and to the church under the Old Testament; "The scripture preached before the gospel unto Abraham." Learn, 2. That the blessing of justification by faith, and of other spiritual favors, promised to the nations in Abraham, was such as Abraham himself was a sharer in, and partaker of; they were blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: For it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

Here is a third argument produced in this chapter, to prove that we are justified by faith, and not by works; because they who seek to be justified by the works of the law, are under the curse: and if so, cannot be justified. The argument runs thus, "Our observance of the law, when at the best, is but imperfect: now every imperfect performance lays us under the curse, therefore no performance of ours can justify us. They that cannot fulfil the law, can never be justified by the law: but no fallen man can perfectly fulfil the law, therefore none can be justified by the law." This is the force of the argument, which the apostle proves by a quotation out of Deut. xxvii. 26 "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Where note, 1. The duty which the law enacts, namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. 2. The penalty which the law inflicts,

and that is, the curse; *Cursed is every one, &c.* Learn hence: That sin and the curse are inseparable; wherever the sin is, the curse will be, be it upon a person by imputation, or by actual commission: wherever sin lies, it lays us under the curse; for sin is an infinite evil, objectively considered; it is a contempt of infinite authority, a contrariety to infinite holiness, a provocation of infinite justice, and abuse of infinite mercy; and consequently the desert of sin is death and the curse.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*; for, *The just shall live by faith.*

12 And the law is not of faith; but, *The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

A fourth argument is here produced to prove that no sinner can be justified before God by the works of the law, although before men he may. The argument is this, taken from Hab. ii. 4. *The just shall live by faith*: that is, live his spiritual life by faith, his life of justification and sanctification also: the life of his righteousness before God, or his holiness before men, and his life of glory with God in heaven, are all by faith. He adds, ver. 12. *The law is not of faith*; that is, the law says nothing of faith in a Mediator, or promises life to any person, save only to him who by a sinless obedience performs exactly what it prescribes; but the voice of the law is, *Do, or die*. Learn hence, That *the law and faith*, that is, the law and the gospel, are not contrary to each other, but are mutually subservient one to another in many things; as thus, when the law makes known sin, the gospel holds forth the remedy for sin; the law discovers our need of Christ, the gospel makes an offer and gracious tender of Jesus Christ; the law makes known to us our entire duty, the gospel furnishes us with strength and ability to perform that duty. Learn, 2. That though the law and faith, that is, the gospel, which is the doctrine of faith, be not contrary to each other, yet in point of justification they are mutually inconsistent one with another: so that if justification be by the works of the law, it cannot be had by faith; if it be had by faith, it cannot be attained by the works of the law. There can be no mixture of law and gospel, of faith and works, in this matter.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*

This is the apostle's fifth and last argument, to prove that we are justified by faith; and that notwithstanding the threats of the law, a believer is freed from the curse and malediction of the law by Christ's bearing the curse for him. *Christ hath redeemed us*. Where note, 1. The believer's happy discharge from the most dismal and dreadful thing imaginable; namely, that condemnatory sentence and curse of the law, whereby a sinner is bound over to death, even to death of soul and body. Note, 2. The person that doth and only can deliver the sinner from this condemnatory curse and sentence, and that is Jesus Christ. He discharges the believer from his obnoxiousness to wrath,

dissolves his obligation to punishment, looses all bands and chains of guilt: so that the curse of the law has nothing, and shall have nothing to do with him for ever. Note, 3. The way and manner in and by which Jesus Christ effecteth all this for us; namely, "by his being made a curse for us;" not that Christ was made the very curse itself, or changed into a curse, but he took the curse upon himself, our sin became his by voluntary susception of the punishment; and Christ underwent that death, the death of the cross, which by the law was accursed, to free us from the curse of the law; as Christ was made sin for us, so was he made a curse for us. Now as he was made sin, not by contracting the guilt of sin, but by suffering the punishment of sin; so he was made a curse, by undergoing that death which the law styles accursed.

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Observe here, One special fruit of Christ's sufferings, and being made a curse for us: namely, that the curse being abolished, the blessing of Abraham, that is, the blessing of justification, reconciliation and adoption, promised to Abraham upon his believing, might come upon all the believing Gentiles, through Christ the promised seed: and that the Gentiles might receive the promises made by Christ, of the Holy Spirit, both in his miraculous gifts and sanctifying graces, through their submission to the faith of Christ, or the doctrine of the gospel. Learn hence, 1. That Christ, by submitting to the curse of the law did not only appease the wrath of God towards us, and deliver us from the curse of the law deserved by us, but purchased all spiritual blessings for us, such as grace here, and glory hereafter.—"Christ was made a curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles." Oh wonderful grace, infinite love and astonishing goodness of God, in that great work of our redemption, in bringing about one contrary by another! He giveth life by death, and the blessing by the curse: "Christ was made a curse, that the blessing might come upon the Gentiles." Learn, 2. That there was a promise of divers blessings made to Abraham: namely, that God would give him a son by Sarah, a son in his old age, and by that son, a numerous issue; that that issue should become a mighty nation, and possess all the land of Canaan, wherein he then journeyed: and that he would settle his covenant, that is his church in that family and nation; and that in one person descending from his posterity, all nations should be blessed: and that this blessing, introduced by that one person should abolish the curse brought upon all nations by the first person's sin: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ."

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to

seeds, as of many; but as of one; And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Observe here, 1. An argument drawn from contracts among men, to prove the fixedness and stability of the covenant made by God: if one man makes a covenant with another, signs it, seals it, and delivers it before witnesses, it becomes irrevocable and irreversible; much more then must the covenant of grace and mercy made with us by God, be perpetual and immutable, since it is a covenant established by oath; and when God swears, he cannot repent. Observe, 2. The apostle proves, that the covenant of God can never fail, in regard of the wisdom and invariableness of him that made it: so it can never expire for want of parties that have interest in it, and advantage by it, for want of a seed to whom it is made: for as long as Christ hath a church and members upon earth, so long shall the promise be of force: not only "to Abraham, but to his seed, were the promises made, not to seeds, as of many: but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ;" where, by one, we understand one mystically, and in the aggregate; not only personally and individually: and by Christ, the whole church, consisting of head members, believing Gentiles, as well as Jews. Observe, 3. That the apostle having confirmed the truth of his doctrine by arguments in the foregoing part of the chapter, comes now, in the latter part of it, to answer objections, which some might be ready to make against his doctrine, the first we have ver. 17. "This I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." The objection lies thus: some might say, "When two laws are made, whereof the one was expressly contradictory to the other, the latter doth, in common presumption, abrogate and disannul the former: but here we find, that four hundred and thirty years after the promise made to Abraham, there was a law published extremely contrary to that promise, a law without mercy or compassion, a law both impossible and inexorable, a law which can neither be obeyed nor endured, a law which denounces a terrible and severe curse to the transgressors and breakers of it: therefore it should seem as if some cause had happened, to make God repent and revoke his former covenant promise made to Abraham." To obviate this objection, our apostle shows, first, what the purpose of the covenant promise to Abraham was; namely, to give life and salvation by grace and promise. Secondly, What the purpose of the latter covenant by Moses was not; namely, to give the same life by working, since, in those respects, there would be a contradiction and inconsistency in the covenants, and so by consequence, instability and unfaithfulness in him that

made them. That, therefore, which the apostle here drives at, is this, that the coming of the law hath not voided the promise, and that the law is not of force towards the seed to whom the promise is made, in any such sense as carries contradiction to, or implies abrogation of, the promise before made: from whence it follows, if it be not to stand in contradiction to, it must stand in subordination to the gospel, and so tend to evangelical purposes. Learn hence, 1. That although God might have dealt with mankind as an absolute Lord and Sovereign, yet he doth not govern them barely by a law, but by a covenant, which has promises and threatenings annexed. Learn, 2. That after the covenant of works, made with man, before the fall, was broken by Adam, God was pleased to enter into a covenant of grace with fallen man, to deliver him out of an estate of sin and misery, and to bring him into a state of salvation by a Redeemer. Learn, 3. That though the former and latter covenant did differ in some considerable circumstances, yet they are one and the same in substance, and do fully agree in all the essential parts of both. Learn, 4. That God's intent in giving the law, and urging exact obedience to it, under the penalty of the curse, was not to take us off from seeking righteousness and life only by the promise, but to encourage us to seek it; for, says the apostle here, "The law could not disannul the covenant made with Abraham, nor make the promise of no effect."

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not a *mediator* of one: but God is one.

Here an objection is moved: some might be ready to say, "If the law, that is, works done in obedience to the law, do not justify, then the law given by Moses upon mount Sinai, is in vain, and to no purpose; for why was the law given, enjoining so many duties, promising life to the obedient, and threatening wrath and a curse to the disobedient, if the inheritance come not by the law?" The apostle answers, that one great end for which the law was given, was to discover sin, and a sinner's undone condition by reason of sin, and to lead him to seek out for a remedy. *The law was added because of transgressions*: that is, to make transgression appear, to discover the pollutions of men's hearts and natures, and make them sensible of the condemnation they are under. "The law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come:" that is Christ and his church. Where note, that the legal dispensations were not to continue always in the church; but only till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: at whose death the partition wall was broken down, and the Gentiles called into the fellowship of the church, as well as the Jews. Observe, farther, the glorious and amazing manner, in which the law was given upon mount Sinai, in thunder and lightning, by the *ministry of angels*, in such a terrible manner, that there was no access for sinful man to God, and by Moses, a mediator, standing betwixt God and them: who in that action was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and

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us. As Moses was a typical, national, and representative mediator, standing between the Lord and that people of the Jews, so Christ was a substantial and universal Mediator between God and mankind. Where note, That the law was published in mercy and pacification, not in fury and revenge; for had the Lord intended death in the publishing of the law, he would not have proclaimed it in the hand of a mediator, but of an executioner. He adds, *That a mediator is not a mediator of one*, that is, of one party, but of disagreeing parties. God and man were once friends: they were one, and needed no mediator: but God and man by sin, fell at variance, and now need a mediator.—The very notion of a mediator doth suppose, that men by sin, are at odds with God, and that God, by grace, is willing to be one with man. However, though a mediator is not a mediator of one, yet God is one: that is, though there be two covenants, and two mediators, yet God is one and the same in both covenants: he carries on one and the same purpose and intention, both in the law, and the gospel; namely a benevolence and good-will towards, and an hearty desire and reconciliation with mankind.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Another objection is here made by the apostle: the Jews might possibly say, "That the law given by Moses was against the promise of God made to Abraham." The apostle answers, no; that the law is not contrary, but subservient to the promise: for the law was not given on mount Sinai, to afford life and justification by obedience to it (seeing it could not by a fallen creature be ever perfectly kept) but to convince of sin, and to condemn for sin; and that men despairing of salvation in and of themselves, might speedily betake themselves to Christ for it: for God in the scripture hath concluded, that is, declared all men to be under sin, and under the curse due to sin; that renouncing all confidence in themselves, they should, by faith, have recourse to the only Mediator for righteousness and life, for justification and salvation. Learn hence, That God in the publication of the law by Moses, on mount Sinai, had none but merciful and evangelical intentions. 2. That the publication of the law by Moses, was not against the promise of God made to Abraham, but they had both the same merciful design and gracious intention. To explain the matter by a similitude or illustration, thus: "Suppose a prince should proclaim a pardon to all traitors, if they would come in and plead it, and after this should send forth an officer to attack and arraign them, to threaten and condemn them: Is the prince contrary to himself? Hath he repented of his mercy? No, sure! but he is unwilling to lose the glory of his mercy, and most desirous to have the honor of it acknowledged; and therefore he bringeth

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these criminals into extremities, that when their guilt is made evident, they may acknowledge the justice of the law that would condemn them, and the great mercy of the prince in offering a pardon to them." The case is alike between God and us; first to Abraham, and in him to us: God made a promise of mercy and blessedness, even to all that would plead an interest in it, for remission of sins, and acceptance with God: but the world grew secure; and though sin was in them, and death reigned over them, they regarded not their miserable condition; being without a law to evidence sin and death unto their consciences, they saw no necessity of pleading the promise of pardon. Hereupon God publishes by Moses, a severe and terrible law, a law, which filled the air with thunder, and the mount with fire, inasmuch, that Moses the mediator, did exceedingly fear and quake; yet in all this, God did but pursue his first purpose of mercy, and take a course to make his gospel accounted worthy of all acceptation, that men being by this law roused from their security, and made sensible of the curse and malediction they lie under, might run from Sinai unto Sion, from Moses to Christ, and by faith plead that pardon and remission which in Christ was promised, when God told Abraham, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Before faith came, that is, before Christ came, and the doctrine of faith was preached, we were in bondage under the law; the ceremonial law was a very great bondage; their frequent going up to Jerusalem at their festivals, was burdensome; their ceremonies were many, inconvenient and chargeable; their laws for uncleanness and purifications, rendered them unconvertible, at all times, with other people, and sometimes unconvertible, one with another: yet was the law very useful to the Jews, that so they might be prepared by it to receive the doctrine of Christ, and salvation by faith in him. Hence it is that he called the law their *schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ*: the schoolmaster exercises authority over minors only, not overgrown persons; he teaches only rudiments and first principles for beginners, not such things as require mature judgment and perfect age. Such was the law in comparison of the gospel, and Moses with respect to Christ. Moses and the law is a rigid and severe schoolmaster, who, with whips and threats, require an hard lesson of their scholars, whether able to learn it or not: but Christ and the gospel is a mild and gentle teacher, who, by sweet promises and good rewards, invite their scholars to their duty, and guide and help them to do what of themselves they cannot do; by which means, they love both their master and their lesson, and rejoice when he is nearest to them, to direct them in their studies. As the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, so Christ is

our great prophet that leads us to God. Note, farther, That though the law was a good schoolmaster to the Jews in their infancy and minority; yet it has no authority over christians now grown up to maturity. The gospel-church, that is, both believing Jews and Gentiles, being like a son come to age, believing in Christ already come, are no longer, to be treated as children under the discipline of the law as a schoolmaster, for they are now under the evangelical, not Mosaic dispensation of the covenant of grace, *After that faith is come*: that is, Christ the object of faith manifested, and the gospel, the doctrine of faith revealed, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Observe here, 1. A glorious gospel privilege discovered, namely, adoption; *Ye are the children of God*. The church of God under the New Testament, is in a special state of sonship and adoption, to whom the privileges and immunities of sons and heirs grown up to maturity do belong. Observe, 2. The universality of this privilege, *Ye are all the children of God*; that is, all, both Jews and Gentiles, all, both weak and strong, believers; substantial relations do not *recipere magis et minus*; he that is a father in reality, cannot be more a father to one child than to another; the young one in the cradle may call the parent father, as well as he that is grown to man's estate; *Ye are all the children of God*. Observe, 3. The instrumental cause of this blessed privilege, *Faith in Christ Jesus*; Christ invests every believer, weak as well as strong, in this glorious privilege of adoption; faith in Christ to come, did intitle believers under the Old Testament to the dignity of sons and daughters; and faith in Christ now already come, doth add some peculiar dignity of sonship to believers under the New Testament: they with us, and we with them, are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus; Christ of a Son became a servant, that we of slaves might become sons.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

What the apostle had asserted in the foregoing verse, he proves in this; namely, that *all believers are the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus*, because they are baptized into Christ and have put on Christ; that is, they are admitted into the christian church by baptism, they profess Christ's holy religion; and if they live as they profess, *they put on Christ*: that is, they are made partakers of his Spirit, and do copy forth the excellencies of his life. To *put on Christ*, is not as to put on a suit of clothes fitted to the body, but as metal cast into a mould, receiving the figure from it. Happy they who are not only sacramentally, but really and spiritually baptized into Christ: incorporated into him, and made one body with him by faith; who do not only bear his name, but wear his image.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

As if the apostle had said, "Now since the coming of

Christ, there is no difference of discrimination between one nation and another, no regard to any national privilege, either of Jew or Gentile, no distinction of conditions, either bond or free; or of sexes, either male or female; but circumcised or uncircumcised, we are all one as good as another, in respect of outward privileges, or external advantages; but being sincere believers, we are all equally accepted of God in Christ." Learn hence, That no external privilege or prerogative whatsoever without faith in Christ, is any whit available in salvation; none are debarred from Christ, nor more nor better accepted with him for any of these things: both the circumcised and uncircumcised are his, if believing in Christ.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

That is, "If ye be Christ's servants and subjects, then are ye the true seed of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the blessing, according to the promise made to him and to his seed." This our apostle asserts, in opposition to the false apostles, who maintained, that there could be none truly reputed Abraham's seed, except they were circumcised, and subjected themselves to the law of Moses; "Yes, says the apostle, if ye be Christ's, and by baptism ingrafted into him, you are the true children of Abraham, though ye be not circumcised: yea, you are heirs apparent of the heavenly inheritance given unto Abraham by promise." Learn hence, That all sincere and serious christians are Abraham's spiritual seed, children of his faith, are heirs together with him of the same promises. *If ye be Christ's, that is, sincere, and serious christians, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

CHAPTER IV.

Our apostle farther proceeds, in this chapter, to clear the freedom of christians, under the gospel, from the servitude and bondage of the Mosaic law. He shows, that the abolished ceremonies of the legal dispensation were properly suited to the minority and infant state of the Jewish church, which required instruction in spiritual mysteries, by carnal resemblances: but that now, Christ, by his actual appearance in human flesh, had obtained our freedom from all those yokes, and put us into a fuller possession of the rights of children, even such as are come to age, and are grown up to riper years. The Jewish church before Christ, our apostle compares to an infant, in respect of age; they were babes and children; to a servant in respect of fear and subjection; to a pupil under tutors and governors, under the institution of a cursed school-master, the law acquainted only with the first rudiments of religion; the high mysteries of faith, being not so clearly manifested, nor made known unto them; and accordingly the apostle thus bespeaks them.

NOW I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

The apostle, in these words, compares the church of God, under the old Testament, to an infant or child in its minority and nonage: partly with respect to their weakness in understanding, and want of the means of knowledge, comparatively to what we enjoy; and partly, with respect to the discipline they were under from their rigid school-master, the ceremonial law. "Now, says the apostle, as a child, though he be heir to, and owner of all his father's inheritance in hope, yet so long as he is a minor, and under age, he differeth nothing from a servant in point of subjection, but is under the management of tutors and directors: in like manner the church, when in its infant state under the Old Testament, was kept in bondage and subjection under the rigid administration, and rigorous exaction of the law, and tied to almost a numberless number of ceremonial observances, by which it pleased Almighty God to instruct the former ages of his church." Learn hence, That the Jewish church in its infant state, was obliged to learn and practise the elements of a religion, chiefly consisting in visible and bodily performances of the ceremonial law, which were but rudiments, in respect of that heavenly doctrine concerning spiritual life which the gospel now reveals, and clearly makes known unto us: *When we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.

5 ¶ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

That is, "When the fulness of time was come, which God the Father hath appointed for the finishing of the legal dispensation, and for the abolishing the ceremonial rites, God sent forth from himself the Son of himself, his only begotten Son, made, that is, born of a woman, made under and obedient to the law, subjecting himself both to its precepts and its curse, to redeem them who were under the law, and discharge them from the curse and malediction of it; that we believers, we the members of the christian church, might receive the adoption of sons, without any observance of circumcision, or other ceremonial rites." Observe here, 1. That Christ was God's Son, his own Son, the Son of himself, as the original calls him, Rom. viii. 3. his Son, not barely in regard of his miraculous conception, or in regard of his sanctification and mission, or in regard of his resurrection and exaltation, or in regard of that endeared affection which the Father bare unto him, but in regard of his essence and nature, as begotten by him: his Son, by eternal and ineffable generation; being for nature co-essential, for dignity co-equal, and for duration co-eternal with the Father. Observe, 2. That Christ, God's own Son, was sent forth by God the Father: *God sent forth his Son.* This sending of

the Son doth, 1. Pre-suppose his pre-existence before his incarnation; for if he had not had a being, he could not have been sent: it supposes also his personality, and that he was a person; not an operation or manifestation only, for that could not be sent; and that he was a person really distinct from the Father; for how else could one send the other? 2. God's sending of Christ doth imply his ordaining, constituting, and appointing Christ from all eternity to come into the world; also his fitting and qualifying of him from his incarnation, and his authorizing and commissioning of Christ to take our nature upon him, and in that nature to do and suffer for us, as our pattern, and as our surety. Observe, 3. That Christ, God's own son, sent forth by God the Father was made of a woman, did really assume and take upon him our flesh, and was made manifest in our nature: it was not an undigested unshapen mass, or lump of flesh, that Christ assumed, but that flesh was organized and formed into a perfect body, having the same parts, members, lineaments and proportions which ours have; St. Paul calls it, Colos. 1. 22. *the body of his flesh*; a body, to show the organization of it; and a body of flesh, to show the reality of it. Observe, 4. That the season in which Christ was sent forth, was not in the beginning of time, nor at the end of time, but in the fulness of time. He came not in the beginning of time, to excite his people's affections and longing desires for his coming, and to teach them to prize him the more when come. He stayed not till the end of time, lest the faith of his church and people should have failed; the patriarchs believed in Christ to come, the apostles believed in Christ then present among them, and we believe in Christ as come, and gone again to heaven. Thus, in all differences of time's past, present and to come, faith had, has, and will have its suitable work, and proper employment. Observe, 5. That the great end of God in sending Christ unto us, and the gracious design of Christ in his undertaking for us, was our redemption from the bondage and curse of the law, and our adoption into the number of God's children: *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

6 And, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

As if the apostle had said, "That you are now under the gospel, become and made the sons of God, appeareth by this, that God hath sent the Spirit of his natural Son into your hearts, to authorize and enable you to call upon him, not only as your God, but as your Father: the gospel assuring you, that you are no longer in that servile condition you were in whilst under the law; but God will deal with you now upon gospel terms, and justify you by faith, without the deeds of the law: now God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Observe here, 1. The title given to the Holy Spirit; it is called *the Spirit of God's Son*; that is, the Spirit of Christ, because it is the same Spirit which abode upon him that resteth upon us, and because the Spirit is purchased and procured for us by the blood of the Son. *Those rivers of living water*, by which the effusion of the Spirit is expressed, do flow out of Christ's pierced side; Christ purchased the Spirit for us, before he sent him from heaven to us. Observe, 2. The act respecting his person, *God hath sent forth*. This imports not any change of place, as if he were more distant from the Father when he was thus

sent, than he was before; but it notes his commission for some special work in and upon the creature. Observe, 3. The objects which have the benefits of this act; *God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*; that is, into the hearts of believers; signifying that the work here intended is an inward work, and a saving work, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit in them*; not into the brain, to dwell there by common unsanctified gifts, but into the heart, where all the habits of grace are planted, and from whence all the issues of life proceed. Observe, 4. The office which the Holy Spirit performs in the believer's heart: First, it cries; secondly, it cries, *Abba, Father*: The Spirit cries, by enabling us through his gracious influences and assistances to cry or pray unto God; and it cries, *Father, Father*: the repetition made, and the word redoubled, denotes the strength and vehemency of the desire, and speaks a passionate and extraordinary concernment of soul, for obtaining the mercy desired, and the blessings prayed for. Learn hence, 1. That there are three sacred persons in the blessed Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; all are held forth to us in this single verse, yea, in this single clause of the verse, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son*. Learn, 2. That the Spirit is not a quality or operation, but a person that has a real being and subsistence; else the phrase of being sent could not be properly applied to him. Learn, 3. That the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and Son; for he is the Spirit of the Son, and is sent by the Father: there is an order among the divine persons, though no priority of being. Learn, 4. That the spirit of adoption is a spirit of supplication; and this spirit of supplication is the great privilege and advantage of believers under the gospel; for it teaches us what to pray for, and the manner how we are to pray; it joineth with our prayers his own effectual intercessions; it gives us a right and privilege to come unto God as unto a Father, and gives us also confidence and assurance, as sons, to be accepted with him. Learn, 5. That the great privilege of adoption is both discovered and improved by the help of the Spirit of Christ: our privilege of sonship under the gospel excels by far theirs under the law: 1. In point of manifestation and clearness. 2. As to fulness and amplitude of enjoyment.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Note here, 1. That the spirit of the first covenant was a servile spirit, a spirit of fear and bondage, and they that were under that covenant, were rather servants than sons; not but that true believers, in and under the Old Testament, were the sons and daughters of the Most High God, and we find them challenging their privilege, Isa. lxiii. 16. *Doubtless thou art our Father*: but yet it was in so defective a degree, that they seemed more like to servants than to sons, and were trained up under suitable discipline: hence, says the apostle here, *thou art now no more a servant*; implying, they were once so. Note, 2. That the spirit of the new covenant is a free and ingenuous spirit, and the gospel state a more filial state than the legal state was: *Thou art now no more a servant, but a son*; and if sons, then are you heirs of God, and have a right to the inheritance of heaven when you die, and to the blessed privileges, and royal immunities contained in that great charter, the covenant of grace, whilst you live: *If a son, then an heir of God, through Christ*.

8 Howbeit, then when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods,

9 But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage ?

Our apostle having proved sufficiently the believing Christians freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law : next endeavours to convince the Galatians how absurd and unreasonable it was for them voluntarily to put themselves under the obligation and obedience of it, and to look upon it as necessary to their justification and salvation : Now in the verses before us he tells them, that when they were Gentiles they were the worst of slaves, serving them that were no gods at all ; whereas the Jews served the true God, though in a servile manner : These Galatians, being Heathens before conversion, served false gods, and so were in a bondage much worse than that of the Jews. The apostle therefore justly blames them, that they being naturally Gentiles, and never under the ceremonial law, should now desire and choose to enter into that bondage : which was apparently to go backward in religion, or to return to those principles which they had already over-past. Thence learn, That it is possible for a professing people to advance very far in the way of Christianity, and yet make a foul retreat afterwards in a course of defection and apostacy : *After we have known God*, that is, acknowledged the living and true God, and been acknowledged by him, *how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements ?* Here note, How contemptuously, or at least disesteemingly, our apostle speaks of the legal rites of the ceremonial law : He calls them elements or rudiments, because they were God's first instruments given to his church for his worship, to which he intended afterwards a more perfect way of worship : Next he calls them *weak elements*, because the law made nothing perfect, and the observance of it was impotent and unavailable to a sinner's justification before God : And lastly, he calls them *beggarly elements*, in comparison with that more rational and spiritual way of worship under the gospel. Whence we may learn, That holy zeal will teach a saint to speak with a sort of contempt of any thing that encroaches upon the honour due to Christ, or any of his offices. True, the Levitical ceremonies were appointed by God himself as a part of divine worship leading to Christ, and as such to be religiously observed ; but when the false apostles did urge the observance of them under the gospel, as a part of necessary commanded worship, and as part of the Galatians' righteousness before God, St. Paul is bold then to give them the name of *weak and beggarly elements*.

10 Ye observe days and months, and times, and years.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

St. Paul here gives instances to the Galatians, wherein it did appear, that they brought themselves under an unne-

cessary bondage to the rites of the ceremonial law ; he tells them plainly, that they kept the ceremonial sabbaths, feast and fasts, as if that law was obligatory, and still binding : "*Ye observe days*, that is, the Jewish sabbath days, and new moons ; *and months*, as the feast of the first month, and of the seventh month ; *and times*, that is, the times of their solemn festivals for going up to Jerusalem, as the *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and *feast of tabernacles* ; *and years*, as the sabbatical years, and years of Jubilee. This, says the apostle, makes me afraid of you, that I have preached the gospel, and the doctrine of free justification by faith, in vain to you ; because you leave the doctrine I taught you, and put your confidence in observing those legal ceremonial rites." Learn hence, 1. That the works of the ministry is a laborious work ; *I have bestowed upon you labour*, says St. Paul. A minister's life is not a life of ease, but of much toil and pains, a labouring unto faintness and weariness, as the word here used doth import and signify : Learn, 2. That the most laborious ministers and lively preachers may sometimes see so little fruit of their labours and endeavours, that they may have just cause to fear that few are savingly converted by their ministry : St. Paul here was afraid *lest he had laboured in vain* among the Galatians. Learn, 3. That in order to the success of our ministry, we must not content ourselves with a reproof of sin in general, but must descend to particulars, and give instances of those several and distinct sins which our people are guilty of, and ought to fall under our reproof for. Thus the apostle here gives particular instances of the sins formerly reproved, in their observing *days, and months, and times, and years*. Generals, we say, do not affect ; but particular reproofs are more piercing, and more convincing : When we say to the sinner, as Nathan to David, *Thou art the man* ; this, if any thing, will stick close to the conscience.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am ; for I am as ye are : ye have not injured me at all.

Observe here, The holy wisdom of our apostle, in tempering his former reproofs with great mildness and gentleness ; *I beseech you brethren*. He well knew that these Galatians were alienated in their affections from him ; and fearing lest from his present severity and sharpness towards them, they should apprehend that he was alienated from them also, he thus lovingly bespeaks them, "*I pray you be affected towards me as I stand affected towards you : Count me not your enemy, because I tell you the truth ; for I am the same to you that ever I was : my love is not alienated from you, for any wrong or injury done to me by you : For, alas ! it is yourselves, and not me, that you injure, by bringing yourselves into this bondage to the ceremonial law, to the loss of your Christian liberty : Be as I am ; for I am as ye are ; ye have not injured me at all.*" Learn from St. Paul's example, That though the ministers of Christ may, and sometimes must, use severity and sharpness in the rebukes and reproofs which they give for sin, yet must they temper severity with gentleness ; and insinuations of kindness and affection must be mingled with rebukes ; as looking not so much at what their sin deserveth, as what is most convenient for bringing them to repentance : *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am*. Learn, 2. That when the ministers of God, from a true zeal for the glory of God, do rebuke sin, and reprove sinners, the

people are too apt to apprehend that our zeal flows from a private spirit of revenge, as if we had some particular displeasure against these persons for some personal injury done unto ourselves: all which groundless suspicions it is our duty to labour to wipe off: so did our apostle here; *I have not injured me at all*, says he.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that if *it had been possible*, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Observe here, 1. A singular instance which St. Paul gives of his sincere affection towards these Galatians, *he preached the gospel to them at first*, and this both with difficulty and danger, *through the infirmity of the flesh*; that is, through much bodily weakness and imperfections. The ancients say St. Paul was a little man, and had some deformity or crookedness of body, and imperfection in his utterance, which rendered both his person and his speech contemptible. These bodily infirmities he calls a temptation; intimating, that the afflictions of the body are great temptations to the soul. And besides these bodily infirmities, he encountered also with persecutions in preaching the gospel to them; which were evidences and convincing demonstrations of his fervent love and affectionate regard toward them: *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at the first*. Observe, 2. The reciprocal returns of love and affection which the Galatians made to St. Paul, at his first coming among them to preach the gospel; they received him as an angel of God, or as a messenger from God sent unto them, yea, as Jesus Christ, as if Christ himself had been there in person, and preached to them: Nay, so warm were their affections then to St. Paul at his first coming amongst them, that they did not only pull open their purses, but had it been possible for them, or profitable to him, they could even have plucked out their very eyes for him. But note, it was at his first coming amongst them, and preaching to them. Whence we may observe, That the first year of a minister's preaching to, and amongst a people, are usually most successful: Then our people's affections are warmest, and perhaps our own too: Our people then hear us without any kind of prejudice against us, with great desire and delight; afterwards their affections cool, either through their own inconstancy, or our inadvertency, or by the malice of Satan, or by the mischievous designs and misrepresentations of some of his instruments. Observe farther, That the love and reverence which the people owe to their ministers, should not be verbal and in profession only, but real and in sincerity; they ought to part with what is dear to them, to promote the work of God in their houses. There was a time

when these Galatians would have given all they had to the apostle, money out of their purse, bread from their table, yea, blood out of their veins, and the very eyes out of their head: "I bear you record, that you would even have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." Learn lastly, That it is an high commendation to a people, when neither poverty nor deformity, nor any deficiency, which may render a minister of the gospel base and contemptible in the estimation of the world, can possibly diminish any thing of that respect which they know to be due and payable unto him. Notwithstanding the Galatians knew the infirmity and temptation of the apostle, yet they received him (at first) as an angel of God.

16 I am therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth.

As if the apostle had said, "How comes your affections, which were so warm at first, to be so cold now? Whence is it that I, who was formerly so precious in your esteem, am now looked upon as an enemy, and only because I declare the truth of God unto you? Can any reason be given on my part, for the sudden change of affection on your part? I trow, not unless you count my candour and ingenuity in telling the truth, a crime: *Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*" Learn hence, That notwithstanding the faithful ministers of Christ, in reproving sin, and vindicating the truths of God, are sometimes counted and treated as enemies, yet will they persist, and finally persevere in their duty, whatever the event may be; though the world account them their enemy, yet they will tell them the truth.

17 They zealously affect you, but not well: yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

They, that is, the false apostles, pretend great love to you, and a zealous affection for you; *but not well*, not upon honest and just grounds. There is often in an ill cause, which is to be condemned and avoided; zeal is a mixed affection of love and anger working into a servency of mind, in defending what we believe to be true and good, and in opposing what we judge to be false and bad; *they zealously affect you, but not well*. Nothing is more common, and consequently more dangerous, than for heretical teachers to pretend great zeal for the glory of God, and great love and affection to the people of God, whilst they are about to persuade them to embrace their pernicious errors and damnable heresies. He adds, *Yea, they would exclude you, that you might affect them: Exclude you*, that is, from the liberties and privileges of the gospel, say some; from depending upon me, or any faithful pastor, say others; they would ingratiate themselves, that they may engross you, and you, may affect them only. The old practice has ever been amongst seducers, first to alienate the people's minds from their own teachers, and next get themselves looked upon as alone, and only worthy to have room in the people's hearts and affections; *They would exclude you from us, and us from you, only that you might affect them*.

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

Note here, That although there is a zeal, in a bad cause, which is to be condemned and avoided, yet there is a zeal in a just and righteous cause, which is laudable and worthy to be practised; when it is a zeal guided by religion, governed by prudence, attended with perseverance; when in a good thing we are affected, zealously affected, and zealously affected always. This the apostle desires that the Galatians should be, and that as well when he was absent from them, as when he was present with them.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Observe here, 1. The endearing title which the apostle gives to the apostatizing Galatians: he calls them *children, little children, his little children, my little children*. Note, He calls them *children*, because converted to christianity by the preaching of the gospel; and being thus regenerated and born again, they were to be as children, innocent and inoffensive. He calls them *little children*, to denote the tenderness of their growth in Christianity, the smallness of their proficiency in religion; they were not come to that consistency in grace, to that maturity in goodness, to that perfection in knowledge, which he did desire. Farther, he calls them *his little children*, to denote that spiritual relation which was between them, he having been the undoubted instrument of their conversion, and so was their spiritual Father; and also to denote that endearment of affection which he bore unto them, and that tender care and concern which he had for them. Observe, 2. The holy vehemency of the apostle's desire, how earnestly he longed after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. He compares himself to a mother in travail, until he saw Christ formed in their hearts and lives. *I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you*. Learn hence, 1. That there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert and bring home to Christ. Learn, 2. That there is nothing in this world which the faithful ministers of Christ do so passionately desire and affectionately long after, as to see Jesus Christ formed and fashioned in the hearts and lives of their beloved people; *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, &c.*

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice: for I stand in doubt of you.

Our apostle, as a farther testimony of his endeared affection towards the Galatians, declares here his earnest desire to have been with them, and see them face to face, that so being more fully acquainted with their case, he might know how to suit his discourses to them, and might have more cause of rejoicing with, than complaining of, them. — Learn hence, 1. That though a minister may sometimes necessarily withdraw himself from his flock, yet he ought always to have a fervent desire to be present with them, without neglecting any opportunity when occasion offereth, of returning to them: *I desire to be present with you*. Learn, 2. That it is a minister's duty to get, as much as may be, the exact knowledge of his people's inclinations and dispositions, of their state and condition, that he may know how to make

a fit application to all of them, admonishing and reproofing some, threatening and correcting others. Thus the apostle here wished to be present with them, *that he might change his voice*; that is, know the better how to speak most suitably and seasonably to their condition; *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice*.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 ¶ For it is written, that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman.

23 But he *who was* of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman *was* by promise.

Our apostle here proceeds to the end of this chapter, in shewing the Galatians that it was the design of God, at the coming of Christ, to abolish the legal dispensation, and free men from the servitude and bondage of that law. And first, he argues with them from the nature of the law they were so willing, yea, so desirous to be under, ver. 21, *Ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* That is, "Ye that desire to be justified by your legal performances, by observing circumcision, &c. do you not hear and take notice how the very law itself doth sentence, curse, and condemn you? And do you not find in the Old Testament, the story of Sarah and Hagar, of Ishmael and Isaac? Are you ignorant that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael by Hagar the bond-woman, and Isaac by Sarah the free-woman? Ishmael the bond-woman's son was born after the flesh; that is, by the ordinary strength of nature in the generation; Hagar being young, and Abraham being strong. But Isaac was the son of the promise; God gave him, by virtue of his promise made to Abraham when his body was dead, unfit for generation, and Sarah past conception also." Now from this history of Abraham's family, considered in itself (without the mystery prefigured by it) we learn, 1. That the best of men are imperfect men; the holy patriarchs lived in the sin of polygamy, or taking more wives than one, contrary to the first institution of marriage, either not knowing or not considering it was a sin. *Abraham had two wives*. Learn, 2. That the truth and veracity of God, engages him to fulfil and make good all his promises, though all ordinary means and secondary causes fail, and become impotent and unable to bring about the thing promised. Thus here, a promise being made to Abraham, that Sarah should have a child, she conceiveth and beareth Isaac; not according to the course of nature, but through virtue of the promise; *he of the free-woman was by promise*.

24 Which things are an allegory. For these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar.

25 For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Here the apostle makes an allegorical and spiritual application of the foregoing history of Sarah and Hagar, of Isaac and Ishmael; and the mystery he tells us is this, "The two mothers, Sarah and Hagar, are types of the two covenants, the one of works, the other of grace; the two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, are a type of two sorts of men living in the church, the one proceeding from the first, the other from the second covenant; the one regenerate, the other unregenerate men. All regenerate men are under the covenant of grace, and the free men; for every man's freedom depends upon the covenant under which he stands. Ishmael is the son of the bond-woman, and points at the Jerusalem which then was, and the people of the Jews, as they then stood attached, seeking justification, and expecting eternal salvation by the works of the law; but now behold in Isaac, a son of the free-woman, an emblem of the gospel church, which dares not depend upon the righteousness of the law, for justification, but relies upon the meritorious righteousness of the Mediator; and this points out Jerusalem above, *which is free, and the mother of us all*. Learn hence, That all unregenerate men, who continue in a state of nature, are under the first covenant or covenant of works. Ishmael is a type of all unregenerate men. Mankind is bound to God by a double bond: First, by a bond of creation; Secondly, by a bond of stipulation; The one is a natural, and the other is a voluntary obligation: by the former we are bound to God, by the latter he is bound to us. The covenant made with man in his state of innocence, was *fœdus amicitiae*, a covenant of friendship; the covenant made with us since the fall, is *fœdus misericordiae*, a covenant of reconciliation; the former made with the first Adam, the latter with Christ the second Adam. The first covenant was made not barely with the person, but with the nature of Adam, with the whole race of mankind: for God dealt with Adam, not as a single person, but as *caput gentis*, as the root and representative of mankind; and consequently, this covenant was not abolished by the fall, but stands still in force; not to give life, because it is become weak through our flesh; we are become weak to that, not that weak to us; but it commands duty as it did before, namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; and in case of failure, denounces the curse. Lord! awaken every natural and unregenerate man, who bearing only Adam's image, is also under Adam's covenant; he is a bond man now as well as Ishmael of old, in bondage to sin, in bondage to Satan, in bondage to the law, in bondage to his own fears, in bondage to the world. Oh, rest not, till by grace you are delivered from this bondage, by being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and heartily submitted to the terms and conditions of the second covenant, which propoundeth repentance, and promiseth pardon and acceptance upon repentance!

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry: thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Our apostle here proceeds, and still goes on in his former allegory; the church of the Gentiles he compares to Sarah,

who was a long time barren, but at last brought forth a child of the promise, a seed to which all the families of the earth were blessed. The church of the Jews is represented under the notion of a woman that had an husband and many children; but the barren Gentiles are by a spirit of prophecy, called upon to rejoice, and shout for joy, because there should be more children brought forth to God amongst them, than were amongst the Jews. Here, and hence observe, That it is not the church's lot to be always alike fruitful in bringing forth children unto God; she hath her barren times, in which the labours of her ministers are attended with little success, and few are converted and brought home to God: In the first beginning of the Christian church, though Christ himself was the preacher, she was one that *beareth not, and travaileth not*. Learn, 2. That upon the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and the weakening of Satan's interest in the world, when souls are gathered in, and brought home to Christ, by the power of converting grace, all the churches of Christ ought to rejoice, and break forth into singing, as being matter of exceeding joy and great exultation; *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth into singing, &c.*

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

In the former of these two verses, the apostle applies the foregoing allegory, or typical history of Sarah and Hagar, thus: "As, says he, Isaac by virtue of the promise, being born of the free-woman, was heir to all his father's estate; in like manner, they who seek salvation not by the law, but by faith in Christ, are the free children of God, and heirs of the promise of life eternal? *We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise*." In the latter of these two verses, which gives us an account of the persecuting enmity that was in the heart and tongue of Ishmael against Isaac, we have several things observable: As, 1. The root and rise of Ishmael's persecuting malice discovered, and from whence it proceeded, and that was an inward antipathy to the work of grace in Isaac. Those great differences in divine heraldry, of being born after the flesh, and after the Spirit, evidently discover where the quarrel lay, and whence it arose; it was the spiritualness of Isaac that exasperated Ishmael's rage; Isaac was born after the spirit, and doubtless he shewed some fruits of the spirit, which Ishmael could not relish, and therefore did deride and mock him. Observe, 2. What was the kind of persecution which Isaac underwent. It was the persecution of the tongue, in derisions, and cruel mockings; Moses tells us, in the book of Genesis, the manner how, and the weapon with which: Ishmael did not lift up his hand against Isaac, as Cain did Abel, but his tongue only: yet St. Paul calls it here a persecution. Mocking and scoffing either at the word, ways, or people of God, is a sin of unspeakable profaneness, a blaspheming of Christ, and a persecution of his members. . . . *He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*. Observe, 3. That the persecution of the tongue, at least, is that which the children and church of God have met with in all former, and must expect to meet

with in future ages: as it was then, says the apostle, even so it is now; afflictions are the donatives of the gospel, and persecution is the church's patrimony; "To us it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer," Phil. i. 29. Observe lastly, from Ishmael's being brother to Isaac, and yet his bitter persecutor, that the sorest trials and sharpest persecutions, which the saints endure, are very often from their nearest relations, who are tied to them by the strongest obligations, either of kindred or acquaintance. Bitterest things are sometimes endured from the hands of those from whom better things might justly have been expected; Christ foretold all this, "The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son." Cain is dead, but the Spirit of Cain yet lives; they that scoff, would bite, and make their teeth meet, had they power to use their cheek bone: He that is born after the flesh, will persecute those of his own flesh and family that are born after the Spirit; as it was then, we may go on to say, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.

The apostle goes on in explaining and applying this typical history of Ishmael and Isaac, and tells us, that the casting out of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, the bond-woman, did typify the exclusion of the law from a partnership with the gospel in the justification of a sinner before God: As Ishmael was cast out of Abraham's family, and none but Isaac must inherit; so they that depend upon the law for justification, shall be cast out of the church of God, and never attain the heavenly inheritance: But they who depend upon the promise of God, and expect to be justified by faith, without legal performances, they only shall be heirs of grace and mercy. The doctrine of justification by the works of the law, when it is not only doctrinally maintained, but practically pursued and walked in, doth exclude persons from having any part or share in the kingdom of heaven. So much was typified and prefigured by the son of the bond-woman's being cast out, and not allowed to be heir with the son of the free-woman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

Here the apostle draws a conclusion from the foregoing discourse, thus, "As Sarah cast out Hagar and Ishmael, so must the children of the New Jerusalem cast out the law, and all the legal rites, henceforth to be observed no more, either alone without Christ, or in conjunction with Christ. And as the church of the Gentiles was not typified in Hagar, but in Sarah, so we Christian Gentiles are not obliged to judaical observations, but freed entirely by Christ from them, and justified by gospel grace without them." The conclusion and sum of all is this, to bring off the Galatians from seeking justification by the works of the law, and to apprehend themselves no longer in bondage to circumcision and

the Mosaic rites, but to stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ had made them free, which introduces that excellent discourse to this purpose, which we find contained in the next chapter.

CHAP. V.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, clearly asserted, and strenuously proved, the doctrine of free justification by faith without the works of the law, and that circumcision, and the ceremonial rites, were all certainly abolished by the death of Christ; he comes now (as his manner was) to improve his discourse by way of application to them; and this he doth, both for the informing of their judgments, and directing of their practice. And the first duty he exhorts the Galatians to, is to persist and stand fast in their Christian liberty, which Christ, by his death, had purchased for them, and to be no longer in bondage to circumcision, and the ceremonial law. Accordingly, he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1:

STAND fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

As if he had said, "Since Christ, by his death, has purchased our freedom from the yoke and bondage of the ceremonial law, let us resolutely stand fast in this our Christian liberty, without subjecting ourselves again to circumcision, and the observance of the Mosaic rites." Here note, 1. The servile condition of the Jewish church, they were under bondage, under a yoke of bondage. This servitude of theirs consisted in the vast number of their religious rites and observances, as to days and weeks, months and years; in the multitude of their sacrifices of all sorts, which they were obliged every day to offer; in their frequent purifications and washings; in the strict distinction they were obliged to make betwixt clean and unclean meats: in the numerous rites and ceremonies they were required to observe at their marriages and burials, at bed and board, at home and abroad, nay, even in ploughing, sowing, and reaping; so numerous were these observances, that they took up half their time, and as burdensome as they were numerous. Well might the apostle here call it a yoke of bondage, and elsewhere, viz. Acts xv. 10. "A yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear." Note, 2. The happy liberty and freedom from this intolerable yoke, purchased by Christ, for the Christian church, Christ has made us free; He, by his obedience and death, has purchased this happy freedom for us, a freedom from ceremonial bondage, from sinful servitude and slavery: not from civil subjection, not from the yoke of new obedience, but from the obliging force of the ceremonial law, and the curse and irritating power of the moral law. Note, 3. The Christians' duty, with reference to this privilege, namely, to stand fast in the liberty which Christ has purchased for them, without obliging themselves to observe any part of the ceremonial law, which was now a servility perfectly unprofitable, and nothing else; stand fast in it; that is, maintain and defend it both in judgment and practice.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

That is, "Behold I Paul, your apostle, do positively declare, and expressly tell you the Galatians, and all other Christians converted by me to Christianity, that *if ye be circumcised*, that is, join circumcision with the gospel as a thing necessary to justification and salvation, Christ's undertaking will *profit you nothing*, for, embracing circumcision after Christ's coming, is virtually to deny and disown that he is come, and in effect to denounce and disclaim him; because at his coming the promise was fulfilled, and circumcision of its own nature ceased." Learn hence, That for persons religiously to observe any of the rites of the ceremonial law, in obedience to any divine precept, or to join any thing with Christ, and faith in him, for the justification of a sinner before God, is a plain denial of Christ, and a disdaining of his ability and sufficiency to justify and save us: "If ye be circumcised, verily Christ shall profit you nothing."

3 ¶ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

He that urges the necessity of circumcision, *is a debtor to the law* in a double respect, namely, in regard of duty, and in regard of penalty: First, *He is a debtor* in regard of duty; because he that thinks himself bound to keep one part of the ceremonial law, doth hereby oblige himself to keep the whole ceremonial law, yea, and the whole moral law too, without deficiency, and that under the penalty of condemnation. Again, Secondly, As he is a *debtor* in point of duty, so he must needs be a debtor in regard of penalty, because he is not able to keep any part of it perfectly. Hence we may infer, 1. How endearing our obligations are to Christ, who as our Surety paid both these debts for us, namely, our debt of duty, and our debt of penalty to the law of God; by fulfilling all righteousness, he paid our debt of duty, and by suffering the punishment due to transgressors, he paid our debt of penalty.—We may also, 2. infer, That as he that is circumcised, is bound to keep the whole law; so he that is baptized, is obliged to obey all the commands of the gospel, to make conscience of the duties of both tables, as an argument of his sincerity, and as an ornament to his profession.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Here another argument is used, to shew that believers are dead to the ceremonial law, and are by no means to expect justification by it: *Whosoever of you*, says the apostle, *is justified by the law*, that is, whoever seeks and endeavours to be so justified, (for in reality none can in that manner be justified,) *Christ is become of no effect*, unto such persons; that is, they renounce Christ, and disclaim benefit by his death: And they are fallen from grace; that is, fallen from Christianity, and the covenant of grace; they have forfeited the grace of the gospel, by cleaving to the ceremonial law; they are fallen from the doctrine of grace delivered in the gospel,

and Christ is become of no effect unto them. Learn from hence, That such persons as do believe that faith in Christ alone is not sufficient to justification and acceptance with God, without the observation of the abrogated law, do in effect disown their relation to Christ, and disclaim all benefit by his death; *Christ is become of none effect, &c.*

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

That is, "We Christians, we believers, through the Spirit which we have received, and not by legal observances, do hope both for such a righteousness as will denominate and constitute us righteous in the sight of God, and also for the crown of righteousness in heaven, which now we wait and hope for here on earth." Note, 1. That a believer does not value himself by what he has in hand, but by what he has in hope; his riches are not so much in present possession, as in future expectation: *We wait for the hope*; that is, for heaven, the good hoped for. Note, 2. That none have either a right to heaven, or can warrantably expect the enjoyments of heaven, who are destitute of righteousness; heaven is here called the *hope of righteousness*, that is, the rational hope and expectation of righteous persons only. Note, 3. That it is a righteousness made ours by faith, even the righteousness of the Mediator, which gives us the best title to, and the firmest ground to hope and wait for, the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. Note, 4. That it is the special work of the holy Spirit, to produce in us the graces of the Spirit, both faith and hope; faith to enable us to apprehend, and hope to enable us to wait for the crown of righteousness, even eternal glory: "We through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

In Christ Jesus, that is, in the economy of Christ Jesus, under the gospel dispensation, in our state of Christianity, since Christ's manifestation in the flesh, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing" with God, as to our acceptance with him, or reward from him: But the qualification now necessary to salvation under the gospel, is faith working by love; that is, such an effectual belief of future happiness purchased for us, and promised to us by Christ, as causes us to love and serve him, to trust in, and depend upon him for the same. Learn, 1. That although circumcision, and the rest of the Levitical ceremonies were once enjoined by God, and practised by the Jews as an acceptable service, and the neglect or contempt of them was a moral sin; yet since Christ's coming in the flesh, who was the substance of all those shadows, the command whereby they were enjoined did cease, and "neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision avail any thing" to salvation. Learn, 2. That though the ceremonial law be abolished, yet a believer under the gospel has work to do, a work of faith, and labour of love; for though faith alone justifieth us before God, yet it is not alone in the heart when it doth justify, but is always accompanied with the grace of love to God and our neighbour: *For in Christ Jesus, no faith availeth any thing, but that which worketh by love.*

7 Ye did run well: who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?

Ye did run well: that is, in the race of Christianity; you set out well at first, and received the gospel in the plainness and simplicity of it, without any mixture of Jewish ceremonies: What hindered you? Who stopt you? Who drove you back from your belief of, and obedience to, the truth of the gospel, which you then received from me? Here note, 1. With what holy wisdom our apostle mixes commendations with his reproofs: At the same time that he reproves them for their present backsliding, he commends them for their former forwardness: *Ye did run well.* Note, 2. That ordinarily a Christian's first ways are his best ways, his first fruits his fairest fruits: "Jeoshaphat walked in the first ways of David his father," 2. Chron. xvii. 3. Commonly young converts are carried out with a greater measure of affection and zeal, and make a swifter progress in religion, than others do, at first, or they themselves do afterwards, when they are of older standing. These Galatians did run, yea, did run very well, at first, in the race of Christianity: Note, 3. That when a person's or a people's progress in Christianity is not answerable to their hopeful beginnings, it is matter of regret and grief to all beholders, as well as matter of reproach and shame to the persons themselves; *Ye did run well, who did hinder you?* Intimating, that this their defection and apostacy was no less matter of astonishment to St. Paul, than it was of rebuke and reproach to them.

8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

As if the apostle had said, "This Judaizing opinion and practice of yours, this persuasion of the necessity of your being circumcised, and obeying the law of Moses, this new doctrine, so contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and the design of Christianity was never taught you either by God or myself, or any other faithful minister of Jesus Christ, who first converted you to the faith; but it is a mere delusion of Satan, and his emissaries the false apostles: And do not think this a small matter; let not circumcision seem a little thing to you; and let not these judaizing teachers be disregarded by you as inconsiderable, because they are few in number, for they are like to leaven; and ye know very well that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; intimating, that a few false teachers, and a little of error and false doctrine, crept into the congregation and church of Christ, may do unspeakable mischief, by speedily infecting the whole church, as a little leaven (to which error is compared) leaveneth the whole lump."

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's holy confidence, grounded upon charity, that through the Lord, that is, through the

Lord's assisting his endeavours, and through the Lord's blessing upon their serious consideration of what he had written to them, they would be reclaimed from their errors, and brought to be of the same mind with himself. Where note, How the holy and zealous apostle was divided betwixt hope and fear concerning these men; he feared the worst of these Galatians, and yet hoped the best; "I have confidence in you through the Lord." It is a fault in the ministers of the gospel, when they despair of men too soon, when they cease or slacken their endeavours for their people's good, looking upon them as resolutely bent upon, and judiciously given up unto all evil. Though our apostle here had not a confidence of faith, or full persuasion, yet he had a confidence of charity, which caused him to hope that they would be like-minded with himself: "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be no otherwise minded." Observe, 2. With what a holy caution, as well as Christian prudence and charity, our apostle applies himself unto them; declaring that though he hoped they might be reclaimed from their error, yet lest they should conclude their error not to be very dangerous, he shews them his just indignation against it, by denouncing deserved punishments against those that seduced them into it: "He that troubleth you, shall bear his own judgment," his condemnation due to him in hell without repentance, which is supposed in all threatenings. For the condition of conditional threatenings, though it is not always expressed, yet it is to be understood. Observe, 3. The universality of the threatening; "He shall bear his own judgment whosoever he be; let him be who he will or what he will; who he will for abilities and parts, what he will for power or reputation; whoever he is, or whatsoever he be, he shall bear his judgment. Such is the exact justice of God, and such his impartiality in the exercise of it, that he will suffer no impatient transgressor to escape his indignation, whoever he is, without respect of persons; "He that troubleth you, shall bear his own judgment, whosoever he be."

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Our apostle, in these words, signifies to us, that some of the Judaizing teachers had suggested to the Galatians, as if he himself had preached elsewhere the doctrine of circumcision, and also practised the duty of circumcision (by circumcising Timothy) which here he opposes; "True, he did circumcise Timothy, but it was only to avoid offending the weak Jews, not out of any opinion which he had touching the necessity of circumcision: Therefore, to discover to them the falsehood of that suggestion, he declares, that if he would have preached circumcision, he might have escaped persecution; the Jews were his persecutors, looking upon him as an apostate from their holy religion, for preaching up the abolishment of the Mosaic law. Where observe, That the Jews, who looked upon themselves to be the people, yea, the peculiar and only people of God, and accounted all others contemptible and profane, were yet far greater persecutors of Christ and his apostles, than the blind and barbarous heathen; and all this out of zeal for God and his law: "Why do I yet suffer persecution?" implying, that the Jews did

persecute him, and that his not preaching circumcision, was the cause why they did so. He adds, "Then is the offence of the cross ceased." By the cross, may be understood, either, 1. The doctrine of the cross; the doctrine of the gospel; and then the sense is, the Jews would not have taken such offence at my preaching the gospel, as they do, were it not because by it, circumcision and the whole frame of the old legal administration are laid aside: Or else, 2. By the cross, may be understood the afflictions and sufferings which he underwent for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; and the sense then is this: Verily, all my sufferings had long since been at an end, would I but have yielded the Jews this point, that "Christians are obliged to circumcision, and to yield obedience to the law of Moses:" would I grant them this, my sufferings would soon be at an end: but my daily persecutions are evident demonstrations that I do not preach up circumcision; for had I so done, the offence of the cross had long since ceased. Learn hence, That the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ will not, dare not, conceal any part of the necessary truth, when the imminent hazard of people's salvation calls for the preaching of it, though the embittered enemies of religion should raise against them the fiercest persecutions for the same: "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?"

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

The apostle's meaning is, "That it were very fit, were it seasonable; that those which had thus seduced them, should be excommunicated and cut off from the church's communion." Where note, 1. How implicitly and interpretatively St. Paul compares these seducers to rotten members, which are and ought to be cut off, lest the gangrene overspread the whole body; *I would they were cut off*; implying, that like rotten members they deserved it, and the church's safety called for it, would her then circumstances admit of it. Note, 2. That in the very expression here used by St. Paul, of *cutting off*, there seems to be an allusion to the practice of circumcision, which is a cutting off the fore-skin of the flesh, and throwing it away. Now, says the apostle, I wish that these Judaizing teachers, that urge you to be circumcised; that is, to cut off and cast away the fore-skin of your flesh, I wish that they might be cut off as superfluous flesh, and cast out of the fellowship and communion of the church. Yet note, 3. The apostle doth rather declare what such seducers deserve, than actually inflict the censure itself; he satisfieth himself, with an affectionate wish, lest the number of the seduced being great, and perhaps the seducers not a few, they should be hardened rather than reformed, and the ordinance itself exposed; "I would they were even cut off, &c."

13 ¶ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Our apostle having finished the former part of the chapter, which contains an exhortation "to stand fast in that liberty which Christ had purchased for them;" he now enters upon the second part of it, namely, to caution them against abusing of their Christian liberty, and by no means to apprehend or

suppose as if they were thereby freed from all obligation to serve God or man, in the duties particularly required of them. Brethren, says he, *ye are called unto liberty*; that is, to the enjoyment of evangelical liberty, which consists in a freedom from the obligation of the ceremonial law, and the curse of the moral law: Use it then so as not to abuse it; use it neither to sin nor scandal; not to sin, to allow yourselves the least liberty in indulging any carnal lust, or sinful affection, nor yet to scandalize the weak, who at present scruple the forsaking of circumcision, and the rest of the ceremonial rites; "Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but in love to serve one another." Learn hence, 1. That our liberty and freedom, purchased for us by Christ, doth not dissolve any tie or obligation which we lie under, either to God or man; the yoke of duty is very consistent with our Christian liberty. Learn, 2. That one of the great occasions of the sins we commit in the course of our lives, is the too free use of our Christian liberty. The using our liberty to the utmost pitch and extent of that which we call lawful, is the occasion of our running into that which is certainly sinful. Religion certainly allows us all reasonable liberty in the gratification of our natural appetites and passions; but all excesses and immoderate liberties are forbidden by religion. And accordingly, one good rule for securing ourselves from falling into sin, in the using our Christian liberty, is this, namely, That in matters of duty, we should rather do too much, than too little: But in matters of indifferency, we should rather take too little of our liberty than too much. For instance, prayer and almsgiving are indispensable duties; but how oft we should pray, and how much we should give, is not positively declared; in this case, to pray very frequently, and to give alms very liberally and largely, is our wisdom and duty; no damage will come by doing too much, but both damage and danger will accrue by doing too little. Learn, 3. That it is not sufficient, in order to the right use of our christian liberty, that we do not from thence take occasion to sin ourselves; but we ought to take care, lest by any indiscreet use of our own liberty, we give offence, and minister occasion of sin and stumbling unto others. This truth is implied in the second injunction, *By love serve one another*.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Here our apostle enforces the foregoing exhortation to love and serve one another, with a forcible argument or motive, namely, because love is the fulfilling of the law; that is, 1. It is the fulfilling of that part of the law which relates to our neighbour; all the moral law respecting our neighbour is fulfilled in that one word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Or, 2. Love may be said to be the fulfilling of the law in general; for true and regular love to our neighbour supposes our love to God, springeth from it, and is an evidence of it; yea, the love of our neighbour is the perfecting and completing of our love to God, 1 John iv. 12. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfect in us." Learn, That as love is a very comprehensive duty, comprising the inward affection as well as the outward action, so the word *neighbour* is of a very extensive consideration, and includes all persons, friend and foe, rich and poor, near and afar off; all that partake of humanity must

be sharers in our charity: Our inward affection and goodwill must extend to all, though the outward expressions of it can reach but a very few. Thus the law is fulfilled in one word, when we love our neighbour as ourselves; not as we do (often) love ourselves, but as we should love ourselves, namely, with a wise and well-guided love.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The apostle, to enforce the foregoing exhortation to mutual love, urges here the dangerous effects which their animosities and strifes, with their controversies and contentions, would most certainly produce: By biting one another, says he, ye will destroy and consume one another; where it deserves a serious remark, that St. Paul compares the enmities and animosities which were amongst them, upon the score of their differences in religion, to the bitings, rendings, and devourings, of wild beasts. *If ye bite and devour one another; and give them timely notice of the fatal mischiefs and consequences that will follow thereupon, namely, a total devastation and inevitable consumption of the whole church, Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* It is a true saying, *Odia religionum sunt acerbissima*; there is no such bitter hatred amongst men as upon the score of religion: as the zeal of the Jews would not suffer an uncircumcised person to live amongst them, so probably the zealous Judaizers in Galatia, would not suffer those who had cast off legal observances, to live quietly and peaceably by them; which might give occasion to these words of the apostle. *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.* Learn hence, 1. That there have been, are, and will be differences about matters of religion, in the best and purest churches here on earth. Learn, 2. That these differences may and ought to be managed with great temper and charity. Learn, 3. That then contentions are highly uncharitable, and very sinful, when men *bite and devour one another*. Learn, 4. That such uncharitable contentions do prepare and make ready a people for utter destruction, *If ye bite, &c.*

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

“To prevent the forementioned evils, as if the apostle had said, I advise and exhort you to walk in the spirit, that is according to the guidance and direction, according to the influence and motion, of the Holy Spirit speaking to you, in his word, and then you never will fulfil the lusts of the flesh; that is, you will never accomplish and bring into complete act (especially with deliberation and consent (the inordinate motions of corrupt nature.” Learn hence, That the more Christians set themselves to obey the new nature, and follow the motions of the Spirit of grace, the more will the power of indwelling sin and inbred corruption be mortified and kept under. This expression, *Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, may be thought to import and imply these two things: 1. That an inward principle of grace in the heart, will give a check to sin in its first motions, and cause it oft times to miscarry in the womb, like an untimely birth, before it comes to its full maturity: It shall never gain

the full consent of a gracious person's will, as it doth of an unregenerate person. 2. But if, notwithstanding all the opposition grace makes to hinder the production of sin, if it doth break forth into act, such acts of sin are not committed without reluctance and regret, and are followed with shame and sorrow; yea those very surprisals and captivities of sin at one time, are made cautions and warning to prevent it at another time: And thus they that *walk in the Spirit, do not fulfil the lust of the flesh*.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These words are brought in as a special reason, why Christians should walk in the Spirit, that is, after the motions and guidances of God's Holy Spirit; because otherwise, the flesh will quickly prevail over them; for the flesh is continually lust-ing against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; that is, the evil inclinations of corrupt nature are continually struggling with, and striving against the good motions which the Holy Spirit of God stirreth up in us: And in like manner, the Spirit, or renewed nature, opposeth the motions of corrupt nature. For these two principles are contrary the one to the other; so that ye who are led by the Spirit, cannot act (with deliberation and consent) according to the flesh, nor can they that are led by the flesh, do the things which delight the Spirit. Learn hence, 1. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian, flesh, and Spirit, there is a good principle, called Spirit, because the Spirit of God is the author of it; and a bad principle in us, which is called flesh, by which we are inclined to that which is evil. This is called flesh, to denote its intimacy with us; it is as dear to us as our flesh, to denote its dearthness to us; it is as dear to us as our own flesh, as dear as a right-hand or right-eye; and, to denote its continuance with us, as long as we carry flesh about us, so long will this principle of corrupt nature remain in us, and continue with us. Learn, 2. That the motions and inclinations in our nature to sin, do ever conflict and combat with, oppose and war against, the motions of God's Holy Spirit, exciting and inclining us to good: Though contraries cannot be together in the same subject in an intense, yet they may be together in a remiss degree. Learn, 3. The consequence and issue of this combat, *we cannot do the things that we would*, nor any thing as we would; we cannot perform any holy duty perfectly in this life. As soon may an imperfect father beget a perfect child, as we in our state of imperfection perform any duty free from sin. O what need, what great need then, have the best of saints, of the mediation and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they present any performed duty unto God! And what need also to watch our own hearts, when we are upon our knees, to fortify them against the incursions and disturbances of the flesh; seeing after all our care and vigilance in duty, we can none of us do the things that we would, nor any thing as we would!

18 But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

That is, if ye be under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit of God, and that renewing principle of grace which he has produced in you, you are no longer under the law; that is, not under the moral law as a covenant of life for our justification, though under it as an eternal rule of living; not under the vindictive, though under the directive power of the law. So that the force of the apostle's argument seems to lie thus: "You are by the Spirit, by the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, free from the curse and terror of the moral law; how unreasonable then is it to suppose that you should be still subject to the ceremonial law? No; if you be led by the Spirit, neither the moral law shall condemn you, nor the ceremonial law oblige and bind you."

19 ¶ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, exhorted the Galatians to walk in the Spirit, to be led and guided by the Spirit, and by no means to obey or fulfil the lusts of the flesh; he comes in these and the following verses, to discover how they might with certainty and assurance, know whether they were spiritual or carnal, whether the Spirit or the flesh had a prevalency in them, or dominion over them: Accordingly, he describes particularly the flesh and the Spirit, by their various and different effects, and gives us a catalogue of the one and the other; he reckons up no fewer than seventeen works of the flesh, all which, yea, any of which, continued in, and unrepented of, are damnable; after this, he enumerates nine special and gracious fruits of the Spirit, which qualify us for, and entitle us to the kingdom of heaven; *The works of the flesh are manifest, &c.* Here observe, 1. That sin is called a *work*, thereby intimating to us the labour and toil, the drudgery and pains, which sinners meet with in a sinful course: The ways of sin are very toilsome, although in their issue very unfruitful; sin is no pleasurable service, but a laborious servitude. Observe, 2. The apostle calls sin by the name of works, in the plural number, *the works of the flesh*; intimating, that sin never goes single, but has a dangerous train and retinue: He that yields himself a servant to one sin, shall soon find himself a slave to many. Observe, 3. That sin is called a *work of the flesh*, because most sins are committed by the flesh; the body is the soul's instrument, as well in the work of sin, as in the service of Christ: and the flesh is the object, about which these works are conversant, as well as the organ and instrument by which they are committed. Observe, 4. These works of the

flesh are here said to be manifest: But how so? First, They are most of them manifestly condemned by the light of nature; a natural conscience in men startles at them at first, till by custom and frequent practice they become habitual and natural to them. Secondly, they are all of them manifest by the light of scripture; the word of God, which is in all our hands, condemns all these works of the flesh to the pit of hell. Observe, 5. The particular enumeration of the works of the flesh, here made by the apostle; *adultery*, or the defiling our neighbour's bed; *fornication*, or the unlawful mixture of single persons one with another; *uncleanness*, under which is comprehended all sorts of filthiness, and filthy lusts, whether natural or unnatural; *lasciviousness*, by which is meant all wanton behaviour, either in speech or action, tending to excite filthy desires, either in themselves or others; *idolatry*, whereby God is represented to corporeal eyes by pictures and images, and so brought down to human senses; properly, therefore, is idolatry, as such, called here a work of the flesh: Again, *witchcraft*, a devilish art, whereby some men and women, having made a compact with the devil, either expressly or implicitly, are enabled, with God's permission, and by the assistance of Satan, to produce effects beyond the ordinary course and order of nature, and these for the most part rather mischievous to others than beneficial to themselves; *hatred*, or a secret enmity in our hearts against our neighbour, either for real or apprehended injuries; *variance*, or outward contention by words or actions, arising from the forementioned enmity in the heart; *emulations*, or an inward grief or displeasure at some good in others, or done by others, which eclipses and overshadow us; *wrath*, or violent anger, and immoderate passion, depriving a man for the time of his reason, and transforming him into a beast; *strife*, or a litigious spirit, a continual proneness to quarrelling and contending; *seditions*; or rending of societies into factions, and dividing communities into parties; which dividing work, when it falls out in the state, is called sedition; when in the church, by the name of schism; *heresies*, or dangerous errors in the fundamental points of religion; not arising purely from mistakes of judgment, but from the espousing of false doctrines out of disgust or pride, or from worldly principles, to avoid persecution or trouble in the flesh; these may well be accounted carnal lusts, and called works of the flesh, although they be mental errors, and their first seat is in the understanding and judgment: *envyings*, a pestilent lust, which makes another's good our grief; our eyes smart at the sight of what another enjoys, though we have never the less, because another has more *murders*, that is, the executing of private revenge, by shedding of blood, and taking away our neighbour's life unjustly; *drunkenness*, *revellings*, the one is intemperance in drinking, the other an excess in eating; all sinful abuse of the creatures of God, which he has given, not barely for necessity, but delight, is censured here as a work of the flesh. Observe, 6. The solemn warning which the apostle gives the Galatians to watch against all these sins, and not indulge or allow themselves in the wilful commission of any one of them: *I tell you*, says he, *that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, but be eternally banished from him. Now from the whole, learn, 1. That the ministers of the gospel must not satisfy themselves barely to reprove and condemn sin in general, but must descend to particulars; though invectives against sin, at large, are of good use to expose the deformity of sin, yet, in order to the awakening of particular sinners, we

must take into our consideration their particular sins, and endeavour to convince them of them, and turn them from them; so doth our apostle here, in the foregoing catalogue of vices. **Learn, 2.** That the members of Christ must acquaint their people, not only with the danger of allowing themselves in the grosser acts of sin, as adultery, fornication, drunkenness, and revellings, and such like, but also with the danger of indulging themselves in secret sins, heart sins, sins which the eye of the world can never accuse them of, but God will condemn them for; such are hatred, emulation, envy, &c. not only the outward act of sin, but the inward desire, is dangerous and damning. It is easy for a man to murder his neighbour, in the account of God, by a secret wish, and a passionate desire; he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and he that looks upon a woman unduly, is an adulterer in the sight of God. **Learn, 3.** That the ministers of Christ can never often enough warn sinners of the danger of sin, and continuance in it; we must do it over and over again; every sabbath, and every sermon, must ring a peal in the sinner's ears, of the fatal danger of a resolute impiety: Thus here, *I tell you now, as I told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit, &c.*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Observe here, **1.** That the apostle, who called *sin* the work of the flesh, doth here call *grace* the fruit of the Spirit. Sin is a work of our own; it proceeds wholly from ourselves, our own depraved minds and wills, without the least co-operation of the Holy Spirit; he can neither be the author nor abettor of any thing that is evil. All sinful works are works of the flesh, and therefore our own works: but all graces accompanying salvation, are the fruit of God's Spirit: both because he is the author of them, and also, because they are so acceptable and pleasing unto him, even as fruit is unto our taste, and likewise so profitable and advantageous to ourselves. Where the flesh ruleth, there the work exceeds the fruit; and accordingly, without any mentioning of the fruit, they are called works of the flesh; but where the Spirit of God ruleth, there the fruit exceeds the work; and therefore, without ever mentioning the work, it is called the fruit of the Spirit. **Observe, 2.** That the works of the flesh are spoken of as many; but the fruit of the Spirit is spoken of as one, many works, but one fruit. There is such a connection and concatenation of graces, that although they are distinct in their natures, yet are they inseparable in their subject, pull one link of a chain, and you pull all: so he that has any one spiritual grace in reality, or at least in eminency, cannot be utterly destitute of any other; for where the Holy Spirit is, there cannot be a total defect of any holy grace. **Observe, 3.** That the works of the flesh are said to be manifest, ver. 19; but no such thing is here affirmed of the fruit of the Spirit. Alas! God knows, the works of the flesh are but every where too manifest; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, do so abound in all places, that you can scarce look beside them: But the fruits of the Spirit are not so; love, peace, gentleness, meekness, these are very thin in the world; hips and haws grow in every hedge, when choicer

fruits are but in some few gardens. Observe, **4.** How St. Paul enumerates here nine special fruits of the Spirit; not as if there were more, but because these here mentioned stand in a direct opposition to the former vices recited in the foregoing verses. The first sweet fruit of the Spirit, taken notice of here by the apostle, is *love*; an holy affection in the soul, whereby a person is carried forth to love God, primarily and chiefly for himself, and his neighbour for God's sake: *Joy*, delight in doing our duty, and rejoicing in the expectation of the reward for well-doing: *Peace*, inward peace with God and conscience, and outward peace with one another: *Long-suffering*, an inclination of mind disposing us to bear injuries patiently, and to forgive them readily: *Gentleness*, or affability and courtesy in conversation, a sweetness of temper, which renders us greatly useful, as well as exceedingly delightful to mankind: *Goodness*, a disposition inclining us to communicate what we have and are to others, and to do all the possible good we can in our respective places and stations: *Faith*, or fidelity towards men, in our promises, and in all our actions, speaking exact truth: *Meekness*, this is threefold, a natural meekness, which is the product of the temperament of the humours in the body, a rare felicity; there is also a moral meekness, which is the product of education and counsel, this is an amiable virtue; and there is a spiritual meekness that orders the persons according to the divine rule, the holy law of God; this a noble and divine grace, which attracts the estimation of God, and the admiration of men: *Temperance*, a sober use of meat, drink, and every thing wherein our senses are gratified or delighted. **Observe, 5.** A special privilege belonging to all those who are possessed of the forementioned fruits of the Spirit, and that is, exemption from the law: *Against such there is no law*; that is, no law to compel, no law to accuse or condemn them; for the law enjoins them, and encourages the practise and performance of them. **Learn hence, 1.** That the best, yea, the only way to have the fruits of the Spirit thrive in our hearts, is first to mortify the works of the flesh; weeds and thistles must be rooted up before grain can grow or thrive. As the corruption of one form is the production of another, so the mortification of sin makes way for the plantation of the fruits of the Spirit. **Learn, 2.** That moral virtues are the fruits of the Spirit, and commence Christian graces when they are acted by faith in Christ, influenced by love unto him, and aiming at the highest of ends, the glory of God and our salvation. **Learn, 3.** That if we compare the fruits of the Spirit with the works of the flesh, there will appear so much beauty in the one; and such real deformity in the other, so much satisfaction in the one, and such disquiet and vexation in the other, that besides the difference between them in their original and event, the former considerations are abundantly sufficient to engage our love to the fruits of the Spirit, and to excite our hatred to the works of the flesh.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

They that are Christ's, that is, they that are truly his followers, and sincere disciples, they have crucified, that is, subdued, and in some degree mortified and put to death their fleshly corruptions, their carnal lusts and sinful affections and passions. They did, by baptism, engage themselves to die unto sin; and the regenerate have done it in

some measure; they *have crucified the flesh*: Yet we must not understand this of a total, plenary, and final crucifixion, but incohabitive only; and they are said to have done it, because they are daily doing of it, in *proposito, voto, et conatu*, in resolution, in desire, and endeavour. And by *affections*, we are not to understand natural, but inordinate affections; and by crucifixion, is not to be understood a total extinction of sin, but a deposing of it from its regency and dominion in the soul of the sinner; yet as death surely, though slowly, follows crucifixion, so likewise doth sin live in the believer a dying life, and dies a lingering, but a certain death; *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*. Learn hence, 1. That there are a peculiar people which are Christ's, that have special interest in him, union and communion with him; *they that are Christ's*, not by an external profession only, but by an internal implantation into him by faith. Learn, 2. That all such as thus have an interest in Christ, are daily crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. The death of sin, is here compared to our Saviour's crucifixion: 1. To shew the conformity there is betwixt the death of sin, and the death of Christ. Did Christ die a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed death? So dies sin in the soul of a believer. There is a gradual weakening of the power of sin in him; sin is dying, as he, but it is a long time a dying. 2. To denote the principal mean and instrument of our mortification, namely, the death of Christ; by virtue whereof, believers do crucify their corrupt affections; the great arguments to mortification being drawn from the sufferings of Christ for sin. Learn, 3. That the work of mortification (called here, tropically, a crucifixion) strikes not only at all sin, but at the root of all sin; it spares none, neither the flesh nor any of its affections and lusts do escape: root and branches, head and members, the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, and the axe of mortification laid to the root of every sin and sinful affection. In this manner, do they that are Christ's crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

If we live in the Spirit; that is, if the Spirit lives in us, if the Holy Spirit of grace be the principle of our life, *let us walk in the Spirit*; that is, let us live and act under the conduct and guidance, under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit; let us do the works of the Spirit, let us bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and let us live a spiritual life; let our dealings be about spiritual and heavenly things, and our chiefest delight be in such things; and by these spiritual delights and exercises we shall every day become more and more spiritual, and in the account of God be esteemed and reckoned amongst the number of those that walk in the Spirit. Let us then evidence the life of grace in ourselves, by exercising that grace in the life of communion with God: This seems to be the importance of this remarkable place, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*. Here we may note, 1. That there must be a principle of spiritual life, before there can be any spiritual motion and exercise; we must first live in the Spirit, and the Spirit live in us, before we can possibly walk in the Spirit: the child must live before it can walk. Note, 2. That where there is a principle of grace and spiritual life in the heart, there will be the actings and exercise of grace in the life;

If we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes*. An holy heart will be attended with an holy life, and a good conscience accompanied with a good conversation; spiritual life will produce spiritual motion.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Our apostle closes this excellent chapter with an exhortation to the Galatians to avoid all pride and ambition, all vain-glorious boastings and ostentation, not provoking one another by their contentions, not envying either the gifts or graces of God bestowed on others. Learn hence, 1. That there is and may be in all men, a desire of applause and just commendation: All men pretend to a share in reputation, and not love to see it monopolized and ingrossed by any person. Learn, 2. That a vain-glorious desire of applause and reputation is sinful, when we seek what we do not deserve, or for more than we deserve, or seek more to be applauded by men, than to be approved by God. Learn, 3. That ambition is usually attended with envy and contention; no sin goes single, but has a train of followers; *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another*.

CHAP. VI.

Our apostle being now come to the concluding chapter of this excellent epistle to the Galatians, exhorts them to the practise of several important duties, in order to an holy life, which was so necessary to evidence the truth of their conversion to Christianity; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn protestation of his sincere affection towards them.

BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The first exhortation here given, is, how they should carry themselves one towards another, upon supposition of their scandalous falling either into error, or into sin, namely, not with rigour and severity, but with mildness and lenity: *If any be overtaken in a fault, &c.* Here note, 1. An evil supposed, namely, that the wisest, the holiest, and the best of men may be overtaken in a fault, and surprised by a temptation: *If any man be overtaken*; implying that any be so: that sin, or that misery, which befalls some men, may befall others, any others, yea, all others: for all are partakers of the same frail nature, subject to the working of the same corruption, and liable to the danger of the same temptation. Note, 2. The duty directed to, with relation to these persons, who trip and fall either into sin, or into error, restore him, set him right, put him in joint again; a metaphor taken from bone-setters, who place dislocated bones and set broken bones, with great tenderness; Those three things, which we may say are necessary in a bone-setter, are absolutely needful in a reprover; namely, an eagle's eye, to discern where the fault lies; a lion's heart, to deal faithfully and freely with the faults; and a lady's hand, to use them gently and tenderly. Note, 3. The persons

particularly named, who are and ought to manage this duty of brotherly reproof, *ye that are spiritual* : you that are the governors of the church, say some ; you that are endowed with spiritual gifts, say others ; the prophets among you, who perform all spiritual offices for you, let them rebuke offenders. Others, by *spiritual*, understand such as had received larger measures of the gifts and graces of the Spirit than others : *Let such as are strong bear with the infirmities of the weak*. Note, 4. The manner how this duty of fraternal corruption, or brotherly reproof is, and ought to be managed, namely, with patience and meekness, not with severity and roughness ; *Ye that are spiritual restore him in the spirit of meekness* ; if the proofs you give others be imbittered with your own passions, they will spit them out of their mouths ; yea, spit them back upon your very faces. Note, 5. The argument to excite to all this ; namely, the consideration of your own personal frailty, and great liableness to fall into temptation ourselves, considering *thyself, lest thou also be tempted* : Who knows what a feather the strongest saint and stoutest Christian may prove in the wind of temptation ? Therefore, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, and exercise great candour and Christian tenderness towards them that are fallen before him. *Hodie, mihi, cras tibi*. From the whole learn, 1. That fraternal corruption, or brotherly reproof, is a great duty which Christians mutually owe to one another, when they either run into error, or fall into sin : *If any of you be overtaken, restore him*. Learn, 2. That although it be the duty of private Christians, to admonish and reprove one another, as being members one of another, yet those that are spiritual, Christ's ministers, the guides of his church, the stewards of his household, ought in special to look upon it as their obliged duty to reprove and rebuke with a long-suffering and gentleness. Learn, 3. That rigour and severity, expressed towards the failings and escapes of others, will rather exasperate than reclaim them : we must deal as gently with a fallen brother, as with a broken bone ; if we do not temper our reproofs with meekness, they will certainly prove successful. Learn, 4. That the holiest saint and most spiritual man, here on earth, is within the reach of temptation, and may possibly fall himself ; therefore ought to treat a fallen brother with great tenderness and regard.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

This is a general precept, and requires us to sympathize with our brethren in all their sorrows and sufferings, and to bear a part with them under the load and burden of oppressive wants and necessities ; particularly, bearing with the weaknesses and infirmities of our brethren, seems here to be recommended to our care and practice in the apostolical injunction. *Bear ye, one another's burdens*. The encouragement to which duty follows, *so shall we fill the law of Christ* ; that is, the law of love, the moral law, which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves. But why is this called the law of Christ, when it was long before Christ ; yea, before Moses, and as old as Adam himself, being part of the law of nature, which was written in Adam's heart before there was any written bible ? I answer, the law of love is very properly called the law of Christ ; because he revived it, rescued it, recommended and enforced it, fre-

quently urged it upon his followers, and exemplified it in his own life and conversation, therefore called a *new commandment, and his commandment* ; *This is my commandment, &c. A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another*. St. John xiii. 34. (See the note there.) Learn hence, 1. That to have our ear, our heart, and our hand open to our brethren in distress, is a necessary Christian duty : 'Our ear open to their mournful complaints, our heart open to sympathize with their necessities and wants. This is a burden which the law of Christ has laid upon us. *Bear ye one another's burdens*. Learn, 2. To bear a part of our brethren's burdens with a compassionate heart, and helping hand, is a fulfilling of the law of Christ ; because much love, which is the fulfilling of the law, goes out, and is acted in the bearing of it ; *so faithful the law of Christ*.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

The apostle is still directing the Galatians, and enforcing them to express great lenity and tenderness towards such of their brethren as had fallen into sin and error, and particularly cautions them, 1. To beware of the sin of pride and self-conceit, and to abound in the grace of humility and modesty : intimating to us that pride, and an high opinion of ourselves, are the certain causes of censoriousness and rash judging of others, and the true reason why we despise and glory over an offending brother, instead of pitying of him, sympathizing with him, and endeavouring to restore him : *He that thinks himself to be something here*, is the man that hath proud thoughts of himself, who thinks himself more righteous and holy, more steady and steadfast, than his fallen brother ; and conceits he has more power to preserve himself than others ; such an one thinks himself to be some great thing ; when, alas ! every man is nothing ; and the best of men having nothing but what the grace of God confers upon them, 2. Cor. xii. 11. Observe, 2. How the apostle strikes at the root of the forementioned sin of pride and self-conceit ; namely, the comparing themselves with those who are worse than themselves, which is very apt to stir up pride and arrogance ; to cure which he directs them to compare themselves with those who are better than themselves, and to try and prove their own works by the rule of the word of God ; and not by the example and practice of others ; and so shall they find matter of rejoicing in themselves, in the testimony of God, and the silent applause of their own consciences, without borrowing matter of rejoicing from the failings and infirmities of other persons. Observe, 3. The argument or motive used by the apostle to enforce upon every man the duty of trying his own work, rather than to be prying into the infirmities of others ; because when he cometh to judgment, every man must bear *his own burden*, or give an account of himself and his own actions

to God: who will then absolve or condemn men, not as they have done better or worse than others, but as they shall be then found in themselves, absolutely considered. It is a great error for any man to measure himself by the measures of other men, either by their perfections, or by their imperfections. To conclude our estate safe, because we are not so bad as others, or un-*safe*, because we have not attained to the perfections of others, is alike dangerous; God will not proceed by this rule, no more should we: every man that appears before him, shall *bear his own burden*, and answer for his own sins. Here note, 1. That how light soever men make of sin in the commission of it, it will be found heavy and burdensome when they come before God to account for it: *He shall bear his own burden*. Note, 2. That the righteous God, in the great judgment, will call no man to account for the sins of others, unless he has some ways been accessory to them; but *every one shall bear his own burden*, both of guilt and punishment.

6 ¶ Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.

In this and the following verses, our apostle enters upon a new exhortation, and that is, to stir up the Galatians to liberality and beneficence, upon every fitting occasion, to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and to do good unto all men. And because it is highly probable, that by reason of the prevalency of error amongst them, and the number of false teachers found with them, that the Galatians' love to the word, and to the ministers and dispensers of it, was grown cold; he first begins to stir up their liberality towards their teachers, saying, *Let him that is taught in the word of the gospel, communicate unto him that teacheth*, in all such good things as he stands in need of. Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God hath seen it fit to teach men by the ministry of man, not by his own immediate voice; this we cannot bear: nor by the glorious angels, these would terrify rather than teach us; but by men like ourselves doth the great God instruct us: He has appointed some to teach, and obliged others to be taught; but the pride of man is grown to that pitch in our days, that almost every one thinks himself sufficient to teach, and few have humility enough to be taught. Learn, 2. That it is the special duty of ministers, not only to teach, but to teach the word: *Let him that is taught in the word*, that is the written word, as dictated by the Holy Ghost, *communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things*. Our business is not to go into the pulpit, and read a lecture to our people out of Aristotle's ethics, or Seneca's morals, much less to load them with the burden of unwritten traditions, but to make known a crucified Saviour to them, and the way to eternal salvation by him. Learn, 3. That seeing the ministers of Christ are to give themselves wholly to the work of teaching, &c. without being entangled with the affairs of this life; the people whom they teach, and amongst whom they spend their time and strength, are obliged, by common equity, as well as by the command of God, to allow them a comfortable subsistence; and, if able, an honourable maintenance. *Let him that is taught, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things*. Learn, 4. That the church maintenance, is only due to such ministers as are apt to teach, that labour in the word themselves: None have a right to the church's salary, which do not perform the church's service.

Let such laymen as by their impropriations take away the vicar's bread, and such clergymen as eat the sweat of their curate's brow, consider how they will answer it at the bar of God.

7 Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Here the apostle offers several arguments to consideration, for exciting them to the forementioned duty of liberality and Christian beneficence in general, and to the ministers of the word in particular: and the first of them is taken from God's omniscieny, who takes notice of all the petty and pitiful pretences, pleas, and excuses, which men make, why they cannot be so kind as they would be to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ. Alas! their own wants are many. (but it is their lusts that make them so;) their burdens are great upon them, and they must provide and take care for themselves: But, says the apostle, through you may, with these lying pretences, cheat yourselves, and mock your ministers and poor neighbours, yet God is not, will not, cannot be mocked. There is no juggling with God, no deceiving of his eye; man never deceives himself so much, as when he thinks to deceive God in the least: Man may be mocked and deceived by man, but God can never be mocked by man. Observe, 2. St. Paul compares charity and Christian bounty, to seed sown, and assures us, that the crop we reap shall be answerable, both in quality and kind, and also in measure and degree, to the seed we now sow; *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*. Learn, That every man's harvest hereafter, shall be according to his seed-time here. The actions of this life, are as seed sown for the life to come; if the husbandman sow tares, he must not expect to reap wheat: *For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*. Observe, 3. How the apostle doth amplify in particular, what he had before asserted in general; namely, that such as the seed is, such will the harvest be: he that *soweth to the flesh*, that is, plainly, he that spends his substance upon his lusts, seeking no more than the gratification of his sensual desires, shall reap corruption; that is, a perishing satisfaction only at present, and eternal perdition afterwards: But he that *sows to the Spirit*, he that improves his estate for God, for the support of his gospel, for the sustenance of his members, *shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*. The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up at the great day, and reward our present parting with the things of this world, which we cannot keep, with eternal life, which we shall never lose.

9 ¶ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially

unto them who are of the household of faith.

The holy apostle, in these words, exhorts the Galatians, and in them all Christians, to the practice of one of the most important parts and duties of the Christian religion, namely, that of doing good one to another: And he doth not barely excite us to the duty, but he exhorts us also to an unwearied diligence in the doing of it, according to our ability, and opportunity. In the exhortation before us, observe, 1. The grand comprehensive duty we are exhorted to, *well-doing* and an *unwearied diligence* therein. This comprehends all those ways and means whereby we may be beneficial and useful one to another, both to soul and body, in spiritual and temporal good things, and promote both the present comfort and future happiness of each other. Observe, 2. The extent and latitude of the duty, with respect to its objects, which is all mankind: *Let us do good unto all*. The Galatians were in danger of judaizing in their practice, as well as in their doctrines; that is, of loving none but themselves and their own countrymen: For the Jews were grown so sour and churlish in their temper, that they would not do the least office of kindness to any that was not of their own nation. Therefore, St. Paul here exhorts them to extend their charity universally to all and every one that is of the same nature with themselves. Observe, 3. The special and particular objects of our charity, *the household of faith*: Do good to all, but especially to them. By *the household of faith*, as appears by the context, ver. 6, are primarily meant the ministers of God, the teachers of his word; these are God's domestic servants. Wherever there has been a people, there has been a religion professed, such as it was; wherever there has been a religion professed, there have been persons consecrated and set apart to attend the service of that religion, and a maintenance provided for those attendants; It was so by God's appointment under the law, and by Christ's under the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 14. But farther, by *the household of faith*, we are to understand the whole collective body of believing Christians, all the members of Christ's mystical body; such are very dear to God, and ought to be so to us. Observe, 4. The subjects of this duty, or whom it doth eminently concern, all Christians; *As we have opportunity let us do good*; that is, every one of us; for verily there is no condition in the world so mean and despicable, but it yields persons an opportunity one way or other of doing good, if not by their purse, yet at least by their prayers, and by their example. Observe, 5. The frequency of the duty, *As we have opportunity*: that is, as often as the occasions of doing good are presented to us, and as long as ability for doing good is found with us. Some men defer doing good till they come to die, till they come to make their will, that unwilling will in which they give God a small pittance of his own, because they can keep it no longer: they will repent when they are dying, and be charitable after they are dead. Good God! how unwilling men are to part with either their money or their sins, as long as they can keep them! But verily a death-bed charity may be as unavailable as a death-bed repentance. The rule is, *As we have opportunity*; that is, as often as an opportunity is offered. Let us decline no opportunity by getting out of the way, with some, when a work of charity presents itself unto us. Observe, 6. The measure of this duty, as we have ability *let us do good unto all*; that is, proportionably to what God has given us, let us be willing to give to others: God

could easily level the world, and give every man alike, but he is pleased to give some more than others, on purpose to try their graces; the charity and bounty of the rich, the faith and patience of the poor. And verily an estate above what sufficeth our occasions and necessities, is no further a blessing to us, than as it puts an opportunity into our hands of doing more good than others. Observe, 7. An unwearied perseverance of going good required at our hands, *Let us not be weary in well-doing*; though we have done much good, there is room for more; new objects will appear, new occasions will arise, new opportunities will present themselves unto us. Let us never think we can do enough, much less too much good; the best of beings are most unwearied in well-doing. God, Christ, the holy angels, are never weary of this blessed work: let us never be weary in imitating them in that which is their highest and their chiefest excellency and perfection. Observe, 8. The argument and encouragement to the cheerful discharge of this duty, *in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*; that is, sooner or later, either in this world, or in the next, or in both, we shall certainly receive the reward of well-doing. We shall reap, but what? *Answer*, We shall reap the blessing of God upon all we have, are, and do; we shall reap the benefit and blessing of their prayers, to whom we extend our charity: we shall reap the highest pleasure and satisfaction in our own minds of doing good, with which no sensual pleasure can be compared. The reflection upon any good we have done, is a perpetual spring of peace, and pleasure to us: the thoughts of it lie even and easy in our minds, and the remembrance of it refreshes the soul with a strange kind of delight and joy. But, Lord! what tongue can utter, or what heart conceive that vast and unspeakable reward, which an unwearied diligence in well-doing will meet with in the other world? It will plead for us at the day of judgment, and procure at the hands of a merciful God, for the rich merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, a glorious recompence at the resurrection of the just: And proportionable to the degrees of our charity, will be the dispensations of this reward. From the whole learn, 1. That great are the obligations which all Christians do lie under of doing good one to another, according to their abilities and opportunities.—Learn, 2. That great is the reward of well-doing, which Christians may eye as a motive to an unwearied diligence, and unfainting perseverance in well-doing.

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

It is very probable, that St. Paul ordinarily did only dictate, and that some other person wrote his epistles, as that to the Romans, wrote by Tertius, Rom. xvi. 22. Sometimes he only wrote the *salutation*, and subscribed the epistle with his own hand, as 1 Cor. xvi. 22. but here he tells the Galatians, that he wrote this epistle to them all with his own hand, having never wrote so large an epistle wholly with his own hand to any church as he did to them. This he did for two reasons, 1. To testify the fervency of his affection towards them, and to insinuate how much he loved them. 2. To evidence the sincerity of his endeavours for their present and future happiness: To accomplish these ends, he adjudged no pains too great. From whence learn, 1. That the faithful ministers of Christ will stick at no pains, but encounter with all difficulties, to advance the good of souls in general, and to reduce an erroneous and wandering people in particular to the obedience of the

gospel. Thus, this great apostle, though he had upon him the care of all the churches, and consequently a multiplicity of business, many avocations, and a multitude of distractions; yet, in order to the reclaiming of these Galatians, who were deeply tinctured with error, as well as dangerously tainted with sin, he redeems time for, and undergoes the fatigue and trouble of writing this whole epistle to them with his own hand: *You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.* Learn, 2. That it neither savours of pride nor vain-glory in the ministers of the gospel, if upon occasion, though sparingly, they make known to the world the great pains they have taken for promoting the good of their people, that so they may be excited the more to bring forth fruit answerable to the cost and culture which the ministers of Christ have expended upon them: St. Paul here sticks not to tell the Galatians, and the whole world, the pains he had been at in writing this large epistle with his own hand to them: yet it was not to commend himself but to excite and encourage them.

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised: only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Here our apostle returns to the description which he had before given of the false apostles, who, though they urged the necessity of circumcision, yet it was not with any sincerity of intention: It was, first, to *make a fair shew in the flesh*; that is, to make a fair outward shew of religion, an high pretence to holiness, by observing circumcision, and the other abrogated rites of the ceremonial law: And, secondly, This pretended zeal of theirs proceeded from pusillanimity and fear, lest they should suffer persecution from the Jews, for preaching the doctrine of the gospel, called here the *cross of Christ*, because it treats of a crucified Christ. Now the fury of these persecutors was abated towards those that preached circumcision, but enraged abundantly against those who preached circumcision down. Observe farther, How well the apostle makes good his charge against these false apostles, the Judaizing doctors, that they urged the necessity of circumcision insincerely, and for base ends; namely, because they made no conscience to keep the law themselves, but could dispense with circumcision well enough, if they were amongst their friends, but pleaded for it when in fear of their persecuting enemies: Thus they *became all things to all men*, but it was to save themselves. And, lastly, He assures them, that they urged circumcision upon them, *that they might glory in their flesh*; that is, might pride themselves that you were become their converts, by being circumcised at their persuasion, and be able to boast of the multitudes of their proselytes, who received circumcision at their instigation, and carried it as a mark of their instruction.—Learn hence, 1. That designing hypocrites do constantly pretend high to religion, but they evermore seek themselves, under a pretence of acting for God and his glory: they that *constrain*

you to be circumcised, make a fair shew in the flesh. Learn, 2. That though it is our duty to eschew persecution when we can fairly avoid it, yet we must not part with the least iota of truth, or espouse the smallest error, to avoid the sharpest persecution; they *constrain you to be circumcised, lest they should suffer persecution.* Learn, 3. That men who talk loud of religion, and pretend high to it, who preach it to, and press it upon others, but do not conscientiously practice it themselves, it is an evident demonstration, that they are men of corrupt minds, of profligate consciences, that do not believe themselves; for he only believes what he says, that lives as he doth believe: *Neither they themselves who are circumcised,* says the apostle, *keep the law.* Learn, 4. That there is nothing which false teachers and erroneous seducers do so much glory of, magnify themselves by, and pride themselves in, as in the number of their proselytes and converts, which they look upon as so many trophies of their victory, and speaking proofs of their unparalleled abilities: *they constrain men to be circumcised, that they may glory in their flesh.*

14 But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world:

Having shewn what it was that the false apostles gloried in, he next shews what it was that he himself gloried in; namely, in the cross of Christ; that is, in his preaching Christ crucified, and the necessity of faith in him, who died as a sacrifice upon the cross. The cross of Christ is taken three ways in scripture, materially, metaphorically, and metonymically; the material cross of Christ, is that which he died upon at Jerusalem: This the church of Rome glories in greatly, but not the apostle.—The metaphorical cross of Christ, is afflictions, Luke ix. 28. *Let him take up the cross,* that is, submit to any afflictions: God oft-times sanctifies this cross, for the crucifying the hearts of his people to the world: But the *cross of Christ* is taken metonymically for the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, or of him that died upon the cross. Now, Christianity, or the doctrine of the gospel, crucifies us to the world: First, By discovering to us the great vanity and emptiness of the world, and all the perishing satisfactions of it: Secondly, by propounding such arguments to crucify the world, as were never heard of from all the philosophers and wise men that ever lived in the world; namely, arguments taken from the glory of God, from the death of Christ, from the dignity of the soul, &c. Learn hence, That such a Christian as doth experimentally find his heart and affections daily more and more crucified to the world, by the *cross of Christ*, has unspeakable cause and reason sufficient for spiritual glorying and rejoicing. *Quest.* Wherein consists not our crucifixion to the world? *Ans.* It consists not in a vile esteem of the world, as useless or hurtful, or in casting off all care and concern for the things of the world, as sinful and unnecessary; nor is every degree of desire after, love unto, or delight in the things of the world, inconsistent with our being crucified to it: nor doth it consist in, or oblige us to the withdrawing ourselves from all society and conversation with the men of the world! But, positively, crucifixion to the world, consists in a crucified judgment and opinion of

the world ; in crucifying our love and affection to the world ; in crucifying our hopes and expectations from the world ; in crucifying our care and concern for the world ; in crucifying our delight in, and our endeavours after the world. *Quest.* How doth a Christian's being crucified to the world, afford him cause for unspeakable rejoicings ? *Answer.* Thus : We may and ought to glory in the blessed effect and fruit of Christ's death, in re-enslamping the image of God upon the soul, in the certain tokens of the love of God. We may glory in the death of Christ's enemy, and our soul's enemy : We may glory in that wherein God is glorified, and in that which is the earnest of our own glorification. Now, crucifixion to the world, by the cross of Christ, is this, all this, and therefore warrantably to be boasted of, and gloried in.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Here the apostle subjoins a reason why he gloried only in the cross of Christ, and not in those carnal ordinances and fleshly privileges of circumcision. &c. which the false apostles so much gloried in : namely, because circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither the presence of that ordinance, nor the want of it, availeth any thing, as to our acceptance with Christ, and interest in him ; but the *new creature* is all in all ; a circumcised heart, not a circumcised fore-skin, a renewed nature, a divine temper of mind, rendering us like to Christ. This will enable us to love him, and qualify us for living with him now in Christ Jesus : that is, now under the Christian dispensation, under the economy of the gospel, neither the presence nor absence of this outward badge of circumcision will avail any thing to our justification before God ; but that which was signified by circumcision, is the thing that pleaseth God : namely, the renovation of our nature, and becoming new creatures both in heart and life. Learn hence, That according to the terms of the gospel covenant, or Christian religion, nothing will avail to our acceptance with God, but the real renovation of our hearts, and lives : " Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Observe here, 1. The nature of Christianity described ; it is a walk : Now a walk is a motion, a free and voluntary motion, an uniform and even motion, it is a progressive motion, and a constant motion. Observe, 2. The condition of this walk, and that is regularity, it is a walk by rule : a Christian is not a lawless person, to range and ramble, and run up and down as fancy leads him, but he walks by rule, by the rule of scripture, by the rule of charity. Observe, 3. The determination of that rule which a Christian is to walk by, it must

be according to this rule. What rule ? The foregoing verse declares it is regeneration, and the law of the new creature : *as many as walk according to that rule*, when the new creature, in the principles and workings of it, is made the ground, the pattern and direction of our obedience, and we frame and square all the actions of our lives according thereunto. Observe, 4. The blessed privileges belonging to them that thus walk : *Peace be on them and mercy* ; that is, there shall be peace and mercy to them ; these shall be their portion ; nay, they shall be upon them ; that is, in a large and plentiful manner vouchsafed to them. Observe, lastly, The honourable mention which the apostle makes of them that thus walk by scripture rule, according to the law of the new creature, written in their heart ; he calls them the *true Israel of God*, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the children of his faith, which was a thousand times greater privilege than to be the children of his flesh : These are the persons interested in his blessings. Learn hence, That true and inward peace, great and lasting peace, peace with God, and peace with conscience, is the assured portion, and shall be the possession of all and only those who walk according to the law of God, the rule of the creature ; *as many as walk according to this rule*.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me ; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

The apostle having thus fully declared the mind of God in the matter controverted betwixt himself and the false apostles, touching the necessity of circumcision ; he now makes use of his apostolic authority, and charges his adversaries to give him no farther trouble or disturbance, either by gainsaying his doctrine, or detracting from his authority ; because he bare in his body the marks of his sufferings for Christ Jesus, namely, the stripes and wounds which he patiently received for the name of Christ, and his holy religion, 2 Cor. xi. 23. Learn hence, That whatever hard measure we meet with for the sake of Christ, what wounds and marks we receive for professing faith in him, and persevering in obedience in him, he will own them for his own, and give us leave to look upon them as his own, yea, to call them his own, as our apostle did here ; *I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Here our apostle closes his epistle with his accustomed valediction, most affectionately praying that the grace and favour of Christ, in the sweet effects of it, and in the sensible apprehension of it, might remain in their souls, to enlighten, sanctify, comfort, and quicken them more and more, that from thence they might derive and draw abiding consolation both in life and death. *Amen.*





THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
EPHESIANS.

St. Paul having planted a famous church at Ephesus, which was the metropolis or chief city in Asia, where he had preached the gospel for three years with eminent success, and being now a prisoner at Rome, he justly feared lest they should faint in their Christian course ; and accordingly, to prevent it, he writes this epistle to the churches of Christ in and about Ephesus, to establish them in the faith he had preached to them, which he was now a prisoner for, and stood ready to seal with his own blood. And here the good providence of God towards St. Paul and them is very remarkable, that though he was now a prisoner at Rome, yet not so close as to be denied pen and paper : God gave him favour in the sight of the keeper, and having work for him to do in prison, provides a keeper for his turn.

St. Paul is no sooner Nero's prisoner, but he falls a preaching and writing too. Happy was it for Onesimus, that St. Paul was sent to gaol, where he was begotten in his bonds by the preaching of the gospel ; and as happy was it for the Ephesians too, unto whom he wrote this excellent Epistle, that they might be the more comforted and confirmed. The devil had better have let St. Paul alone, than thus imprisoned him ; For no sooner was he committed, but he falls both a preaching and writing ; at which the gates of Satan's kingdom fly open, and sinners come forth to his sorrow and shame. There are no such ways to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their spite and malice against us, as by doing all the good we possibly can wherever we come.

This excellent epistle divinely sets forth the great and astonishing mysteries of our redemption and reconciliation by Jesus Christ ; the freeness and richness of God's grace ; the admirable benefits and privileges of the gospel ; the marvellous dispensation of God to the Gentiles, in revealing Christ unto them.

The principal parts of this Epistle are two, doctrinal and practical. The former is contained in the three first chapters, in which he treats of the sublime privileges of our election, vocation, justification and adoption ; the latter in the three last chapters, in which he exhorts them to constancy in the faith, to preparation for, and patience under sufferings, and to live religiously in every relation, by making conscience of relative duties one towards another, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, in which the life and beauty of religion lies ; and so closes and shuts up the epistle, wishing them all peace and prosperity, and a mutual increase of love and charity, and advising them to manifest the sincerity of their love to Christ, by the purity and incorruptness of their lives and conversations.

CHAP. I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Observe here, 1. The penman of this epistle described by his name, *Paul*; by his office, *an apostle*; by his commission to that office, *the will of God*: that is, by the command and appointment of God. It is matter of great consolation to the ministers of Christ, as well as great satisfaction to their people, that their calling is from God, and not from themselves; that they speak not in their own names but by commission received from Christ, whose ambassadors they are. Observe, 2. The superscription of this epistle, the persons to whom it was directed and sent, *To the saints at Ephesus*: So they were all at Ephesus by visible profession, and many of them, no doubt, by real sanctification. All the members of the visible church are obliged to be saints, and the true and real Christian is a true and real saint: He adds, *And to the faithful in Christ Jesus*, throughout all Asia. This pointed out their duty to them, to be not only holy in profession, but faithful in conversation; these two words, *saints* and *faithful*, conjoined, denote both their dignity and their duty; their dignity, in standing near to God, as his children; their duty, in being faithful to him as his servants. Observe, lastly, He styles them saints and faithful in *Christ Jesus*; intimating, that all our grace and holiness must be holiness in Christ Jesus; that is, acted and exercised by strength fetched from Christ Jesus, and that all our holiness must be accepted in Christ Jesus.

2 Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These words may be considered two ways: 1. As a religious salutation, taken from the manner of the Jews, who expressed their desires for one another's well-doing, by wishing *peace*, that is, all kind of happiness and prosperity to each other: Christianity doth neither forbid or abolish, but doth spiritualize and improve civility, humanity, and common courtesy. 2. The words may be considered as an apostolical benediction, in imitation of the priest's blessing, Numb. vi. The apostles were the patriarchs or spiritual fathers of the Church of the New Testament, as the sons of Jacob were of the Old: accordingly they bless their children, wishing *grace from God the Father*, or *grace from God as a Father*; thereby denoting, that God bestows not his *grace* as a Creator, but as a Father in Christ, in a discriminating way and peculiar manner: And *peace from our Lord Jesus Christ*: he being the purchaser of our peace, he upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and he that made peace for us by the blood of his cross; and thereupon God of his free grace accepts us, justifies us, and is at peace with us. Learn, That such as have received most grace from God, stand in further need of supplies of grace from him: they are thankful for peace, but they cannot content themselves with peace without grace; they desire both to have the heart and love of God set upon them, as well as pacified towards them;

they desire to be pardoned, but above all, seek to be beloved of the Father.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;

Observe here, 1. The work which the heart of the apostle was set upon, and that is, the work of blessing God; we bless God one way, he blesses us another; he blesses us imperatoriously, by commanding his blessing upon us; we bless him opotatively, when with thankful hearts, we praise him, when we wish well to him, and speak well of him. Lord, what an infinite favour and privilege is this vouchsafed to us, not only to pray to God and receive blessings from him, but to admit us to bless him, and to account himself honoured by us, when we acknowledge him the fountain of all blessings, and blessedness to us his creatures! Observe, 2. The title under which our apostle bleisseth him, namely, as the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He doth not say now under the gospel, as of old under the law, *Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; or, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*; but, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Where note, 1. He is a God to Christ, in relation to his being man: Christ being fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, to the work and office of a Mediator, 1 Pet. i. 20, and the Father making a covenant or federal transaction with him from all eternity as Mediator. Note, 2. He is a Father to Christ, and that both as God and man: a Father to him as God, by eternal and ineffable generation, the one being *Deus gignens*, the other *Deus genitus*; thus he was the only begotten Son of the Father; and a Father to him as man, by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, Luke i. 32. Therefore, *that holy thing shall be called the Son of God*. Observe, 3. The reason why, under these relations, he so affectionately blessed God, namely, for bestowing blessings, spiritual blessings, all spiritual blessings; and this is in or concerning heavenly things, which intend to fit us for heaven and eternal glory: And, lastly, All these blessings are conferred upon us in Christ; he, by his merit, hath purchased them; he, as our Head and Advocate, in our name, has received them; by virtue of our union with whom we have a right unto them, and shall ere long in heaven be fully and finally possessed of them. Behold here the transcendent bounty and liberality of our heavenly Father: He has more than one blessing for his children, he has all spiritual and heavenly blessings for them, *grace* on earth, and *glory* in heaven; grace, to enable them to glorify him upon earth, and glory, as the reward of grace with himself in heaven. Rejoice, O Christian, in thy lot and portion; God himself hath but all things, and so hast thou. Has he all spiritual blessings in heaven in full possession? Thou hast them also in right and title at present, and ere long shall enjoy them in full fruition. *Eternally blessed then be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or in heavenly things, in Christ.*

4 ¶ According as he hath chosen us in

him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love :

Our apostle having, in the former verse, offered up a very solemn thanksgiving to God, for blessing the Ephesians with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, he comes in this verse to discover and declare the fountain from whence all these spiritual blessings did proceed and flow, namely, from God's gracious purpose in our election before all time; *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, &c.* Where note, The favour vouchsafed, election; and the fruit and product of that favour, holiness of conversation. Note, 1. The favour and privilege vouchsafed by God: *He hath chosen* : This denotes the freeness of the favour; he chose when he might have refused: His book of life is a book of love; the cause of our love is in the object; the reason of God's love is in himself. Note, 2. The subject of this favour; *He hath chosen us*, us Gentiles: The Jews much gloried in their being a chosen generation, a peculiar people; we Gentiles are a chosen generation also; they were beloved for their father's sake, Abraham: we for Christ's sake. Note, 3. The antiquity of this favour, *before the foundation of the world*, that is, from all eternity. The apostle, to take the Jews off from boasting, as they did, that the world was made for their sake, and that the Messiah from the beginning of the world did enter into a covenant with God to redeem them especially, declares, that the despised Gentiles were elected and chosen by God, to be an holy people to himself; and all this, in the purpose of God, before the foundations of the world were laid. Note, 4. God is said to have chosen us in Christ, as our head. Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him: *I know whom I have chosen*, says Christ: Consider him as Mediator, so we are chosen in him, not chosen for him: because, not Christ's undertaking for us, but the Father's good pleasure towards us, was the spring and fountal cause of our election. The truth is, God was so far from choosing the Gentiles out of faith foreseen, that he did not choose them for sake and obedience of Christ foreseen; God did not love us from eternity, because Christ was to die for us in time, but because he loved us with an everlasting love; therefore, in the fulness of time, Christ was sent to die for us: So that the death of Christ was the fruit and effect, but not the cause of our election: No other reason, says Bishop Fell upon the place, can be assigned of this privilege, but the good pleasure of God; and if Christ's sufferings were not the cause of our election, much less our own deservings, as he adds there; almighty God not choosing us because worthy, but to make us worthy by choosing us. Note, 5. The effect and fruit, the benefit and end of this free and ancient favour, *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*. 1. Holiness is here declared not to be the cause, but the effect of our election; God chose the Gentiles from eternity to be his people, not because they were holy, they were far enough from that, being afar off from God, but designing that they thus graciously chosen should be holy; initially, progressively, and perseveringly holy in this life, and perfectly holy in the next: Yet arriving at such a perfection here in holiness, as to denominate us blameless in the account of God, by virtue of our faith in Christ, and love to one another. From the whole, learn, 1.

That God's bestowing all spiritual blessings upon us in time, is the effect and fruit of his electing love from all eternity; *He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world*. Learn, 2. That God hath chosen none to happiness and glory hereafter, but only such as are holy in conversation here, holy in the habitual frame and disposition of their hearts, and in the general course and tenor of their lives and actions. Learn, 3. That such as are holy before God, will endeavour to walk unblameable in the sight of man, in the exercise of love, and in the practise of all the duties of the second table, which are at once evidences of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*.

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved :

That is, *Having predestinated us Gentiles, who in the esteem of the Jews were accounted dogs, to be his adopted sons and daughters, in and by Jesus Christ, in whom he hath made us accepted, to the abundant praise and glory of his free grace and mercy*. Observe here, 1. That none are the children of God by nature; none are born sons, but made sons; not of their own, but God's making; and in order to this glorious privilege, we were *predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*. Observe, 2. The attribute mentioned here by the apostle, which moved God to predestinate us to the adoption of children; it was the glory of his grace; he mentions not the glory of his holiness, the glory of his justice, or the glory of his power; because the glory of his power is manifested in making of the world, the glory of his holiness in making of his law, the glory of his justice in turning the transgressors of that law into hell; but his *grace*, he shews no where so much as in the predestination of his children, and in what he hath predestinated them unto; he sheweth indeed all his attributes herein, but *grace* over and above all the rest. Observe, 3. The effect and fruit of this privilege, namely, of our being predestinated to the adoption of children, and that is, our being made accepted in Christ the beloved; the word is properly rendered, he hath made us dear, precious and delightful to himself; or, in one word, he hath ingratiated us. Here note, That as Jesus Christ is in an eminent manner beloved of God and accepted with him, so, in like manner, all God's adopted children do, and shall find favour with God, and acceptance through Christ; *he hath made us freely accepted in the beloved*.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ;

Our apostle having in the foregoing verses, enumerated the great and glorious privilege which the children of God

were made partakers of before all time, comes next to discover what they are admitted to the participation of in time: and here in this verse he mentions two of them, namely, redemption, and remission of sin, *in whom we have redemption through his blood, &c.* Here note, The privilege itself, redemption; the Redeemer, *Jesus Christ in whom*, the price of this redemption paid down, *his blood*; one fruit of this redemption instanced in for all the rest, *the forgiveness of sin*; and lastly, the spring or source of all this, *the riches of his grace*. Learn, 1. The deplorable state into which the whole race of mankind was brought by sin, namely, an estate of slavery and bondage, and spiritual captivity unto sin; redemption supposes this: slaves and captives need a Redeemer, none else; we are all by nature under slavery to sin, to satan, and the curse of the law, and the wrath of God.—Learn, 2 That there was no delivery to be had from this slavery, but by a price paid down to the justice of God; redemption is a delivery by ransom and price. Learn, 3. That no other price did, or could redeem us from our miserable captivity, but the blood of Christ; *we have redemption through his blood*. Learn, 4. That all believers and only they have remission of their sins, through the redemption purchased for them by the blood of Christ. Learn, 5. That God's free grace, and Christ's full satisfaction, do stand well together in the work of redemption and remission of sin: true, God had a satisfaction from the hand of our surety Christ Jesus; but was it not free grace and rich mercy in God, to accept of a surety and a substitution, when the rigor of the law required none, and would admit of none, but demanded that the soul which sinned should die? Was it not free mercy, not only to accept a surety, but to provide a surety for us, as God did, and this surety his own Son? And to deliver up this Son to a painful, shameful, and accursed death, that we might have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace?

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself;

That is, in which dispensation of his, namely, our redemption from sin and wrath by the blood of his Son, God the Father hath discovered abundant wisdom, wonderful wisdom, riches of divine wisdom, to the children of men. Taking the words in this sense, the observation is, That God's sending his Son into the world to suffer in our stead, and to satisfy for our sin, was not only an act of special grace and peculiar favor, but also an evidence and demonstration of wonderful wisdom in God; *he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom*; O what wonderful wisdom appeared in the contrivance of the work of redemption, and in the accomplishment of it! What wisdom, in appointing such a Mediator as was fit to reconcile God to man, and man to God! What wisdom, in laying the platform and design of the gospel in such a way and manner as at once to advance the honor and secure the glory of God, and to promote the holiness and comfort of man! Observe, next, the description which St. Paul gives us of the gospel, and (No. 55.)

the preaching of it, is the mystery of God's will revealed and made known to a lost world. Learn, that the gospel's method for recovering and saving lost sinners by a Redeemer, was a mystery, a hidden mystery; it was hid where all the world could never have found it, where angels and men could never discover it; it was hid in God, in his breast and bosom, in his heart and thoughts; it was hid from angels, nay, the churches knew it before the angels; yea, the angels learnt it from the churches, Eph. iii. 10. Unto principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God; and as it was hid from angels, so from the wise men of the world, 1. Cor. ii. 8. We preach the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew; nay, the gospel was hid from all the saints of the Old Testament, comparatively, not absolutely; with respect to that clear revelation which we have of the gospel now, it may be said to be hidden from them then. O, what obligations then do we, lie under, who live under the dispensation of the gospel, to acknowledge what an infinite favor it is from God, clearly to know the mystery of his will, concerning the redemption and salvation of poor lost sinners by a Mediator! God has now revealed it, and he desires all may know and receive the revelation of it, namely, the hidden mystery of his will. Observe, lastly, What was the impelling and moving cause of God's making known the mysteries of his will to a lost world; it was his own good pleasure, which he had purposed in himself; God's making known the mystery of his will by the gospel, and his enlightening the understandings of men savingly to apprehend it, proceeds entirely from the purpose and pleasure of his own good will; *having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself*.

13 That, in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him:

These words discover to us the end and design of God, in making known the mystery of his will, that is, in revealing the gospel: it was to gather into one universal church both angels and men, Jews and gentiles, under Christ their Head, and by virtue of that union to become one with the Father, as he and Christ are one. Here note, 1. That Christ is the Head both of angels and men; an Head of confirmation to the angels, of redemption to fallen man; both angels and saints in heaven and on earth make up one family, of which Christ is the Head: the angels are a part of the worshippers of Christ as well as we, they are a part of his family and household; the heads fill our churches as we'll as men, and are present in our congregations and assemblies, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Note, 2. That all mankind by nature, and as considered in themselves, are under a fearful dissipation or scattering: sin hath rent and separated them from God, from man, and from the blessed angels: *Gathering together* pre-supposes a foregoing scattering. Note, 3. That the purpose and design of God, in discovering the truths of the gospel unto men, was this, that he might gather them together into union, with Jesus Christ; that by virtue of that

union they might be one with the Father, as he and Christ are one; *That in the fulness of time he might gather together in one body in Christ all things capable of eternal happiness, both in heaven and earth; even in him who is the Head of that body, whereof angels as well as men are members.*

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Our apostle having hitherto spoken of the glorious privileges of the gospel in general, he comes now to make application of this his doctrine, first to the Jews, and next to the Gentiles in particular. As to the Jews, who were first called by Christ and his apostles, and who were the first that trusted or hoped in Christ for salvation, before there was any considerable number of converts among the Gentiles, he declares, that these Jewish believers, whereof himself was one, had, in and through Christ, obtained a right to be God's portion and peculiar people; and that they should not by embracing the gospel, lose that ancient privilege which their forefathers so mightily boasted of, and gloried in; namely, to be a chosen generation, and a peculiar people; but together with their being God's portion, they should have right to an inheritance: *In whom we have obtained an inheritance*; namely, an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, the inheritance of the saints in light; and to this inheritance, says he, you have been appointed, God having fore-ordained that this inheritance should be the portion of all believers, and the consequent of faith in Christ, by virtue of which we become the sons of God, and all this to the *praise of his own glory*: that is, to the intent that his glorious attributes of wisdom, goodness, and mercy, might be acknowledged, and highly praised. Learn hence, 1. That to be called to faith, and brought to believe in Christ, before others, is a favor and special prerogative, which some persons have above others: *We who first believed in Christ*. It is an high honor above all others, to be in Christ before others, Rom. xvi. 7. *Who were in Christ before me*. Learn, 2. That as all believers are God's portion and the lot of his inheritance, so they do obtain from him right and title to a lot and share in an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for them; *We have obtained an inheritance*. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ the Mediator, is that person, in, by, and through whom believers are instituted to this inheritance; *In whom we have obtained an inheritance*. Christ hath purchased this inheritance for them: he hath promised it to them; he has already taken, and still keeps possession of it for them; and he will put them into the full and final possession of it at the great day. Learn, 4. That the great end and design of God, in all the distinguishing favors and benefits which by Jesus Christ we obtain from him, is this, *That we should be to the praise of his glory*. The words may be understood; 1. Passively; the praise of his glory was to be manifested in them. 2. Actively; that the high praises of God were to be set forth by them.

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that

ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Here the apostle recounts the favors and privileges which the Gentiles, as well as the Jews upon their believing in Christ, were admitted to the participation of: he assures them that in and through Christ they had obtained a right to this heavenly inheritance also, as well as the Jews, having been brought to trust and believe in him, by hearing the word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, preached to them: and next, that they were sealed for the children of God by the sanctifying Spirit promised to the sons of God, which produced a real renovating change in their hearts and lives, and so was a pledge and earnest of, as well as made them meet and fit for the heavenly inheritance; the full enjoyment of which is not to be expected till the last day, when, and not before, all believers shall obtain complete redemption, and their bodies being raised, shall be re-united to their souls, and both rendered perfectly and everlastingly happy. The end of God, in all this dispensation of grace and mercy to the Gentiles, being the same with that before mentioned to the Jews; namely, the praise of his own glorious grace. Here observe, 1. That both the Gentiles and Jews are saved by the same faith and trust in Christ; *In whom ye also trusted*; as they have the same common inheritance, so have they the same common assistance and faith in Christ. Observe, 2. That the faith of the Gentiles came by hearing of the word; *In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word, &c.* that is, presently after they heard, they believed and obeyed; Col. i. 6. *Ye obeyed from the first day that we preached the gospel*. What a shame and reproach is this to those amongst us, who have heard the gospel preached all their days, yet never did believe or obey the gospel? Observe, 3. A double encomium which the apostle gives the gospel by which these Gentile Ephesians were converted; he calls it, 1. *The word of truth*; that is, a word of the most eminent and excellent truth. There is no truth that ever God swore to, but the truth of the gospel. The law is truth as well as the gospel, but the law was made without an oath; had it been made with an oath, it had never been recalled; the gospel is sealed with an oath, and therefore shall never be reversed. 2. He calls it *the gospel of salvation*, and the gospel of their (the Ephesians) salvation. It is called a gospel of salvation, because the matter of it is salvation, because the offer of it is salvation; and it declares the only way and means by which lost sinners may obtain salvation; and the gospel of their salvation, because God had by his Holy Spirit, made the preaching of this gospel effectual for their conversion and salvation. Observe, 4. The privilege which the Ephesian Gentiles obtained, after they had by faith consented to this gospel of salvation, and that was their sealing; *After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*. Where note, That the privilege of sealing always follows the duty of believing, never goes before it. *Sealing doth*

imply that precious and excellent esteem which they have with God: nothing but what is precious is sealed by us: who seals up dung and pebbles in a bag? Believers are God's jewels, his treasure, therefore sealed. Sealing also is for safety and security, for discrimination, and for confirmation. The Holy Spirit, by sanctifying of us, doth discriminate and distinguish us from the rest of the world, doth secure and preserve us from the fatal danger of a ruinous apostacy, and doth also confirm our hopes of the glorious inheritance. Observe, 5 That the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the nature of an earnest; sanctifying grace wrought in the heart here, is a sure earnest of glory hereafter, *which is the earnest of our inheritance*. An earnest binds the bargain; and is a part of the bargain; if it be but a shilling given as an earnest, it secures a contract for a thousand pounds. Believers are to consider and look upon grace not barely as grace, but as an earnest of glory. Oh, be thankful to God for his sanctifying Spirit, not only as abiding the corruptions, but as a pledge and earnest of a glorious inheritance. It is a great comfort to find grace in the soul, as sanctifying, as quickening and renewing, but a greater matter of rejoicing to find it also there as witnessing, as sealing and confirming, as a part of our inheritance in glory, and as a pledge and earnest of the whole. Observe, 6 That the Holy Spirit of God is God. To sanctify, to seal, to confirm our hearts, are divine operations; be that doth these must be a divine person. True; how the Spirit of God is God, and how he proceedeth from the Father and the Son, cannot be comprehended by our reason and shallow understandings. No wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity is inexplicable, seeing the nature of God is incomprehensible; our faith then must assent to what our reason cannot comprehend, otherwise we can never be christians. Observe, lastly, That heaven is here called a possession, and a purchased possession: that is, by the blood of Christ. A king's ransom we account a vast sum; Oh, what will our ransom by the blood of the Son of God come to? Grace is purchased, and glory is purchased, both by the blood of Christ. Lord! what will that glory come to! in eternity we shall admire it, but never fully comprehend it!

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Observe here, 1. The special duties which St. Paul performed on the behalf of these Ephesians, he gave thanks for them, he prayed for them, and both without ceasing; "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Where note, How enlarged St. Paul's heart was in thankfulness to God for the salvation of others, as well as unwearied in his endeavours in order to their salvation. This will be one great exercise of our grace in heaven; namely, thankfulness to God for the salvation of others, as well as our own: and verily, it ought to be a mighty argument to move the heart of any one to work out his own salvation, when he sees another, be it his minister, his parent, his master, or his neighbour, so solicitous for it, and taking such care of it. Note farther, That the duties of prayer and

praise, of supplication and thanksgiving, ought to accompany one another: we are never to pray for fresh mercies, either for ourselves or others, without giving thanks to God for former mercies. Besides there is no such effectual way of begging, as thanksgiving; he that is spiritually thankful for what he has received, engages God to confer upon him the mercies which he wanteth. Add to this, That holy thankfulness is an evidence of true grace in us: need and want will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgiving. Observe, 2. The occasion of St. Paul's prayers and praises in the Ephesians' behalf; namely, his having heard, 1. Of their faith in Christ; 2. Of their love to all saints. Where note, How he joins faith and love together, as the two most eminent graces, and as the two great evangelical commandments, faith in Christ, and love to saints. But how comes he not to make mention of their love to God? Ans. Because love to God is supposed and necessarily included in our love to saints, as saints; for he that loves them that are begotten, much more loves him that begetteth; he that loves the child for the father's sake, loves the father much more for his own sake. Note farther, It is love to saints, as saints, and to all saints without exception, that is the evidence of true faith; poor saints as well as rich, weak saints as well as gifted. There are froward and fretful saints, passionate and peevish christians, who have many infirmities, great infirmities cleaving to them, though disallowed by them; yet these professing christians are loved and to be beloved by us, even as a brother loveth all his brothers, for his father's sake that begat them all, though one but little, another lame, a third crooked, a fourth sickly. Lord, how far are the professors of this day from the practice of this duty? How doth a little difference in judgment, occasion a great deal of judging, and rash censuring one another? Christ hath received us, why should we reject one another? One heaven will hold us all hereafter, why should not one communion hold us here? Verily, if children quarrel and fall out with one another at a full table, there is an enemy at their backs that will quickly take away the vider. If our hearts be not turned suddenly to one another, Almighty God will certainly come and smite the earth with a curse.

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him:

These words give us a short, but very comprehensive account of that affectionate prayer which St. Paul put up to God on the behalf of these Ephesians, newly converted to christianity; in which, observe, 1. The person whom he prays unto, God, under a very endearing title, for the strengthening of his faith; he styles him, not as the Old Testament saints, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but in the language of the New Testament, *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of glory*. *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is a man and Mediator, commissioned of him, and sent by him; and *the Father of glory* as being in himself infinitely glorious: to whom all glory is and ought to be ascribed, and from whom alone it is communicated. Learn hence, That as all our prayers and requests are and ought to be directed unto God only, so in order to our having access to God with assurance in prayer,

it is our duty to apply to him as a Father, as a Father in Christ, as a Father in Christ to us, and under this notion and apprehension to strengthen our faith for the obtaining of what we ask in prayer; "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you, &c. Observe, 2. The great and comprehensive blessing prayed for; namely, divine illumination, and spiritual knowledge; that is, farther increase of that wisdom and saving knowledge of divine mysteries, whereof the Spirit of God is the author. Learn hence, That as spiritual wisdom, or the saving knowledge of divine mysteries, is necessary to a christian; so those who have a good measure of this grace already received, ought not to sit down satisfied with it, but aspire after farther measures and degrees of it: spiritual knowledge is as necessary for increasing grace, as it is for working grace in the soul. Observe, 3. The title here given to the Holy Spirit of God, he is styled "Spirit of wisdom and revelation;" he being the author of all that knowledge in the mysteries of religion which we attain unto, and it being his proper work and office to reveal unto us the will of God for our salvation. Learn hence, 1. That believers themselves, who are divinely enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, have yet need of farther measures and fuller degrees of spiritual wisdom. Learn, 2. That the way to obtain this fuller measure of divine wisdom and spiritual illumination, is to be earnest with God in prayer for his Holy Spirit. So the apostle here.

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Our apostle proceeds in this verse, and to the end of the chapter, in a very affectionate and fervent prayer, on the behalf of the Ephesians; namely, that the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all divine illuminations would farther open the eyes of their understanding, *formerly shut up in heathenish blindness and darkness*, that so they might know, 1. "What is the hope of his calling;" that is, what high and glorious hopes he had called them unto; for *hope* here, is taken for the object of hope, or the great and good things hoped for; and it is said to be "the hope of their calling;" because, as their conversion from heathenism to christianity, they were entitled to, and called to the expectation of these great and good things, which were the object of hope. Where note the Ephesians' deplorable state before conversion; they were without hope; and the happy exchange of their condition by embracing christianity, they were begotten to a lively hope of glorious things, which before they were wholly ignorant of, and strangers to. As a sinner's misery lies not in what he feels, but what he fears; so a christian's happiness consists not in what he has in hand, but in what he has in hope; *May you know what is the hope of his calling.* The second blessing which he prays for on their behalf is, that they may know *what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*; that is, say some, what an exceeding glorious thing it is to be a christian; or, what an exceeding glory redounds to God, by his people, which are his inheritance, say others: but most understand the words as a description of heaven, which is here called an

inheritance, a rich inheritance, a glorious inheritance, in or among the saints; that is, the saints in heaven, who hold that in possession, which the saints on earth have in hope and expectation. Learn hence, That heaven is the saints' inheritance. An inheritance is an estate that belongs to children, to all such, and none but such. It is an undeserved possession, and it is a sure and certain possession. Here note, That Almighty God is said in scripture, to make heaven as sure to his saints, by all sorts of ways, as a man can make an inheritance sure to his child: It is theirs by promise, it is theirs by purchase, it is theirs by gift, it is theirs by bequest; it is given by will to them, St. Luke xxii. 29. "I appoint by will unto you a kingdom." Can any thing be sure, or more ways made secure to any person, than this inheritance of heaven is to the holy servants of God? But farther the apostle calls it "the riches of the glory of his inheritance;" that is, a very rich and exceeding glorious inheritance; such abundant riches and transcendent glory are found in it, as overwhelm the mind of man, that here enters upon the close contemplation of it. Heaven will appear to be a glorious inheritance, if we consider the glory of the place, the glory of the company, the glory of the employment, and the glory that will be then and there put upon our souls and bodies. Lord, make us meet for this glorious inheritance of thy saints in light!

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power;

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.—

The next particular which the apostle prays for, on behalf of the converted Ephesians, is this, that they might know, or sensibly apprehend, the greatness of that divine power, which God had exerted, first in their conversion: next, in carrying on that work step by step, in spite of all opposition; then in giving them the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, as miracles, tongues, and prophecy; also, the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, as knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, and patience, to enable them to go on in suffering for Christ to the uttermost; and lastly, That they might know the exceeding greatness of that power which God will farther exert towards them as believers, in raising up their dead bodies to enter upon that glorious inheritance which God by promise insured to them; which power, he assures them, would bear some likeness to, and correspondence with, that omnipotent power which God put forth, in raising Christ from the dead, and advancing him to the heavenly glory, where he is Lord of all. Observe here, What an heap of words our apostle makes use of, to set forth the power of God in the soul's conversion from the power of sin, and in the body's resurrection from the power of the grave; he calls it "Power, the power of God, the greatness of his power, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, and the power which raised up Christ from the dead." Lord! what a glorious power was that which opened our Redeemer's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a mighty stone rolled upon his sepulchre; may the same Almighty power break asunder all those bars of unbelief, which keep our souls under the power and dominion of

sin now, and at the great day, break in pieces the bars of death and the grave, that it may be altogether impossible for us any longer to be holden by them: for towards thy saints, and in order to their salvation, thou dost engage the uttermost of thine attributes, the uttermost of thy love, and the exceeding greatness of thy power.

—And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;

22 And hath put all things under his feet,—

Our apostle, in these words, discovers to us Christ's exaltation, or that glory and dignity, which, after his resurrection and ascension, the Father put upon him as God-man or Mediator, far surpassing the glory of all created beings. Now, this is represented to us by the notion, and under the metaphor, of Christ's *sitting at God's right hand*: This imports, 1. Fulness of rest and pleasure, that he quietly, securely, and everlastingly possesses all that happiness and satisfaction in heaven, which God himself is possessed of and delighted with, far above all the pleasures and delightful satisfactions, which all the glorified saints and glorious angels do, or can possibly enjoy. 2. It implies a fulness of honor and glory, of dignity and respect. When Solomon set Bathsheba at his right hand, it was in token of honor and respect to her. Heb. ii. 9. we see Jesus to be crowned with glory and honor, sitting down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. 3. Christ's sitting at God's right-hand, imports, his having all rule, dominion and power, put into his hand to govern all things, both in heaven and on earth. 4. It imports and implies ability to execute that power: all those royal glorious endowments, which God filled the human nature of Christ with, to make him fit to be the supreme Head of his church, and the great and wise governor of the world; all this doth God's setting Christ at his own right-hand import and imply. In the next verse (the 21st) the apostle expresses more plainly, what he had said in the former verse figuratively; God hath exalted Christ (says he) "far above all principalities and powers, might, and dominion, and every name that is named; and hath put all things under his feet." Where note, 1. The eminency; 2. The universality of our Lord's exaltation. Its eminency appears in the height of his exaltation: he is not only *above* but *far above*, all principalities and powers, and might and dominion; and in the lowness of the subjection of all things to him, "having put all things under his feet." And the universality of Christ's exaltation appears, by instancing, in "principalities and powers, might and dominion;" under which he comprehends all things that are excellent in heaven and earth, angels and men, &c. all creatures whatsoever being placed in a degree of inferiority beneath him, and in the lowest state of subjection under him. Whence we learn, 1. That the human nature of Christ, and his glorified body, by virtue of that unspeakable union between the two natures of Christ, his Godhead and manhood, is so highly dignified and exalted in heaven, that all

(No. 55.)

the glory of heaven and earth, of kings and emperors, of sun, moon, and stars, of the souls of just men made perfect, yea, and of the spotless glorious angels themselves, is nothing to it, nor may be compared with it. Christ sits now in heaven, in our glorified humanity united to his glorious Deity; that body which hung on an ignominious cross in blood and gore, now shines brighter than ten thousand suns in the kingdom of his Father. All this honor and homage, glory and praise, dominion and power, is due to our Lord the Redeemer, as the reward of his sufferings; God hath set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers. "Learn, 2. That although the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall cease at the last day, (and be delivered up by Christ unto his father) as to the way wherein he now administers it, by ruling in the midst of his enemies, whom he shall then have finally subdued and destroyed; yet his natural kingdom as God, shall never cease, but continue, "in the world to come" without end. Those words here, "not only in this world, but in the world to come," do show the duration of Christ's kingly government, and that he is king for ever and ever, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth through eternal ages.

—And gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

St. Paul having spoken of Christ's sovereignty in general, over all created beings, both in heaven and in earth, in the foregoing verses, doth, in the words before us, declare, that as he is an head of dominion and authority to the whole creation in general, so he is an head of influence to his church in particular. Note, Christ was given by the Father to be the church's Head: now, this metaphor of an *head* implies several things: as, 1. Eminency above the church, as the head is above the members. 2. Authority over the church; the head governs all the members. 3. Oneness of nature betwixt him and his church: To see an head of one nature, and members of another, is monstrous. 4. It implies a strict, intimate, and close union betwixt him and his church, as betwixt head and members; which union, as to the members of the visible church, is a political union; but as to the invisible members (real believers), the union betwixt Christ and them is mystical, spiritual, supernatural, and indissoluble. Lastly, This metaphor of an *head*, given here to Christ, implies a communication of influences from himself unto all his members; an influence of common gifts to the visible members of his body, and an influence of spiritual life and motion to the invisible members, true believers. Indeed, Christ is the Head of angels as well as saints, but in different respects; to angels, he is an Head of dominion and government, an Head of authority and superiority: but to his church, he is an Head of dominion and direction also; not only an Head of authority, but an Head of vital influence too: the angels are Christ's honourable subjects, but saints are the mystical members of his body; the former are as the nobles in his kingdom, that attend upon his person, but the latter are the endeared spouse that lies in his bosom. Oh glorious dignity of the meanest believer above the highest angel! For as the nobles in a prince's court think it a preferment and honor to wait upon his queen, so the glori-

ous angels account it no dishonor to them, to serve and administer to the saints, to which honorable office they are appointed, Heb. i. 14. namely, to be "ministering," or serviceable "spirits, for the good of them that are the heirs of salvation." As the chiefest servants disdain not to serve the heir, so the angels delight to serve the saints.—Observe, 2. As the character here given of Christ "the head of his church;" so the honorable titles put upon the church, she is his body; "The head over all the church which is his body;" not his natural, but his mystical body. This implies, 1. The church's union with Christ, and her relation to him. 2. The church's receiving influences from him, life, motion, and strength; all which the members of the body receive by virtue of union with their head. 3. It implies the duty of subjection and obedience due from the church to Christ, as from the members to the head. 4. It implies the union and order among the members themselves: that as all the members of the natural body sympathize with, and are subservient to each other, so should all the members of the church, Christ's mystical body, employ their gifts, and improve their functions and offices for the general good of the whole, and the mutual benefit and advantage of each other, as becomes the body of Christ, and members in particular. But especially, the church is said here to be the body of Christ, and He her Head; 1. With respect to a communication of influences; Christ our Head is our fountain of life;" our Head is our heart also, "out of it are the issues of life;" from him we live, by him we move, and our spiritual being is derived from him, strengthened and sustained by him: the whole church receives spiritual life, motion and strength from Christ, as the body doth from the animating and enlivening soul. 2. Christ is called here "the head of the church, his body," with respect to a complication of interest, as well as a communication of influences: As the head and the body, as the husband and the wife, so Christ and his church are mutually concerned for each other; they stand and fall, live and die together: whatsoever he has, is theirs; they have nothing but through him, they have all things in him, and by him; his God is their God, his Father is their Father; his blood, his bowels, his merit, his spirit, his life, his death is theirs; and as all that he has is his church's, so all that he did is for his church, called here *his body*. He obeyed as his church's Head; he died as her Head; he rose, ascended and reigneth as her Head; and hath in his church's name, taken possession of heaven, as a purchased inheritance for her. How fitly then may Christ be called the Head of the church, and the church be called the body of Christ? Observe, 3. How Christ came to be the Head of his church. God the Father gave him this authority, ver. 22.—"And gave him to be the Head over all things to the church;" that dignity and superiority, that dominion and power which Christ has over his church, is given to him by God the Father; none else was fit for it but himself; and although it was due unto himself, yet it must be given him: Now, if Christ did not exercise any authority over the church till it was given him, what bold presumption is it, and will it be, in any person upon earth to assume any power over, or to exercise any office in the church, when never called to it, nor authorised by Christ to undertake it? We may demand of such confident undertakers, as the pharisee demanded of the holy and humble Jesus. "By what authority dost thou these things; and who gave thee this authority?" Observe, 4. The high honor which is put upon the church by being Christ's body, by

this she becomes Christ's fulness.—"The church which is his body, the fulness of him."—Yet note, The church is not the fulness of Christ personal, but of Christ mystical; not of his natural, but mystical body; every saint, and every degree of grace in a saint, is a part of Christ's fulness. The work of the ministry then, is the best and noblest work in the world, because it is an adding to the fulness of Christ. God had but one Son in the world; and he made him a minister: and if increasing the number of converts, and adding to persons' growth in grace, be an addition to Christ's fulness, then how glorious a sight will the great day afford, when Christ shall have all his fulness; when there shall not be one saint wanting, nor one degree of grace in any saint wanting; when head and members shall both be full, full of grace, full of joy, full of glory: when Christ shall be fully glorified in his saints, and they everlastingly filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, as Head of his church: "He filleth all in all; he filleth all persons, both angels and men; he filleth all places, heaven with glory, earth with grace, hell with horror; he filleth all ordinances, prayer with prevalency, preaching with efficacy, &c. he filleth all relations, fathers with paternal affections, mothers with maternal bowels; he fills all conditions, riches with thankfulness, poverty with contentment.

CHAPTER II.

The design and scope of our holy apostle, in this chapter, is to set forth before the Ephesians, the happiness of that state and condition, which, by their embracing Christianity, upon the preaching of the gospel, they were brought into: to which end and purpose, he shows them the deplorable misery of their former condition, before conversion; declaring that their natural heathenish estate, was a state of spiritual darkness, yea, of spiritual death, they being dead in trespasses and sins: in which they, and the whole heathen world with them, did generally then lie, before the publishing of the gospel: as appeared by their manifold idolatries, which the grace of the gospel had both convinced them of and turned them from. Accordingly, the apostle thus bespeaks them:

AND you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Observe, here, 1. The deplorable condition which the Ephesians were in by nature, and all persons with them, before their conversion from sin to God. It is a state of spiritual death; the natural and unregenerate man is a dead man, spiritually dead in sin: Our apostle doth not say they were in a dying, but in a dead condition: not half dead, but altogether dead. But how so? Not dead as to natural actions, they can eat and drink; not as to rational actions, they can reason and discourse: not as to civil actions, they can buy and sell, bargain and trade: nor is the natural man dead to moral actions; he can pray, read and hear the word, meditate upon it, and discourse of it; if he please, he can hearken to the voice of God's judgments, consider and call his own ways to remembrance; but as to spiritual acts, to be spiritually performed, here he is dead, till quickened by a vital act of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to enlighten blind eyes, and whose delight it is to quicken and enliven dead souls. But what doth this state of spiritual death im-

ply? *Answer*, It doth suppose and imply a state of separation from God, insensibility of that dismal state, an impotency and inability to recover ourselves out of that condition, and our loathsomeness and offensiveness to Almighty God, whilst we continue in it. In short, every unregenerate man is a dead man, in a double sense: He is, 1. Legally dead, being under the condemnatory sentence of the law; we call a man under legal sentence of death, a dead man. 2. Spiritually dead, as being destitute of a principle of spiritual life, a quickening principle to enable the soul to perform spiritual operations. Thus before regeneration are we dead, in opposition to justification; and dead in opposition to satisfaction also; and the fatal instrument, by which our souls die, is here discovered, "dead in or by trespasses and sins." This is the sword that kills souls, and cuts them off from God; "you hath he quickened, being dead in trespasses and sins." Observe, 2. The choice and singular privilege and favor vouchsafed to the Ephesians, in and under the power of spiritual death: they were quickened; that is, made spiritually alive, by the quickening or life-giving power of the Spirit of God. A regenerate man is a living man; he lives a life of justification, which consists in pardon of sin: a condemned man's pardon is his life; and he lives a life of sanctification, having received from the Holy Spirit a vital principle of grace in all the powers and faculties of the soul; justification reconciles God to us, sanctification reconciles us to God: justification takes away the legal enmity, sanctification the natural enmity between God and us. Here note, That the person who is spiritually quickened, is universally quickened: there is not a faculty in the soul but is spiritually dead, and therefore not a faculty but must be spiritually quickened: as there is an universal pollution in every faculty, so must there be an universal renovation; for no spiritual duty can be performed without it, no spiritual privilege can be enjoyed without it, and we can never be saved hereafter, if not spiritually quickened here: but if quickened aright, we live a divine life, the life (in some measure) which God himself lives: and this must needs be an excellent life and a pleasant life here on earth, and shall be an everlasting life with Christ in heaven! "Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." Observe, 3. The person quickening described, "you hath he quickened;" that is, God the Father, who, chap. 1. 17. is said to have given them the "spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of himself;" man in his natural state considered, is unable of himself to quicken himself; he doth not so much as desire the quickening grace of God, till God gives the grace of desire. Alas! the understanding is naturally so blind, the heart so hard, and the will so stout and stubborn, that none but a divine power can enlighten the one, and efficaciously incline the other. It is a change of stone into flesh, of a dead sinner into a living saint. A change from nature to grace requires as much, or more of divine power, than a change from grace to glory. To see a creature naturally filthy, now, to delight in purity; to see a sinner, that by nature drinks iniquity like water, now thirsting after righteousness; to see a man that loathed the holy law, and holy ways of God, now longing to walk in them, and to come as to an exact conformity to God in them: these acts are above nature, contrary to nature, and consequently the God of grace is the author of them; "you hath he quickened."

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Our apostle having in the former verse described the Ephesians by their natural state and inward condition, as dead in trespasses and sins, doth in this verse set forth their misery in respect of their outward conversation; they walked in, and made a constant trade of sin: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, &c." Here note, 1. Their constant and continued course of life, set forth by *walking*; a metaphor frequently used in scripture, to set forth the tenor of a person's conversation; *wherein*, that is, in which sins in time past ye walked. Note, 2. The path in which they walked, in sins and trespasses; this denotes the abundance of sin that was in them, and committed by them with facility and ease, with satisfaction and delight: walking is a motion, a voluntary motion, a progressive motion, a pleasant and delightful motion; it is natural to men whilst unregenerate, to walk in sin with some sort of delight and pleasure; but alas! it is the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man, a sensual and not a rational satisfaction. Note, 3. The guides which they are said here to follow, the world and satan. 1. The world; that is, the corrupt course and sinful customs of the men of the world according to the time and place in which they live; for though the world alters in the course and fashion of it; from time to time, yet it is and ever will be the world still; and the unregenerate part of mankind will always walk according to the course of this world. The second guide which the Ephesians followed, was satan styled here a *prince*; in regard of that mighty power which he has in and over the men of the world; and "the prince of the power of the air," because he exercises his power by God's permission, in the lower regions of the air: all the elements and the meteors stoop to his direction; when God gives him leave, he can command the fire, the water, the winds, the thunders; all these powers that are in the air he can command, therefore he is called *prince*; yet here is matter of comfort to us, satan is the prince of the air only: if so, when the air shall cease, his kingdom shall cease; when the world is ended, his dominion and power is ended. Again, there is farther comfort in this, satan is prince of the air, but Christ is prince of heaven and earth, and the air too; both our prayers, whilst we live, and our souls when we die, pass through the air, but satan can neither intercept the one, nor stop the other, in their passage thither: Christ, when he ascended into heaven, went through the air, this kingdom of devils, and spoiled their principalities and powers; he entered heaven in the sight of them all, and led them all captive in triumph at his chariot, so that they shall never hurt the souls of his people, nor ever keep them from heaven. Again, the devil is here described by the influence he has upon the minds of sinners, "he works in the children of disobedience." Satan's way of working in and upon obstinate and impenitent sinners, is very powerful and efficacious, Hence it is here said, 1. That they are led by satan, "they walk according to the prince of the power of the air;" that is according to his guidance, according to his mind and

will: he has them at his beck: he says to one sinner, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh. 2. They are excited and assisted by satan, he worketh in them and suggests evil thoughts to them: he defiled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Ghost; he put a lie first into their hearts, and then into their mouths. Now from hence we may infer, that the Holy Spirit of God doth also inwardly work in pious persons, enabling them to will and to do, according to his own good pleasure: for it is unreasonable to conceive, that the evil spirit should have more power over the children of disobedience, in whom he dwells, than the good Spirit has in those pious persons, in whose hearts he is said to dwell: surely the Spirit of God doth more to the saving of souls, than the devil can do to the damning of them.

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Our apostle, in these words, is supposed to set forth the condition of the Jews by nature, as he had done before of the Gentiles; and that he declares, that even they had their conversation amongst the number of disobedient persons, and were no less obstinately rebellious against God, than the disobedient Gentiles, following the motions of their corrupt lusts and vile affections: nay, he affirms roundly, concerning himself and all the Jews, without exception, that as to their way and course, whilst unregenerate, they did whatsoever their corrupt minds willed, liked, and inclined to; and as to their state, "were by nature the children of wrath, as much as others;" yea, even as much as the despised Gentiles were. Here note, 1. The case of all men, Jews and Gentiles, alike described, children of wrath; that is, our estate and course is such by nature as deserves destruction, as tends to, and will end in destruction, without the renewing grace of God. Note, 2. The rise of this case, expressed by nature, which implies, 1. The term from which this commences, namely, from the first receiving of our beings and natures from our immediate parents, and together with the depravation of our natures, we received an obnoxiousness to the wrath and curse of God. 2. It implies the ground for which this wrath doth impend and hang over us, namely for that depravity of nature, which since the fall is found with us. Learn hence, 1. That original corruption is universal to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. 2. That this original corruption leads to, and will lodge under eternal wrath, every person in whom regeneration and transplantation into Christ are not found: "We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

5 ¶ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

St. Paul having set forth that miserable state, which both Jews and Gentiles were in by nature; namely, dead in sin, and children of wrath; he doth next set forth their deliverance from that woeful estate, by the rich mercy and free grace of God: "God, who is rich in mercy, &c." Here observe, 1. The author of our deliverance, God; and the moving or impulsive cause of it, rich mercy and great love. Where note, That God hath done more for us, infinitely more than he did for the angels: he showed love to them, but mercy to us; they are vessels of honor, but we are vessels of mercy; the object of mercy, is a creature in distress and misery. Note farther, That all the attributes in God are subjected to his love; this is the great prevailing attribute which sways all the rest; which way love goes, all attributes go; mercy, power, justice and wisdom, they all work in subordination to love, they are all at love's beck, and love sets them all on work for the good and benefit of the object loved. Note, 3. That the love which God bears to the children of men, is a great love; and the mercy which was set on work by it, is rich mercy; his love so great, that it can never be expressed; his mercy so rich, that it can never be conceived; rich mercy, is abundant mercy, inconceivable mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy. Note, 4. The blessed effects and fruits of this great love and rich mercy in God towards the Ephesians, in quickening them when dead, in saving them when lost, in doing all things for them when they had undone themselves; "God, who is rich in mercy—even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Learn hence, That poor lost sinners, do stand in need of all the riches of mercy that are in God, in order to their regeneration and salvation; if ever we be saved, it is the riches of mercy that must save us. Note, 5. How the apostle ascribes the whole work of their salvation to God's free grace, in opposition to any merit or worth in the persons to be saved; "by grace ye are saved." Learn hence, That the dependency on salvation has in the whole, and in all the parts of it, upon the free grace of God, is the great thing which St. Paul delighted to discover and make known to us here: By grace ye are saved; and he asserts it again, ver. 8. "By grace &c."

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The apostle here instances in two branches more of that salvation, which he had in the foregoing verse affirmed to be of grace, namely, that of our resurrection and glorification, both which are yet to come, and yet they are spoken of as already past; when the Father raised and glorified Christ, all believers were raised and glorified in him; for in his resurrection and glorification, he did sustain the quality of a public person, representing his whole church as their head and husband; and accordingly, believers are and may be said to be raised already, and glorified already, not in their own persons, but in Christ their Head; the apostle says, "God has raised us up, and has made us sit together;" not, he shall raise us, and will make us sit; to denote the dependency which our resurrection and glorification has upon Christ's, as the effect depends upon the cause, and also the undoubted certainty that they shall come to pass; Christ's resurrection and glorification being a pledge of ours. Learn hence, 1. That Christ rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven,

not as a private person, but as the common head and parent, root and representative of his church and people; so that what he has done, they may be said to have done; they rose in him, and are set down in heaven, in him; and blessed be God for the well-grounded hopes, that as we sit now together in Christ, so ere long we shall for ever sit together with Christ. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the cause of our resurrection and glorification; he is the efficient cause, the meritorious cause, and exemplary cause of our resurrection and glorification. Learn, 3. From the phrase here used of *sitting*; and of *sitting together in Christ*; that believers shall certainly partake of the same kingly state and dignity, of the same honor and glory, of the same delight and pleasure, of the same rest and tranquillity, of the same safety and security with Christ in heaven: "He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

These words are expressive of the final course or special end of that salvation which God propounded in his gracious workings upon the hearts of these Ephesians, namely, that in all present and succeeding ages, to the end of the world, he might give a convincing proof and example of the exceeding riches of his grace, for the encouragement of the greatest sinners to hope for mercy in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That the instances and examples of God's mercy, grace and goodness, love and kindness towards lost sinners, in one age, are and ought to be an encouragement to future generations to hope in the same mercy, to draw nigh to the same fountain of rich grace, for pardon of sin, and salvation by Christ. O! when we consider that others are as unworthy as ourselves (these Ephesians, for instance) have been admitted to the participation of such divine favors, Lord, what encouragement is it to us, and to others, to venture our salvation upon the same grace! Verily, the primitive christians were intended by God as patterns of grace to succeeding christians; nay, God did not only design them as patterns, but as pledges, that he would go on as he had begun, in after-ages to magnify the riches of his grace, in the conversion of the vilest and worst of sinners.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God.*

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

In these words our apostle informs the Ephesians, and in them all succeeding christians, that their complete salvation, from the first to the last, from the lowest to the highest step, depends upon God's free favor and grace in Christ, and not upon any merit or desert in ourselves; works having no meritorious or casual influence upon our salvation, (for they are not causes, but effects of that grace by which we are saved) to the intent that all boasting may be excluded, (No. 55.)

and that all the saints glorying may be in God, and not in themselves. Note here, 1. That believers are saved already, in some sense; not only because they have salvation begun in their new birth here, but they have already a right and title to, yea, a pledge and earnest of complete salvation:—Believers are saved here. Note, 2. That the believer's salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. Note, 3. That faith by and through which they are said to be saved, is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; faith is the gift of God as well as Jesus Christ, and the one as necessary as the other; for as the only way to heaven is by Christ, so the only way to Christ is by faith; as sin has put a vanity in the creature, so unbelief puts a vanity in Christ, that he should profit us nothing: Wrestle we then with God in prayer for a believing heart.

10 ¶ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, asserted the whole of our salvation to be of grace, and not of works, lest by magnifying of grace he should seem wholly to set aside good works, and the necessity of a holy life; he declares in this verse, that christians are ordained to them, created and prepared for them, and consequently they are effects flowing from grace, though not causes producing grace: "We are his workmanship:" 1. In our natural capacity, as men: 2. In our civil capacity, as such or such men, high or low, rich or poor: 3. In our spiritual capacity, as saints; this is intended here: believers are God's workmanship, as such, by supernatural renovation and spiritual regeneration; they are not only once made, as other persons, but they are new made, as saints; not by receiving new faculties, but new qualities; for grace is not a substantial, but a qualitative change. Lord, as we are all thy workmanship by natural creation, let us be so by gracious renovation likewise! "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Observe here, 1. The manner of this workmanship, *created*; this denotes two things: 1. That in their new making, they were intended to good works; this was God's mind and meaning in fore-ordaining that they *should walk in them*: 2. That in their new making they were fitted and prepared for good works, therefore did they receive a new nature from God, new principles, new affections, new dispositions and inclinations, on purpose to fit them for a holy life, fruitful in good works. Here note, That as good works are antecedently necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is absolutely necessary to good works; therefore, before there can be a good work, there must be a good workman, and that good workman must be God's workmanship, created anew through the power of God. Observe, 2. The meritorious cause of this spiritual workmanship, and that is Christ Jesus: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus;" that is through the intervening mediation of Christ Jesus. The life which we live in this new created state, namely, a life of holiness, it is purchased by his death, produced by his spirit; all spiritual life comes from God, through Christ as a Mediator; he is a quickening Head and life-giving Spirit: 1. John vi. 9. "God sent his Son, that we might live by him;" Christ is first our ransom,

and then the fountain of life unto our souls, *created in Christ Jesus*. Observe, 3. The final cause of this divine workmanship, and that is, *to good works*: all those that are new creatures, are created unto good works; so that a holy life is the necessary fruit of their new creation: new creatures are not to live idly, much less to live wickedly, but to make conscience of every duty, to bring forth fruit of piety towards God, of righteousness towards our neighbour, of love and universal charity towards all mankind; "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;" that is, God hath before prepared these works for us, and also prepared us for them; he hath prepared these works for us, first by his decree and purpose; he that ordained the end, salvation, hath appointed good works as the means thereto, by his precept and command: Micah vi. 8. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, &c." And as God hath prepared these works for us, so he hath prepared us for them by his Holy Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, by enlightening our minds, and inclining our wills. Learn hence, That new creatures are both ordained and obliged to, and also fitted and prepared for good works; God will have his children distinguished from others by the good they do, as well as the devil's children are characterized by the mischief, which they do. Observe, lastly, The constancy of the christian's duty declared, with reference to good works; he is to walk in them. Now walking denotes and implies both a way and action.—*Walking*, 1. It implies a way; and intimates plainly to us, that good works are the way and means to obtain salvation; we can never come at heaven as the end, but by walking in the path of good works as the way and means. 2. An action; *walking* denotes spontaneity in the principle, progress and perseverance in the motion; he that walks, goes forward, gets round, gives not over till he comes to his journey's end. A good man is as diligent and zealous, as constant and persevering in good works, as if he were to be saved for them and by them; and at the same time relies by faith on the merits of the Mediator for his acceptance with God, renouncing all confidence in his own good works; he knows they cannot justify themselves, much less can they justify him, who has a better righteousness than that of his best obedience, to denominate him righteous in the sight of God. Thus are we "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to good works; which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time passed Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Our apostle doth two things in these two verses, namely 1. He calls upon the Ephesians to remember their former miserable condition before conversion, when they were in their heathen and unregenerate state, when they were Gentiles, and reproached by the Jews for being uncircumcised, and looked upon by the Jews as dogs; he calls upon them

here, to remember their obligations to God, for bringing them out of this miserable state and deplorable condition: "Remember that in times past ye were Gentiles in the flesh." Learn hence, that believers, remembering and calling to mind the sin they were guilty of, and the misery they were exposed to, in their natural and unregenerate state, may many ways be of singular use and advantage to them, and be spiritually improved by them; namely, thus, 1. To excite us to magnify the greatness of God's love, and to admire the freeness and riches of his grace: this we shall certainly do, when we remember that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. 2. To inflame our love to Jesus Christ; Mary loved much, when she remembered that much was forgiven her. 3. To increase our godly sorrow for sin; "then shall they be confounded" when they remember "that I am pacified towards them for all their abominations." Ezek. xvi. 63. 4. To quicken us up to greater zeal and industry for God: it was the remembrance of what Paul was before conversion, that fired him with holy zeal, and carried him forth with such vigor and industry after his conversion, that he labored more abundantly than all the apostles. 5. The remembrance how bad we were ourselves before conversion, will be a special mean to keep up our hearts in hopes of, in prayers for, and endeavours after the conversion of others though very bad at present: *What they are, that thou once wert: and what thou now art, that they may also be*. Observe, 2. That as St. Paul does put the Ephesians in mind of their former miserable condition; in their heathenish and unregenerate state; so he does particularize the same and branch it forth into its distinct parts and members. When they were unconverted Gentiles. 1. "They were without Christ;" that is, without the knowledge of Christ, without any relation to him, or interest in him, without any union and communion with him, without any communications of life and light, of grace and holiness, of joy and comfort, of pardon and protection, received from him: they did not discern any excellency, nor taste any sweetness in Christ; and consequently had no love to him, no longings after him, no delight or satisfaction in him. Ah miserable condition of a Christless soul! if thou art without Christ, thou art without the spirit and grace of Christ to enlighten thee, to quicken thee, to sanctify and save thee. 2. They "were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;" that is, they were no members of Christ's church, either visible or invisible; they did not so much as profess themselves to be a people that stood in any relation to God; they were uncircumcised Gentiles; for in Jewry only *was* God known, and his name great in Israel, Psal. lxxvi. 1: Verily, whatever the world thinks of it, it is a very great favor from God, to be born within the pale of the visible church, and to have communion with her; for thereby we partake of many excellent privileges, namely, the word and sacraments, the communion of saints, together with the offers of Christ, and salvation by him. 3. "They were strangers to the covenants of promise;" that is, to the covenant of grace, first made with Adam after the fall, then with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, afterwards with Israel upon mount Sinai; for which reason, it is here by the apostle called *covenants*, in the plural number, though it was always one and the same covenant in substance; and its being called the *covenants of promise*, seems to point at the promise made to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. that first grand original promise, of which promise all the following promises were but branches, or more full explanations. Now

the Ephesians are here said to be strangers to the covenants of promise; because, as Gentiles, this covenant was never revealed to them, nor any offer of it made by the ministry of the word, and consequently they could have no actual interest in the blessings and privileges of it. This intimates to us, that for men to live, and die without an offer of the covenant of grace made unto them, is a woeful, sad and dangerous condition, because their salvation is rendered in an ordinary way impossible, forasmuch as the terms upon which salvation may be had, are concealed from them. 4. They were *without hope*; that is they were without the grace of hope, and without the means of hope; they were without hopes of redemption, without hopes of pardon and reconciliation, and consequently without any well-grounded hope of eternal life and salvation: such as are Christless, must be hopeless;—such as are without faith, must needs be without hope; and such as are without the promise, must necessarily be without faith; for the promise is the ground of faith, and faith is the ground of hope. Learn, That for a person to be without a well grounded hope of future happiness is a very deplorable case and condition; but all such as are without the pale of the christian church, without the bond of the covenant of grace, without the offer of a Saviour in the gospel, they must be without hope, even in this life, and so are of all men most miserable. 4. They were “without God in the world;” that is, without the knowledge of the true God, without worshipping of him as God, without any alliance or trust in him, without performing any obedience to him: not that the Ephesians, and other Heathens lived without all sense of a deity, for they worshipped false gods abundantly; but they lived without any sense or sensible apprehension of the majesty and holiness of the true God: now this is to live without God in the world; and verily, such a life is worse than death. The apostle calls all the Gentiles, not only the barbarous and savage, but the best polished and civilized nations, *Atheists*, because they wanted the right knowledge of God by and through a Mediator: there is no knowing God acceptably, except we know him in Christ, and approach unto him by Christ. In this affecting manner doth our apostle set before the Ephesians their dark and dismal state, whilst Gentiles, and before brought into the christian church, by preaching the gospel of Christ unto them: “they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” God grant that every unregenerate sinner may think of it, till his heart and soul are affected with it!

13 But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

The apostle having set before the Ephesians the black and dark part of their lives, before the conversion to christianity, in the foregoing verse; comes here in this to acquaint them with the blessed change which was made in their state, and by whom. Now, says he, in or by Christ Jesus, “ye, who were sometimes afar off,” namely, from Christ, his church, his covenant, from saving hope, and from God himself, are made as nigh as the Jews, and have as much right to expect the aforesaid benefits as they, the blood of Christ having purchased them for you, and sealed them to you.—“Ye, that were before afar off, are now made nigh by the blood

of Christ.” Where note, That persons who are most remote, and at the farthest distance from God, are sometimes unexpectedly brought home unto him; “Ye, who were afar off, are now made nigh.” Note, 2. That it is owing to the blood of Christ, to his death and sufferings, that any soul is brought into a state of nearness unto God, and finds acceptance with him: “Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 (Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace:

He is our peace; that is, 1. He is the mediator of our peace, the peace-maker betwixt God and man. 2. He is our peace; that is the purchaser of our peace. 3. He is our peace; that is the establisher of our peace. All which is to be understood not only of peace betwixt God and man, but also betwixt man and man *who hath made both one*; that is, both Jews and Gentiles one church. Here note, That there was a very great and deep-rooted enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles, until Christ purchased their peace and reconciliation. The Jews derided, scorned, and hated the Gentiles, as unclean, compared them to dogs and swine; the Gentiles they reproached the Jews for circumcising their flesh, esteemed them, of all nations, the worst; and would hold their nose at the Jews when they met them, and cry *O fatentes Judæi!* O ye stinking Jews! and turn away their eyes from them. Learn, from hence then, That the uniting of both Jew and Gentile into our church, was one blessed effect and sweet fruit of the purchase of Christ's blood; Christ's offering of himself was intended as a sacrifice for enmities between man and man, as well as for enmities between God and man; “He is our peace who hath made both one.” Observe next, What Christ hath done in order to his making peace between Jew and Gentile: 1. He has abolished the ceremonial law, called here a *partition-wall* between the Jews and the Gentiles; in allusion, no doubt to that wall in Solomon's temple, which separated the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles, that they could neither come at, nor look at one another. So that this partition-wall being said to be broken down, intimates to us, that Jew and Gentile, who before had two manners of religious, the one in and under a covenant with God, the other other afar off, and without God, yet now by Christ are both adopted into the same church, partakers of the same covenants, incorporated into the same faith, intitled to the same glory. 2. Christ has abolished the enmity and perpetual strife which was occasioned between Jew and Gentile, upon the account of the observation of the ceremonial law, and the ordinances thereunto belonging; “He hath abolished the enmity, that is, the ceremonial law, which made the enmity between them. The ceremonial law was the cause and continuer of that enmity which was betwixt Jew and Gentile; this is called “the law of commandments contained in ordinances;” because Almighty God did actually separate the Jews from all the world, by giving them ordinances and commandments, judi-

cial and ceremonial laws, containing many visible and external observances, which forbade them to communicate with the Gentile world. Now Christ being come in the flesh, all those observances ceased, and those legal ordinances vanished away; all nations became blessed in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles became one church, both alike the people of God, both admitted equally into covenant, and both alike blessed. Here note, That the moral law, summarily comprized and comprehended in the *ten commandments*, was no part of the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile; nor did the death of Christ abrogate this law, or is it at all abolished; but it was the law of *ceremonies* only, which the sufferings and death of Christ put an end unto; for when he died, they all vanished; as the shadow disappears when the substance is come.

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;)

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that one end of Christ's death was to make peace between Jew and Gentile; here he assures us, a second end was, to make peace between God and man; that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile thus united, to an offended God. This he did by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, whereby he did destroy that enmity which was betwixt God and man, by undergoing the punishment of sin, the cause of that enmity. Learn hence, That in order to our reconciliation with God and being at peace with him, a price was paid by Christ upon the cross, to satisfy divine justice and atone divine displeasure. Observe, next, That Christ having purchased peace, he came and preached peace both to Jews and Gentiles: to the Gentiles, said here to be *afar off*, and to the Jews that *were nigh*: But how did Christ preach to the Gentiles; where do we read that he ever did so? *Ans.* Though he did not in his own person preach peace to the Gentiles, yet he gave commission to the apostles to preach to them, Matt. xxviii. and they and their successors, pursuant to such commission, did preach peace unto them, even to them that were *afar off*, and *them that were nigh*. Learn hence, That when the ministers of Christ do come in his name, and by a commission received from him, to preach peace, and offer terms of reconciliation unto lost sinners, it is all one as if Christ himself did come and preach; he expects the same readiness from them in receiving the message, as if it were delivered to them from his own mouth; and will treat the despisers of his ministers, and the contemners of their message, as if the affront were offered immediately to his own person. Observe, 3. The apostle's argument to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were effectually called, by the preaching of the gospel, to partake of peace and reconciliation with God; because they had both equal access and liberty to approach unto God in all holy duties, as unto a father, by the manuduction of the Spirit; *through him*, that is, through Jesus Christ, *we*, both Jews and Gentiles

have access, that is, liberty of approach, *by one* and the same Spirit, *unto the Father*. Learn hence, that through Jesus Christ, all believers, of what denomination soever, have access to God by the Spirit of Grace. *Quest.* What doth this *access to the Father* denote? *Ans.* It supposes a preceding distance between God and us, both a natural and a moral distance, as creatures, and as sinners: it denotes a propinquity and nearness unto God in opposition to this distance, and that our approach to God is free and voluntary, friendly and complacential, peculiar and privileged, fruitful and advantageous. *Quest.* 2. In what respects have believers access to God as to a father? *Ans.* In this life they have access to the Father's heart, and love to the Father's ear and audience, to the Father's care and protection; to his providing care, to his guiding and counselling care, to his comforting and supporting care, but especially to his sanctifying care. *Quest.* 3. Through whom have we this access to God? *Ans.* Through Jesus Christ, through his mediation and manuduction, we have access to God's heart, to God's ear, to his fatherly care on earth, and to his gracious presence in heaven. *Quest.* 4. What influence the Holy Spirit gives unto this *access unto the Father*. *Ans.* It is by his influence that they are at first brought home to the Father; he prepares them for this access unto the Father; he stirs up holy affections, and enkindles holy desires in them after God, and helps them to make improvement, an holy, fruitful and advantageous improvement of all their access unto God.

19 Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Our apostle began this chapter, with setting before the Ephesians the horror and dread of their heathenish state before converted to christianity; here he closes the chapter with an account of that glorious and blessed state which the christian religion, embraced by them, had translated them into; "Now, ye are no more strangers, but fellow-citizens, &c." Where observe, 1. Their present happy condition is set forth, both negatively and positively; negatively by showing what they were not, neither *strangers* nor *foreigners*, but *freemen* and *fellow-citizens*, &c. Where it must be remembered, that all the nations of the world, except the Jews, were called strangers to the God of Israel, but the Jews were all *propinqui*, his neighbours, or near ones; but, says the apostle, there is now no such difference, for the believing Gentiles are equally admitted with the believing Jews, to the privileges of the New Jerusalem, and are fellow citizens with one another; they are no longer aliens

from the commonwealth of Israel, but freemen. Observe, 2. The apostle sets forth their happy condition positively, under a threefold similitude; namely, that of a city, that of an household or family, and that of an edifice or building. Note, 1. Our apostle compares the christian church (of which the Ephesians now were members) to a city, and shows, that themselves, as believing Gentiles, had a right to all the privileges and immunities of that city, as well as the Jews: who accounted themselves the only free members of it: "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints;" that is, the patriarchs and prophets, and all other members of the church of the Jews; ye are free denizens, burgesses, and enfranchised citizens, with the rest of that holy society, ye are all members of the Holy catholic church. Note, 2. Our apostle compares the christian church to an household or family; "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Now this metaphor intimates a greater degree of nearness to, and communion with the church, than what the former metaphor did imply, there being a straiter tie of familiarity and friendship between the members of a family, than between the members of a city. Whence we learn, That the church of Christ under the gospel, is God's great household or family, in a peculiar manner admitted to an intimate communion with him, in a special way provided and cared for by him; and every sincere christian becomes a member of this blessed family, and enjoys all the privileges thereof: "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Note, 3. St. Paul proceeds yet farther, and compares the church of Christ to an edifice, or stately building: "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c." Now this similitude holds forth unto us, still a farther degree of nearness to, and communion with, God and his church, than the former: what can be more closely united, and more strictly joined together, than stones in a building? And our apostle calling the church an holy temple, seems to allude to Solomon's temple, which was a type of the christian church, as the tabernacle was of the Jewish church; the tabernacle was ambulatory and changeable, made of decaying and corruptible materials, and so fitly typified the Jewish dispensation, which was temporary and transient; the temple was made of durable and rich materials, and thereby a proper type of the christian church, which is called "a kingdom that cannot be shaken." But, observe further, How our apostle doth describe this stately edifice, this spiritual building, the christian church, these several ways; 1. By its foundation which it stands upon, namely, the apostles and prophets; that is, upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, not upon their persons; Christ himself being the personal foundation and chief corner-stone. Learn, That though Christ himself be the builder of, and the chief corner-stone in his church, yet he employs his ministers now, as he did the prophets and apostles of old, to lay the foundation, and carry on the superstructure, and no one apostle had a privilege in this above another; and therefore, for the Pope, as St. Peter's successor, to style himself the Foundation of the catholic church, is an imprudent presumption; for no more is here said of Peter, than is said of all the apostles and prophets. 2. The church, as a spiritual building or temple, is here described by the unity and compactness of its parts, "in whom all the building fitly framed together;" that is, all the members of the church, are by faith firmly joined to Christ as the foundation, and to one another by love, and their unity is both their strength and their beauty,

(No. 55.)

3. This building is described by its growth and perpetual increase, "it groweth unto an holy temple." The church groweth two ways, by an addition of new and particular converts, and by an addition of new graces in every particular convert: where remark, how this spiritual edifice, the church of Christ, differs from all other buildings; both the whole of it, and all the individual parts of it, are endued with life, a life flowing from Christ the foundation, a life far from a state of perfection, "in whom all the building groweth;" all a christian's life and spiritual growth flow from his union and communion with Christ; "in him all the building groweth." 4. This building, namely, the christian church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, is here described by the end and design of Christ in erecting this growing edifice; namely, to be an holy temple unto God, wherein now, (as in the material temple of old) he may manifest his gracious presence, and be perpetually worshipped, glorified, and served: the whole church, or collective body of believers jointly, and each believer severally and apart, are a spiritual and holy temple unto the Lord, in and by whom all spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up, and all duties of new and sincere obedience acceptably performed.

CHAPTER III.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is, to let the Ephesians know, that he was now a prisoner at Rome for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in general, and consequently, that they (the Ephesians) had no cause to be offended at his present sufferings, in particular, especially considering that his calling to that work and office, was by divine revelation: and that he was not only extraordinarily called to it, but qualified and fitted for it: from all which considerations, he exhorted them from fainting upon the score of his sufferings, which he gladly underwent for so good a cause, and in discharging so honorable an employment; accordingly, he thus bespeaks them:

FOR this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles;

"For this cause," that was, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in general; and in particular, for asserting, that the privileges of justification and salvation by Christ, belonged equally to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, though they were not circumcised: for this cause I was persecuted and imprisoned by the Jews. Where observe, The apostle styles himself Christ's prisoner, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ;" he was at once Christ's prisoner, the Jews' prisoner, the Romans' prisoner, the Gentiles' prisoner; Christ's prisoner, as suffering for his gospel; the Jews' prisoner, as suffering by their accusation; the Romans' prisoner, as suffering by their sentence; the Gentiles' prisoner, as suffering for his labors in order to their salvation. Lord, what a title of honor is here put upon the apostles! "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ;" his imprisonment for Christ was verily a greater honor, and matter of higher glorying, than his rapture in the third heavens.

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore in few words;

Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel; it is styled "the grace of God;" partly, because the glad tidings which the gospel brings, are the effect and product of God's grace and favor, and partly because the gospel is the instrument and means of working grace in the souls of persons. Observe, 2. The title given to St. Paul's apostleship, he styles it "the dispensation of the grace of God;" because God had commissioned him to declare and dispense the gospel of grace to them; Christ's ministers are the dispensers of his mind to the children of men. Observe, 3. The title here given to the calling of the Gentiles; he styles it a *mystery*. The calling of the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, was a mystery hid from ages. Observe, 4. The way and manner how St. Paul came by the knowledge of this mystery; it was divine revelation from heaven; ver. 3. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery." The mystery of man's redemption in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular, to the participation of that grace, was made known by divine revelation to the apostles, by God himself. The truth is, the redemption of a lost world, by the incarnation, death, and passion of the Son of God, is so stupendous and surprising, so wonderful and amazing, that the very thought of it had been the highest blasphemy, if God himself had not revealed it.

4 Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.)

5 Which in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Our apostle here proceeds in setting forth this great mystery of man's redemption in general, and the calling of the Gentiles in particular; he styles it a *mystery*. 1. Now, a mystery is a purpose and decree of God, unknown to, and unsearchable by, man, unless first by revelation discovered and made known by God himself; such a mystery was the whole gospel in general, and this article concerning the calling of the Gentiles in particular. 2. St. Paul styles it a mystery, "in other ages" of the church "not made known," that is, not so plainly and clearly, unto the sons of men, Jews or Gentiles; for the calling of the Gentiles was foretold and prophesied of under the Old Testament, but darkly and obscurely; the time when, the manner how, and the means by which were not understood, till now the Holy Spirit of God revealed it to the apostles and evangelical prophets under the New Testament. 3. The apostle amplifies and sets forth the glorious excellency of that mystery which here he

had mention of; namely, that the Gentiles should have access into the church, with an entrance by the door of circumcision be joint heirs of the heavenly inheritance with all believers, and together with the Jews, taken into the bond of the covenant; and finally, that they were brought into this happy estate by the preaching of the gospel, and by believing and obeying of it. Learn hence, That the calling of the neglected and despised Gentiles to the knowledge of Christ, and the participation of the gospel privileges with the Jews, was a great mystery, awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy, with all thankfulness to be acknowledged; "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body, &c.

7 Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

As if the apostle had said, "Of this gospel it pleased God to make me a successful minister or dispenser, furnishing me with ordinary and extraordinary gifts and graces from his Holy Spirit, for that weighty work and service; unto me, even unto me I say, was this special favor granted, though unworthy, (being "less than the least" of all saints, because once a great persecutor,) yet unto me was the apostolic office committed, to preach unto the Gentiles the incomparable and incomprehensible riches of God's mercy towards them in Christ, in receiving them fully, freely, and finally, into covenant with himself; and to make known unto all men what is the communion or fellowship of this mystery; namely, that the Gentiles with the Jews should have one faith, one Lord, one hope, one heavenly inheritance; which was a mystery hid in the secret intention and decree of God, until discovered by divine revelation." Observe here, 1. How careful the apostle was to assert his authority and apostolical commission, "I was made a minister; and how he refers his calling immediately to the grace of God, "unto me was this grace given." It was the grace of God converted him, it was the grace of God revealed the gospel to him, and that called him to reveal it unto others. Observe, 2. How the apostle attributes the success of his ministry to the power of God, and not to his own endeavours, "by the effectual working of his power." The grace of God in him, and the power of God accompanying him, was effectual to the conversion of very many sinners, and to the producing of great signs and miracles which were wrought by him. Observe, 3. The noble subject of St. Paul's sermons, what it was he preached amongst the Gentiles; namely, the unsearchable riches of Christ;" riches imply abundance, and abundance of such

things as are of worth and value; in Christ are riches, all riches eminently and transcendently found; riches of grace, and riches of glory; and these are called *unsearchable*; not as if it were unlawful to search after them, but because after our utmost search after them, we can never fully discover them. Learn hence, That there are such mazes, such mysteries of love and goodness in our Lord Jesus Christ, as, though it be our duty to be continually searching after them, yet we can never, by our utmost searching, fully discover them and find them out. Observe, 4. The humble and low opinion which this great apostle had of himself; he styles himself not barely the least, but "less than the least of all saints;" he was, in his own esteem, as little as could be "less than the least;" a double diminutive; a comparative made of a superlative: thus he debases himself, upon consideration of his former enmity against Christ and his church: lower he could not lie than he lays himself; the greatest and chiefest of sinners; the least, yea, less than the least of all saints; growth in grace, and increase in humility, accompany one another.

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the holy angels, they are styled *principalities and powers*, because God makes use of their powerful ministry in governing the kingdoms and principalities of this world; and they are said to be in *heavenly places*; not as if they were never here upon earth below, but because the ordinary place of their residence is in heaven above. Observe, 2. That the angels are not omniscient and all-knowing. The wisdom of God in the work of redemption was a secret unknown to the glorious angels; they did not know it until God made it known unto them. Observe, 3. That God did not make the mystery of the gospel or the glorious work of redemption, known unto angels immediately, but occasionally; by the revelation of it first to the church, and by the church to them: as if the apostle had said, "Had it not been for the light given to, and spread abroad in the church, the angels had been in the dark about the mysteries of the gospel to this day." "By the church is made known unto the angels the manifold wisdom of God."

Quest. But how could the church communicate this knowledge to angels? *Ans.* Either the angels did gather up their knowledge of these mysteries, by the ministry of the apostles preaching them to the world in a way of information, or else they saw, as in a glass, the manifold wisdom of God, and the dispensations of his mercy, grace and goodness towards his church, in a way of contemplation. Observe, 4. The title here given to the work of redemption; it is styled, "The manifold wisdom of God." O, how full of variety was the wisdom of God in man's recovery! It is of many folds and plaits, manifold in kind, manifold in degrees, manifold in its administration; there are manifold secrets in this wisdom, some less perfectly seen, some more perfectly understood, and some that will never perhaps be thoroughly understood: doubtless there are some secrets in the wisdom of God, which it belongs only to God to understand and know. Blessed be God, that so much of the manifold wisdom of God, in the glorious work of redemption, is made known unto us, as will eternally ravish and delight us.

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Our apostle here shows, 1. That whatever the wisdom of God has done in the work of redemption, was from all eternity purposed to be done, and that our Lord Jesus Christ was the person by whom God would in time execute his eternal purpose; "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus." Next, he shows the great and gracious privilege which all believers are admitted to the participation of, by and through our Lord Jesus Christ: namely, boldness, access and confidence; "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of him." *Access*; that is, a liberty of approaching to God as a father: *Boldness*; that is, a freedom of speech in delivering our heart, our whole mind and heart, to him in the duty of prayer, and thanksgiving: *Confidence*; that is, a well grounded persuasion, that both our persons and performances shall find acceptance with God. All which privileges are enjoyed by the exercise of faith in Christ: "We have boldness, access, and confidence through the faith of him." Lastly, he exhorts them not to faint under, or be discouraged at his present sufferings, much less to backslide from christianity upon that account, seeing that his tribulations were both profitable, and also glorious and honorable; "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

Observe here, 1. That new converts to christianity are subject to fainting and drooping discouragements at the news of sufferings. Observe, 2. That persecution for the gospel of Christ, is a trial, not only to those who are under it, but to those that hear of it. St. Paul here was more afraid of the Ephesians' fainting under their sufferings than he was of his own fainting, and therefore he doth carefully guard against it; I desire you not to faint at my tribulations." Observe, 3. That the persecutions and afflictions, the hardships and severities, which the ministers of Christ do for the most part endure and undergo, are for the sake of their people; they might shift off and shun the cross as well as other men, did not love to the souls of their people engage them to suffer the sharpest persecution for their sake: I desire ye faint not at my tribulations for you; that is for preaching the gospel to you. Observe, 4. From those words, "My tribulation which is your glory." So honorable it is to suffer, that not only the ministers of Christ themselves, who suffer, are thereby honored, but the people of their charge also are greatly honored, thereby; it testifying God's high esteem of such a people, in sending his ministers not only to teach and instruct them, but to suffer with them, yea, even to die for them. Which consideration ought not only to prevent our people's fainting at our sufferings, but should make them glory in them, and take encouragement from them: "My tribulation," saith St. Paul, "is your glory."

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians, in the foregoing verse, not to faint at his tribulations for the gospel, here he puts up a most affectionate prayer to God for them on the same account; "For this cause," and in order to this end, "I bow my knees, &c." Now in this affectionate and most excellent prayer of the apostle, we have several particulars worthy of our notice and remark. As, 1. The humble gesture which the apostle used in his prayers, "I bow my knees;" thereby expressing the fervent frame of his heart in prayer. Learn hence, That the gestures which we use in prayer should be such as may best express our reverence of God, and denote our profound humility before him. Observe, 2. The person prayed to, God, under the appellation of a *Father*, and in particular, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed be God, that believers and Christ have one and the same Father; he by nature, we by grace; he by eternal generation, we by gracious adoption. By virtue of this relation, we may expect to be heard in prayer, as Christ was, and to be helped in our diseases, as Christ was, and in God's good time to be possessed of the inheritance of children, as Christ is. Observe, 3. The title given to the church, it is styled God's *family*, his household; all the saints on earth, whether Jews or Gentiles, and all the glorified angels and saints in heaven, do make but one family. There is but one catholic or universal church, comprehending all its members, both in heaven and earth; and all within the church are of one kindred and line, descending of one common Father; and his family is named, that is, united under Christ, he being the head of all. Observe, 4. The mercy prayed for, ver. 16. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Where note, 1. The mercy itself, spiritual strength, strength in the *inner man*, to enable them to bear afflictions, to endure persecutions, to resist temptations, to grapple with all their spiritual enemies in the progress of their christian course. Note, 2. The fountain from whence all spiritual strength flows, and that is, from the Holy Spirit, "strengthened with might by his Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit of God that constantly renews the believers' strength, by upholding and actuating their graces, which otherwise would fade and wither, would languish and die. So many and so mighty are our spiritual enemies that we have to wrestle with, and strive against, that except we be under-propped and strengthened by the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit in the inner man, we cannot keep our ground, and much less get ground of our enemy, but shall become an easy prey to every temptation. Note, 3. The moving, impelling, or impulsive cause from whence the foregoing mercy is expected to proceed and flow, namely, from the rich and glorious mercy of God; "God grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened." In all our approaches to God for any blessings, especially for spiritual blessings, it is our duty to direct the eye of our faith to that inexhaustible fountain of

rich mercy, and almighty power in God, whereby he is both able and willing to bestow upon us whatever is agreeable to his holy will. "God grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Our apostle here proceeds with affectionate ardor to pray for further spiritual blessings on the behalf of his beloved Ephesians; 1. He prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts by his most holy faith. The phrase of *dwelling in us*, imports a very close and intimate union between Christ and believers; he dwells in them subjectively and effectively, by his gracious influences, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening impressions. The holy Spirit is the bond of union on Christ's part, and faith on our part. 2. He prays that they may be *rooted and grounded* in love; that is, they might be so deeply possessed with a sense of God's love, that they might find their hearts inflamed with love to God, and one towards another; and that love might be the very habit of their souls, and rooted nature in them. 3. He prays that the Ephesians may comprehend what is the "breadth, length, depth, and height" of the love of God, and the mysteries of the gospel; intimating to us, that we are not to content ourselves with a superficial view of God's free love in Christ, but to make an accurate inspection into all the dimensions of it; to view it in its breadth, as extending to all ages, Jewish and christian; in its length, as reaching from eternity to eternity; in its depth, as it stoops down to succour and relieve the vilest and the greatest, if penitent sinners; in its height, whereby it reaches up to heaven, and entitles us to the joy and felicity of the saints above. Verily, the love of God, in Christ to a lost world, is so vast and boundless, so rich and matchless, exceeding not only our comprehension, but conceptions also, that not only the natural man cannot understand it, but the renewed man also is unable to fathom it, but must be daily endeavouring to take dimensions of it; for the love of Christ surpassingly transcends the knowledge of the most illuminated believer; it surpasses natural knowledge, apostolical knowledge, yea, angelical knowledge; "that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height." 4. He prays that they may know the superlative love of Christ, which surpasseth all human understanding and knowledge, implying that the love of Christ to a lost world is a transcendent love; that the knowledge of it may be attained in some measure; that it is our duty, to seek after it, and search into it; but after all, we can never fully comprehend it: what created understanding can know what is unknowable, or comprehend what is incomprehensible? Learn, There are such dimensions and degrees in the love of Christ to sinners, which, at least in this present and imperfect state, do surpass all comprehension and conception; also, that love

whereby he took our nature upon him, that love whereby he took our sins upon him, is so stupendous and amazing, that the holy angels lawfully admire it, but even their enlarged capacities cannot fully comprehend it. 5. He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God: that is, with such measures of grace, knowledge, faith, holiness and love, which God hath appointed believers unto, and they are capable of in this life. Note here, 1. That there is a fulness in God, which we neither can be filled with, nor may we strive to be filled with: God is essentially full, originally full, independently full, inexhaustibly full of all holiness and grace; now this fulness of his is undiminishable and consequently incommunicable. Note, 2. That there is a fulness of God which we may, and therefore ought to pray and endeavour to be filled with, namely, to be filled with the knowledge of God, to be filled with the grace and Spirit of God, to be filled with the wisdom of God, that we may know God more, serve him better, glorify him on earth, and be glorified with him in heaven: in a word, we may pray for, and strive to be filled with such a measure of the fulness of God and his grace, as God shall see fit to give, and as our capacities are or may be prepared to receive; God is not straitened towards us, let us not be straitened in ourselves; *Open thy mouth wide*, says God, *and I will fill it*. Blessed be God for a present fulness of sufficiency, and for the hopes of a future fulness to satiety.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

21 Unto him *be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Observe here; 1. How our apostle closes his prayer with thanksgiving and praise; intimating to us, that praise should evermore conclude that work which prayer began, and that spiritual blessings principally deserve our praises. Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul's faith fixed upon, in his approaches to God in prayer and praise, and that is, his omnipotence or almighty power. In all our addresses to God, it is our duty to have such apprehensions, and use such expressions concerning him, as may most strengthen our faith. *He is able*, saith the apostle, "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Note here, The comprehensive fulness of this expression, he is able *to do for us*, to do *abundantly* for us, to do exceeding abundantly for us, *above what we ask*, yes, to do exceeding abundantly for us, *above what we can think as well as ask*. O! how narrow, short and poor are our prayers, compared with the power of God! It is much that the tongue can ask; it is more that the mind can think: but the Lord is able to do for us, not only above what we can ask, but abundantly above what we can think. Lord, what an everlasting spring of comfort is this! what encouragement doth it administer to thy people! what encouragement to prayers, what encouragement in prayer! They pray to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think. Observe, 3. That it is not God's absolute power that St. Paul bottoms his faith in prayer upon, (for God can do many things that he never

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will do,) but it is his operative, promised, and formerly experienced power, "according to the power that worketh in us:" that is, according to that infinite and almighty power which God had exerted and put forth in their first conversion: this power was, and is a main prop for confidence in prayer. Learn hence, That the experience we have had of God's gracious power in working in us, by converting and quickening grace, may and ought to confirm our faith, that he will do exceeding abundantly for us, above what we can expect, yea, above what we can ask or think, when we are upon our knees in prayer before him. Observe, 4. The concluding doxology: "To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Where note, 1. The divine praise given to Almighty God, namely, that of *glory*; *To him be glory*. Glory is the fountain of all excellency in the creatures: they all shine with beams borrowed from God's excellencies, as stars shine with the light they receive from the body of the sun: Almighty God is that infinitely glorious being, in whom all the excellencies and perfections in the creatures are eminently and transcendently found. Note, 2. The persons giving this glory unto God, the church; *To whom be glory in the Church*. True, it is the duty of all reasonable creatures to set forth God's glory; but only the church (holy and gracious persons alone) can perform it in an active and acceptable manner. Note, 3. The person through whom this duty becomes acceptable unto God, through Christ Jesus; "To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus." The duty of praise and thanksgiving is what we owe to God for received favors, and indeed is all we have to pay him; but neither this, nor any other duty, can find acceptance with God, but by and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note, 4. The duration and continuance of this duty of thanksgiving, "throughout all ages, world without end." As God shall never want glory from his church, so there shall always be a church to the end of the world, to give glory unto God, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Note lastly, In this divine doxology, after what manner, and with what affection this praise is given, intimated in the word *Amen*; *World without end. Amen*. This *Amen*, 1. Is a note of assent, and as such used by the Jews and Christians in all ages, at the end of prayers, to testify that they assented and agreed to what was put up to God in their name, and on their behalf. Again, 2. It importeth earnest desire. Hence Jeremiah (chap. xviii. 6.) said *Amen* to the prophecy of Hananiah, concerning the return of the captives to their land, to show how earnestly he desired that it might be so. 3. It imports steadfast faith, that the thing we pray for shall be granted; and accordingly, in the testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*, so be it; so let it be; so let it be, O Lord for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

Our apostle having, in the three foregoing chapters, managed the doctrinal part of this epistle, and treated of the great and deep mysteries of the christian religion, comes now (as his manner was in all his epistles) to the practical part of it; wherein he exhorts his beloved Ephesians to many excellent christian duties, which Almighty God expected from them, for all the distinguishing favors and privileges received from him. These duties are laid down, first, more generally, and then more particularly;

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the more general duties he begins with here in this chapter, ver. 1, 2.

I Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

As if he had said, "Seeing the riches of God's grace in Christ have so abounded towards you, who were once Ephesian idolaters, but now converted Gentiles, I Paul, who am a prisoner for preaching the gospel, and for declaring this grace to you, do most affectionately exhort you, that ye live answerably to your profession, and according to the great obligation of your high and holy vocation from heathenism to christianity." Here note, 1. the person exhorting and beseeching, "I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you; I that am in bonds for Christ, I that am imprisoned for preaching the gospel to you, and for proselyting you by it to christianity." Nothing can more oblige a people to hearken to the exhortations of the ministers of Christ, than this consideration, that the truths which they deliver to them, they stand ready, both to suffer for, and to seal with their precious blood: "I the prisoner of the Lord beseech you." Note, 2. The comprehensive duty exhorted to, "That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called;" worthy, that is, beseeching and becoming your holy profession, answerable to the dignity and obligation of your christian name; or, as he exhorteth the Philippians, chap. i. 20. Walk as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ: but when may we be said so to do? *Ans.* When we walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel; answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel; answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, the example of Jesus Christ; answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords. Finally, to walk worthy of our vocation is to walk answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the christian up to the expectation of.

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Having exhorted them to the practice of their general duty; namely, to *walk worthy of their holy vocation*, in the former verse; in these two verses he presses upon them more special and particular duties, the chief of which is the duty of christian unity and concord, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit." The word signifies, a diligent, industrious, and united endeavour to preserve and keep, to support and maintain, the unity of the Spirit: an union of heart and spirit, an unity of faith and doctrine, an unity of judgment and affection, amongst all the professors of christianity. Observe, 2. The means by which this duty may be performed, and the unity of the Spirit maintained; namely, *in or by the bond of peace*; a peaceable disposition and temper, a peaceable deportment and behaviour, is the bond or ligament which binds christians together; whereas discord and division cuts that bond asunder. Observe, 3.

The special graces which the apostle recommends unto us, as excellent helps for preserving unity and peace: namely, humility, meekness, and mutual forbearance. 1. Humility, ver. 2. *With all lowliness*; that is, with all submissiveness of mind, and humble apprehensions of ourselves. What Tertullus said of Festus flatteringly, we may say of humility truly, *By thee, O humility, we enjoy great quietness*: the humble man is the peaceable man; only by pride cometh contention. 2. Meekness, which consists in a backwardness to provoke others, or to be provoked by others: as lowliness stood in opposition to pride, so meekness here stands in opposition to perverseness; *with all lowliness and meekness*. 3. Long-suffering and mutual forbearance: when christians are so far from resenting every wrong, and revenging every injury that is offered to them, that they can bear with one another's weaknesses, cover each other's infirmities, pity another's failings, and pardon each other's provocations. And this duty of mutual forbearance, ought to proceed from a principle of love to each other, "forbearing one another in love."

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

6 One Lord, and one Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all,

The apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to a strict unity and concord amongst themselves, next proceeds to enforce his exhortation with several arguments; and there are no fewer than seven summed up in the three verses now before us. 1. Says the apostle, there is *one body*, that is, one universal church, whereof ye are all members, 2. There is *one Spirit*, by which we are all animated and enlivened, and therefore keep the unity of the Spirit. 3. There is *one hope* of eternal life, by which we are all excited: our inheritance in heaven is the same; God doth not give one a double portion, or a party-colored coat, above another; but it is called an *inheritance in light*, because all are alike partakers of it, and sharers in it; the saints have all one hope, therefore should have all but one heart. 4. *One Lord* Jesus Christ, the Head of his church, the Saviour of the body, one whom we all profess to serve and obey: be ye therefore one, for your Lord is one. 5. There is *one faith*; that is, either one grace of faith whereby we believe, or one doctrine of faith which is believed; ye all believe in one and the same Saviour, and are all justified by him, after one and the same manner; therefore be ye also one; one in affection, as well as one in belief. 6. There is *one baptism*, one door by which we all enter into the church; both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, they are all one in Christ Jesus, and by one Spirit baptized into one body. 7. *One God and Father of all things*: and of all persons in Christ, whom we all expect one and the same salvation from: and this God is transcendently above all, and over all; his eye penetrates and pierces through you all, and he is in and among you all, as in his holy temple; therefore, such as endeavour to divide you, do as much as in them lies to divide God himself that dwells in you. This then is the sum of the apostle's argument: "Seeing ye are all member-

of one body, partakers of one Spirit, expectants of one hope, having one Lord and common Saviour, one faith and belief, one and the same baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and one and the same God and Father in Christ; seeing you are one in all these particulars, be one among yourselves, and "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." From the whole learn, That so many are the obligations, so strong the bonds and ties, which lie upon all the members of the church to be at unity among themselves; of one judgment, and of one heart; that such as violate these bonds, and culpably divide and separate themselves from communion with their brethren, Christ looks upon them no longer as members of his body, but as having rent and torn themselves from it.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith; When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Our apostle here, in these verses, supplies us with another weighty argument to persuade us "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" namely, that it was one great and chief end which Christ aimed at, in instituting the ministry of the word, in appointing the several officers in his church, of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and also in the several gifts which he bestowed upon those officers; he assures us, it was Christ's great design, in and by all these, to bring his people, not only to faith and knowledge, but "to unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God." And here, 1. Our apostle shows, that the diversity of gifts and graces, and the different measures and degrees of those gifts and graces bestowed by Christ upon the several members of the church, do all tend to preserve and to promote unity, they all coming from one and the same author, and being all given for one and the same end. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Learn hence, 1. That

there is grace given by Christ to all his members, bearing some proportion and similitude to that grace which was conferred upon Christ himself. Learn, 2. That the design of Christ, in dispensing his grace in different measures and degrees, is the general good of his church, and particularly for preserving and promoting unity and love amongst his members; for seeing every one has his several graces from God, and no one has all, if one hath that grace which another wants, and if one wants that grace which another has, it shows that we want the help of one another, and therefore ought to love one another: this is the apostle's argument. Next he proceeds to prove that Christ has dispensed this diversity of gifts amongst his members; affirming, that in the day of his ascension into the highest heavens, "he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." In which expression there is manifest allusion to the Roman conquerors, who in the day of their triumphs, scattered their magnificence and bounty, their largesses and donatives among their soldiers and subjects. Thus Christ, after he had triumphed over his own and his church's enemies upon the cross, rode in the triumphant chariot of his ascension into heaven, where he received gifts as the purchase of his blood, and shed forth those gifts of his Spirit in various kinds, upon his members in general, but upon his ministers in particular; which gifts, in the first ages of christianity, were extraordinary, as the gift of tongues and miracles, but now ordinary, and to continue to the end of the world. Now from the apostle's scope and design in this argument, we learn, That though diversity of gifts in the church, and divers measures of grace in and amongst the members thereof, are too often a sad occasion of division and strife, through the prevalency of envy and pride, and other dividing lusts, yet this great variety and diversity of gifts and graces, rightly considered, would be found to be one of the strongest ties and bonds of union, seeing we all stand in mutual need of the gifts and graces of each other. It is very evident, that our apostle's scope here is, to urge and enforce unity, from the diversity of gifts and graces which are amongst the members of the church; God forbid then, that they should occasion envy and animosities, strife and contention, rents and divisions. Our apostle's next argument for unity, is in the 11th and 12th verses, where he proves, that as the unity and education of the church, was the design of Christ in dispensing divers gifts and graces amongst the members of his church, so was it likewise his aim and end in instituting such variety of offices and officers in his church; for this end it was that he gave to his church by qualification and mission, first, *apostles*, sent forth first by his own mouth, to be witnesses of his doctrine and miracles, and then to preach the gospel throughout all the world, having received the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary manner, at the feast of Pentecost, to fit them for that service, Acts ii. 1, 2. Next, *prophets*, who explained the mysteries of faith, foretold things to come, and expounded the writings of the old prophets.— Then, *evangelists*, who were sent out by the apostles, some to plant, others to water the churches which they had planted, without being fixed to any particular place. Lastly, *pastors* and *teachers*, called also bishops and elders, who were set over the churches as guides and instructors. Learn, hence, 1. That it is Christ's special prerogative, as Head of the church, to institute and appoint such offices and officers in his church, as to his own wisdom seems meet for the edification and government of it. Learn, 2. That the great

end and design of Christ, in instituting such variety of offices, and officers in his church, was, his church's unity, that by all ministerial helps and endeavours, his members might be compacted and knit together, and made one entire body; by the increase of sanctity, concord, and unity. "He gave some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints (not for converting of sinners only) and for the edifying of the body of Christ." Observe lastly, The apostle declares how long the work of the ministry appointed by Christ for his church's edification and advantage, was to continue; namely, to the end of the world, to the day of judgment, *till all come*, by means of the same faith in Christ, and knowledge of him, *unto a perfect man, and unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*; that is, till the church, which is Christ's mystical body, shall be complete and perfect, and attain its full stature from infancy to full manhood. Learn hence, 1. That the church of Christ here on earth, is laboring for, and endeavouring after perfection in grace and knowledge, to come unto a perfect man, and to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. 2. That the ministry of the word, is an ordinance of Christ's own appointment, to continue to the end of the world, in order to that purpose and design. 3. That none of the most eminent saints on earth (the most knowing and pious ministers of the gospel not excepted) are above ordinances, above the ministry of the word, above receiving benefit and advantage by the plain and practical preaching of it; even St. Paul here puts himself in, and reckons himself among the number of those who stood in need of the ministry of God's word, to bring him to a perfect man, and to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; he says not, till ye, but till we all come to a perfect man. Such people then, as think themselves above ordinances, are above God himself; none need ordinances so much, as those that want them least. And such hearers as turn their backs upon the preaching of the word, because they know more than the minister can teach them, and can better instruct the preacher, than be instructed by him, they betray their own ignorance both of the intent and end of the ministry of the word, and also of the state of their own hearts; for if their understandings want no light, do their affections need no warmth? Have you no graces to be perfected, no corruptions to be weakened, no good resolutions to be strengthened? If your knowledge be imperfect, as sure it is, do not your affections want a fresh excitement? Admit the despised preacher cannot be your instructor, yet sure he may be your remembrancer, and excite you to that duty which you know already perhaps better than you practise it.

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, *and cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

St. Paul, in these words, declares one special end for which the ministry of the word was instituted and appointed; namely, to preserve from error and seduction, to prevent instability of mind, and unsettledness of judgment, and to confirm persons in fundamental truths; "that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, &c." Observe here, 1. The name which St. Paul gives to unstable persons, and unsettled professors, he calls them *children*; not in re-

gard of age, but in respect of knowledge and understanding; *children*, is a word that denotes imperfection and weakness, instability and ungroundedness in knowledge. Observe, 2. How the unsteadiness of these professors is expressed by a double metaphor; the former is drawn from a wave of the sea, they are "tossed to and fro;" the latter is drawn from a light cloud hovering in the air, carried about from place to place; neither wave nor cloud have any consistency, but are both moving, if the least wind be stirring. Observe, 3. The cause of this instability, *every wind of doctrine*, professors that have no solid principles, every wind of doctrine, has power over them to drive them to and fro, every teacher can cast them into what mould he pleases, and blow them, like glasses, into this or that shape, at the pleasure of his breath. But why wind of doctrine? Because there is no solidity in it, but being wind in the preacher, it breeds but wind in the hearer, because of its variety and novelty, and because of its prevalency over untaught men. How suddenly, sometimes, is a family, a town, yea, a whole country, leavened with a particular error? Observe, 4. The character of those impostors and seducers that do thus unsettle and unhinge men, they use *slight*; a metaphor taken from gamblers, who with art and slight of hand, can cog the dice, and win the game. Seducers cheat with false doctrines, as gamblers do with false dice: *cunning craftiness*; the word signifies the subtlety and deep policy of the old serpent; implying, that seducers are old and *cunning* gamblers, skilful to deceive: "That lie in wait to deceive;" the word signifies an *ambushment*, or stratagem of war, implying, that all seducers' *slight* and *craftiness* is to this very end and purpose, that they may entrap and catch men within the ambush of their impostures. From the whole learn, That seducers and false teachers are craft-masters of slight and subtlety, and stratagems of deceit; they have artifices, ways and methods to take men unawares, and to make merchandise of the people; they wrest and rack the scriptures to make them speak what they please, not what the Holy Ghost intended: if all this art fails, their last device is, to recommend their doctrines upon some private pretended revelation, and uncommon impulse of the Holy Spirit; by all which methods they lie in wait to deceive.

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even Christ*;

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that, which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

Our apostle had set forth the excellent end of the ministry, in the foregoing verse, for furthering our stability and steadfastness in grace; here he declares the admirable fitness of it for helping forward our proficiency and growth in grace. "Speaking the truth in love;" that is, cleaving to the truth of Christ's doctrine, and living in love with one another, you may grow up in Christ, by making progress in all christian graces, being united to him as members to the head. Here note, How the apostle draws a comparison between the na-

tural and mystical members, and the increase of both: as there must be a fellowship betwixt the natural head and members, so must there be an union betwixt Christ, the spiritual head, and believers, his mystical members; and as there is further required, a mutual communion and fellowship of the members of the body within, and amongst themselves, in order to growth and increase; so must there be concord, love, and unity amongst believers, if they expect to see grace growing in themselves, or in one another. Are the members of the natural body severally distinct one from another, some principal, others ministerial, but all concurring to the service of the whole? So, in order to spiritual growth, must all the members of Christ's mystical body keep their rank and order, and act in their own sphere with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye not doing the work of the hand, nor the hand the work of the foot, but every one in the calling wherein he is called, must there abide with God. Again, Is there a supply of nourishment from one member to another, according to the measure of every part in the natural body? So is there a supply from head to members in the mystical body, and from one mystical member to another; one is apt to teach, another ready to comfort, a third able to convince, a fourth willing to exhort, a fifth to advise and counsel: and all these, and every one of these, contributing all they can to the welfare and growth of the whole. Happy is it both for the natural and mystical body, when the members of both are subservient to each other, and contribute all they can to the mutual growth and improvement of one another, and especially for the benefit and advantage of the whole.

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind;

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Our apostle having finished his grand exhortation to love and unity amongst all christians, and enforced it with the most weighty arguments and motives in the former part of the chapter; comes now, In the latter part of it, to press the Ephesians to the practice of particular duties. The first of which is this, to take special care, that being now converted christians, they walk no more like ignorant and unconverted heathens: *Walk not as other Gentiles walk.* Next, he gives particular instances how, and after what manner the Gentiles, in the black night of Paganism, did walk; namely, 1. *In the vanity of their minds*, following their own imaginations, and not any revelation from God, in the matters of his worship. 2. *Having their understandings darkened*, their minds void of saving knowledge. 3. *They were alienated from the life of God*, that is, from a godly life; they were strangers to the life which God commanded, which God approved, and which God himself lived. Here note, that ho-

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liness is called the *life of God*, because it is the life which God requires of us, it is the life which he works in us, it is the life whereby God liveth in us, the life whereby we live unto God; it is an ever-living life, not obnoxious to death, as the Ephesians were; so every carnal man, before conversion, is alienated from this life of God; he has no liking of it, no inclination to it, but prefers a life of sin before it. Lord, how many that are surrounded with the celestial beams of the gospel, are as impure and impenitent now, as these Gentiles were then in the black night of Paganism! 4. They were *past feeling*; their sottish stupidity had benumbed them, the flames of their lusts had seared their consciences to a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility; they were at once insensible of their sin, and of their danger by reason of sin. A dead conscience, and a desperately dissolute life, are inseparable companions. 5. "They gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Here see, how insensibility of sin begets insatiableness in sinning; they work uncleanness with insatiable greediness, who have once abandoned themselves to sin, especially to the sin of uncleanness. Lord, this was the deplorable case of the heathen world, before the light of the gospel did arise and shine upon them; but, alas! it is the case of multitudes that sit under the brightest beams of gospel light, they shut their eyes, and will not see; they extinguish all sense of immortality and a future state, and so abandon themselves to a life of brutish sensuality, *working all uncleanness with greediness*; but let them know assuredly, that though they live like beasts, yet they shall not die like them, nor shall their latter end be like theirs, the soul being under a divine ordination to an everlasting existence in a future state, in which it shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable, according as we manage our deportment in this present world.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

In these verses, 1. Our apostle acquaints the converted Ephesians, that the saving knowledge of Christ, which they had received, instructed them better than to practise such licentiousness and wickedness as the unconverted Gentiles wallowed in. *But ye have not so learned Christ*, that is the gospel of Christ. Nothing curbs sin, nothing cures sin, in a licentious sinner, like the doctrine of Christ revealed in the gospel; no moral precepts from the school of the heathens, which some so much magnify and applaud, can compare with this, which lays open the root of this accursed disease, and leads us to the remedy which the wisdom of God has

appointed for its cure, even the blood of his own Son, then blessed be God for revealed religion. Observe, 2. The apostle acquaints them what the truth as it is in Jesus, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, doth direct them to, enjoin and require of them, namely, *to put off the old man*, that is, their former heathen conversation, and manner of life, say *come*; but this they had put off already, at their first conversion to christianity: *by the old man*, then understood the old corrupt nature, so called, because it is old as Adam, and derived from Adam, and which daily more and more corrupts and depraves us by its deceitful lusts, if it be not resisted and subdued. But this is not sufficient, that we *put off the old man*, unless we put on the new, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds after God; that is after the image of God, which consisteth in righteousness and true holiness. Note here, 1. That regenerating grace is called the new man, because the person has a new principle infused into him (says the pious Bishop Fell, upon the place,) which enables him to lead a new life. Regenerate men, then, are new men, they have a renewed and enlightened understanding, they have a sanctified and renewed will, renewed affections and desires: old things are passing away, and all things becoming new. Note, 2. That God himself is the pattern and exemplar, after which, and according to which, the new man is formed in the soul, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness:" what is godliness, but godlikeness, what is holiness, but the conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God? Acts xiii. 22. I have found David a man after my own heart, who shall perform all my will. Note, 3. That holiness is not only the reforming of the outward man, but it is the renewing of the mind; and not only of the mind but of the spirit of the mind; by which understand, the highest and most refined faculties of the mind, that part which is most free from the dregs of sin, and which comes up nearest to God as the spirit of the mind and understanding doth; verily, not our minds only, but even the spirit of our minds needs renewing, because corruption is got into the highest powers and faculties of the soul, and because we must serve God with all our mind: and if so, with the spirit of our mind; and blessed be God, that regenerating and renewing grace is an universal principle, as sin was. Did sin invade the whole soul, all the powers and faculties of it, and deprive us of the divine image? It is the work of grace to restore our depraved natures to their primitive integrity. The renewed person is sanctified *totus* (though not *totaliter*); a new nature is found with him, which "after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

25 Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: For we are members one of another:

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to several duties belonging to the second table, namely, to abstain from lying, from anger, from a railing, from corrupt communication, from all bitterness of spirit, from malice and revenge, and to exercise brotherly kindness and mutual forgiveness. From whence note, That christians must make conscience of the duties of the second table, as well as of the first, and perform their duty towards their neighbour, as well as towards God, for the law is one copulative, *God spake all these words*: The authority of the lawgiver is

despised in the violation of the least command: when therefore second-table duties are performed by us from arguments and motives drawn from the first table, that is, when in obedience to God's command, and with an eye at his glory, we perform our duty to our neighbour, this is both an argument of our sincerity, and also an ornament to our profession: "Wherefore put away lying, &c." Lying was a vice very common among the heathens: it is like the Ephesians, in their heathen state, had been very guilty of it, for they thought it lawful, when it was beneficial, to lie; and affirmed that a lie was better than a hurtful truth. Our apostle therefore exhorts them, now converted to christianity, to speak exact truth one to another; and adds a forcible reason for it, because they were members one of another; that is, of human society, which by lying is destroyed; falsehood dissolves the bond of human society. Learn hence, That there is no sin more unseemly in a christian, more inconsistent with grace, more abominable to God, more like unto the devil, more injurious and prejudicial to human society, than the sin of lying; fidelity towards each other, and mutual confidence in each other, being that which makes human society both safe and easy.

26 Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath;

27 Neither give place to the devil.

Some understand these words only as a cautionary direction, and sense them thus: If ye be angry at any time, take heed that ye sin not, by exceeding due bounds; and if at any time it doth so, suppress it speedily, before the sun go down: this was a practice even amongst the heathens; before the sun went down they would shake hands and embrace one another; to the shame of christians, who gave place to the devil, according to the known proverb, *Contubernalem habet diabolum, qui tectum petit iratus*; he that goes angry to bed has the devil for his chamber-fellow, yea for his bed-fellow; nay, he lies not only in his bed, but in his bosom. Others understand the words as a precept and command. *Be angry*, but take heed of sinful anger: now the way to be angry and not sin, is to be angry at nothing but at sin; it is our duty to be angry, when we see others depart from their duty. Meek Moses, who was cool enough in his own cause, was not in God's; he has no zeal for God, that is not moved when he sees or hears God dishonored. Learn hence, 1. That anger being an affection implanted by God in the human nature, is not in itself evil or sinful, but in some cases, a necessary duty. Learn hence, 2. That there is an easy and ready passage from what is lawful, to what is sinful. *Be angry, and sin not*; implying, that it is a very easy matter to sin in our anger, and no easy matter to be angry and not to sin. Learn, 3. That it is very difficult, if not impossible to avoid sin in our anger, if we let anger hang upon our spirits, and continue with us; anger may pass through the heart of a wise man, but rests in the bosom of fools: anger against sin must continue, but continuance in anger will be sinful. To prevent the sin of immoderate anger these rules will be useful: 1. Desire not to hear what others say of thee, lest you want patience to bear what you hear; many tear themselves with anger, when they hear themselves torn with slander; we had better be in the dark concerning our own wrongs, than by knowing of them, wrong ourselves by passion or desire of revenge.

2. What you do hear said of you, interpret always in the most favorable sense; call it an infirmity, and distinguish between the action and intention, between what is spoken, and the intent of the speaker. 3. In and under all provocations, cast your eye upward: look up to God, and cast your eye inward, and see what you have deserved, though not at your neighbour's hand, yet at God's hand. Shimri gave David provocation to boil up his anger to the height of fury, 2. Sam. xvi. 5. but by eyeing God, how calm and meek was his spirit? Thus, *lie angry and sin not.*

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Observe here, 1. The sin dissuaded from, theft, and stealing. This the heathen nations counted no crime; they made no conscience, either openly or fraudulently, to take away their neighbour's goods. Therefore, says the apostle, let those of you, who in the time of your Paganism and unregeneracy, were given to stealing, now being converted to christianity, do so no more. Observe, 2. The remedy prescribed for the prevention of this sin, and that is, diligence and labor in some honest calling: *let him labor, working with his hands.* Idleness occasions poverty, brings men to want, increases their necessities, and then they betake themselves to indirect and unlawful means to supply them. Observe, 3. One special reason why persons should labor in the way of their calling, that they might have to give to him that needeth; not only that they may have wherewith to relieve their own wants, but the wants of others. Where note, That God expects charity from the hands of those who get their living with their hands: day-laborers, and such as have nothing to live upon but their work, must yet give their mite, their alms for the help of the indigent. Observe, 4. The restriction and qualification of this labor of the hands, he must *work* that which is *good*, that he may give to him that needeth: to relieve others with the gain of oppression, or with the hire of an harlot, is unacceptable; the matter of our alms must be goods righteously gotten, otherwise it is robbery, not righteousness.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Here the apostle directs us how to manage our tongues, both negatively and positively telling us, what we should not speak, and what we should: Let no corrupt, rotten, filthy discourse come out of your mouth; such as have rotten lungs, have a stinking breath: filthy discourse argues a polluted heart: such noisome discourse is unsavory to an holy ear, and greatly offensive, contagious, and infecting to common and ordinary hearers. Next he tells them what they should speak, that which is profitable and edifying, and that which may minister increase of grace to the hearers: our speech should be so gracious and savory, as to discover grace wrought in our hearts, and be a means of working it in the hearts of others: elsewhere, St. Paul advises, that our

speech be savory seasoned with salt, Col. iii. 6—Truth, holiness, and prudence, is the salt of our word: christians must not suffer their tongues to run at random in their ordinary discourse; it is not sufficient that they do not speak to evil purpose; but they must speak to edifying purposes: that which has a tendency to make the hearers some way or other either wiser or better: this the apostle calls, *that which is good to the use of edifying.*

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the Spirit of God, he is styled the holy Spirit, being essentially and infinitely holy in himself, and the author of all grace and holiness in us. —Observe, 2. The affection of grief, which is here attributed to the Spirit, not properly, but improperly; when we do that which would most certainly afflict and grieve him, were he a subject capable of grief, and when, upon provocations given on our parts, he carrieth himself towards us after the manner of a person grieved, namely, when we provoke him to suspend his influence, to withdraw his comforts, leaving us without any present sense or feeling of his assistances; he is also then grieved when he is opposed, interrupted, controled, and disturbed in his operations of grace and comfort upon our souls. Observe, 3. The argument used to enforce the exhortation, not to grieve the holy Spirit of God, because by it we are sealed to the day of redemption. But, what doth God's sealing his people by his holy Spirit intimate and imply? *Ans.* 1. It intimates that God has distinguished them from others. 2. That he has appropriated them to himself. 3. That he has put a value upon them, and a very high esteem. And, 4. It imports the irrevocable purpose of God for their salvation. Seals are for these uses, ends, and purposes: seals are for distinction, for appropriation, for confirmation, and argue a high valuation and precious esteem of the person or thing which the seal is put upon: "Grieve not the Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption," that is, the day of judgment.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Our apostle had exhorted, in the former verse, not to grieve the holy Spirit of God; in the next verse, he acquaints us with the particular sins that would afflict and grieve him; namely, *bitterness*, that is, a secret grudge, and a smothered displeasure against our brother; *wrath*, or an impetuous fierceness of spirit, upon some real or apprehended injury; *anger*, an eager desire of revenge; *clamor*, loud threatenings or reviling language; *evil-speaking*, either of others, or to others; *malice*, a rooted enmity, the rage of the devil, and renders a man as like the devil, as any sin.

on this side hell: all those sins do exceedingly grieve the Holy Spirit, they make him both loathe and leave his lodgings. In the last verse, as a proper remedy against all the foregoing sins, he exhorts them to mutual kindness: *Be ye kind one towards another*: that is, of a sweet and loving disposition, affable and courteous to each other; neither carrying it loftily nor morosely, but affably and humbly; *tender-hearted*, having a compassionate sense of the miseries and infirmities of one another; *forgiving one another* whatever has been matter of provocation in each other, according to the example of God, who for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Learn hence, 1. That christians are obliged, by the laws of their holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another. Learn, 2. That they are obliged to forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them. As God forgives us universally, freely, heartily, and sincerely, and when he has power in his hand to revenge, so should we in like manner forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.

CHAPTER V.

BE ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children;

Our apostle having, in the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, exhorted the Ephesians to mutual offices of love and kindness towards each other, in the beginning of this chapter, he makes use of several very cogent arguments to excite and quicken them thereunto: the first of which is drawn from the example of God, as he has been kind to us, and for Christ's sake forgiven us; let us therefore, be followers of him, not as our God only, but as our Father; "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." Where note, 1. The duty exhorted to, *Be ye followers of God*; that is, in all the excellencies of his communicable attributes, and particularly in the exercise of universal goodness and kindness, mercy and forgiveness. Note, 2. The argument exciting to this duty, *as dear children*; you are children, and who should children imitate but their Father? And you are dear children, will not you imitate such a Father? Learn from both, That such as lay claim to a relation to God, without imitation of him, are not children, but bastards: they may be of his family, but not of his household; of his family, by instruction, but not by descent: there is no implantation in Christ, without an imitation, both of the Creator and Redeemer, Heb. iii. 6. "Christ as a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast, &c."

2 And walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Here we have a second argument urged to walk in love, one with, and one towards another, drawn from the example of Christ; he also, as well as God the Father, has loved us; and the instance given of his love, is the highest that ever was or can be given: he gave *himself* for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." Observe here, 1. The great duty of the law, [walk in love.] This implies the exercise of this grace, not barely to have it in the principle and habit, but to exercise and exert it in the

act: and it implies the universal exercise of grace; whatever we do both to God and man must be done in love, 1 Cor. xvi. 14. "Let all your deeds be done with charity." Observe, 2. As the great duty of the law, *to walk in love*, so the great pattern of the gospel, *as Christ also hath loved us*. The particle, [as] hath first the force of an argument, and is as much as *because* Christ hath loved us; and it has also the force of a rule to direct us in the manner how we should love one another, with an [as] of identity, but not equality; not with the same degree, but with the same kind of love wherewith Christ *hath* loved us. But why *hath*, rather than *doth* love us; Why in the preter, rather than in the present tense? *Ans.* To denote both the priority of Christ's love, that he loved us before we loved him; yea, before we loved ourselves; nay, before we had any being in the world, we had a being in his love, even from all eternity. And also to denote the indubitable certainty of his love; he hath loved you; you need not doubt it, nor question it, he has given actual and undeniable proof of it; follow him from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven again, and you will find every step he took to have been in love: "Walk then in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Learn hence, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ hath given an ample and full demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people. 3. That this love of Christ towards us, should not only be an argument and motive to excite and quicken us to walk in love one towards another, but also an exact rule and copy to direct and guide us in our walking. There were some incommunicable properties in Christ's love which we cannot imitate: as his love was an eternal love, an infinite love, a free love, without motive, and in despite of obstacles, a redeeming love; such cannot our love be one to another: but as Christ's love was an operative love, a beneficent love, a preventing love, a soul love, a constant love, thus we are to imitate it, and walk in love one towards another. Observe, 3. The high instance and expression which Christ has given of his love unto us. "He gave himself for a sacrifice unto God, &c." *He gave*: now gifts are expressions of love; *he gave himself*, that is more than if he had given the angels in heaven, and all the treasures on earth for us, more than the whole world, yea, than ten thousand worlds; he gave himself an *offering and sacrifice*, a voluntary sacrifice, a meritorious, efficacious, expiatory, and propitiatory sacrifice: and this for us, to be stuck and bled to death in our stead: and he gave himself a sacrifice to God, as an injured and offended God; to God, as a revenger of sin: to God as the guardian and giver of the law; to God, as the asserter of his truth in his threatenings; he appeared before God as sitting upon a seat of justice, that he might open to us a throne of grace. Lastly, *For a sweet-smelling savor*, that is, he gave himself with an intention to be accepted, and God received him with a choice acceptance; our sin had sent up a very ill savor to heaven, which disturbed the rest of God: Christ expels this ill scent by the perfume of his precious blood. Learn hence, 1. That the sacrifice and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ were very free and voluntary: he offered himself, and his offering was a free-will offering. Learn, 2. That this voluntary sacrifice and free-will offering of Christ, was acceptable to God, and efficacious for men, it was acceptable to God, because a complete satisfaction for sin's wrong; and efficacious for us, because a discharge from the obligation of sin's guilt.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints;

The apostle, in this and the following verses, exhorts the Ephesians to shun several sins, which were frequently practised among the Gentiles before their conversion to christianity, as, first, *fornication*, and all sorts and degrees of *uncleanness*; this was looked upon as an indifferent action, and no sin at all, by the Pagan world. Next, he advises them to beware of *covetousness*, that is, all irregular and inordinate desires, and lusting after things forbidden in the general, and particularly all insatiable love of riches, which in trading cities (such was Ephesus) doth usually very much abound, which sins he earnestly desires may not be named amongst them, that is, not named with approbation, not named without reprehension; not named, that is, not committed by any of them, yea, not so much as named by them without detestation. And the argument offered to dissuade from these sins, is drawn *ab indecoro*, as not becoming saints, that is, converted christians, who profess separation from the world, and solemn dedication to God and Christ, and therefore ought to be holy in heart, chaste in mind, heavenly in desire, undefiled in body: a life of purity and chastity well becoming saints; they must be pure in heart, pure in tongue, pure in hand, pure in intention, pure in expression, pure in conversation, otherwise they answer not their name, nor walk according to their renewed nature: "Let no uncleanness be once named amongst you, as becometh saints."

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.

Here our apostle advises christians to guard against the sins of the tongue, to avoid all filthy discourse, and all foolish discourse, all scurrilous and obscene jesting, all excess in drollery, which is nothing but the sham of frothy wit; moderate mirth, by innocent and inoffensive jesting, is not here forbidden, but when we jest by tart reflexions upon the way, gesture, natural imperfections of others, especially when we furnish out a jest in scripture attire, and in a jocular humor make light and irreverent applications of scripture phrases. Lord! what an impious liberty do some men take, to bring forth scripture, as the Philistines brought forth Samson, only to make them sport. These men, ere long, will find Almighty God in earnest, though they were in jest when they played the buffoon with the most serious things in the world. Observe, farther, Our apostle's argument to dissuade from such talk, is this, *they are not convenient*; not convenient in themselves; not convenient for the speaker, not convenient for the hearers; for they poison instead of profit the company, and pollute both the minds and manners of the hearers. O, what a great and common instrument of sin is the mouth or tongue of man! The tongue of a good man is his glory, the tongue of a sinner is his shame; there is no member of the body that doth so much service for the devil as the tongue, especially in common conversation; then it is that men let their tongues run riot, then they utter oaths and blasphemies against God, censorious, opprobrious, slanderous words against their neighbour; to prevent

(No. 56.)

all which, the apostle exhorts, in the last words of the verse, that when we meet together, we should rather recount the favors received from God, and bless him for them; *But rather giving of thanks.* As there is at all times, and in all places, cause of thanksgiving administered to us by God, so is it our duty to take all occasions and fit opportunities to excite both ourselves and others to the practice of it, who are naturally very averse and backward to it. From the whole, note, That so quick and easy is the passage from what is lawful and allowed, to what is sinful and forbidden, that it is a task of no small difficulty to keep within the bounds of lawful and allowed mirth, especially by recreating our spirits by pleasant and delightful discourse, so that we exceed not either in matter, manner, or measure. Well might St. James say, (chap. iii. 2.) "If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man," intimating, that there are many, very many, that do thus offend; and such as do not, are christians of no common attainments, but great proficient in grace: persons of extraordinary measures both of piety and prudence.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them:

Our apostle, considering how exceeding common the fore-mentioned sins were among the Gentiles, and how ready persons were to esteem lightly of them, advises the Ephesians here not to entertain in their minds light thoughts of them, or to believe any libertines which should represent them as small and inconsiderable matters; for how can a little sin be committed against a great God? or that sin be accounted light which brings down the heavy wrath of God upon the person, and shuts him out of the kingdom of God? Note, here, 1. The description of heaven, it is a *kingdom*, for its eminency and glory, for its fullness and sufficiency, for its safety and security, for its duration and perpetuity, so called: and it is the kingdom of Christ, and of God, that is, either the kingdom of Christ who is God, or the kingdom of Christ by purchase, and the kingdom of God by free donation. But mark, *The kingdom of Christ and of God*, of Christ first, because there is no coming into the kingdom of God but by Christ; Christ is first named, because we enter by him into the kingdom, and in his right. Note, 2. The sins enumerated, which will assuredly shut persons out of this kingdom, and they are not external and corporeal sins only, as whoredom and uncleanness, but internal and spiritual, *covetousness, which is idolatry* - as a man may be guilty of adultery, and yet never touch a woman, and of murder, yet never strike his neighbour, so he may be guilty of idolatry, and yet never bow his knee to an idol: secret idolatry,

soul idolatry, will shut out of heaven, as well as open idolatry. Any thing that has our highest esteem and regard, our extreme love and delight, and is the special object of our hope, our affiance and trust, of our fear and care, this we make our God: and thus the covetous man is an idolater, for he gives these acts of soul worship to the creature, to something in the world which is not God. Every natural man is an idolater; either the world, or some worldly lust, is his god: and no idolater can have, while such, an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Note, 3. The seasonable advice which St. Paul gives the Ephesians, and us in them, not to be partakers of other men's sins: *Be not ye therefore, partakers with them*, lest ye be also partakers with them in their plagues and punishments. *Quest.* But when may we be said to be partakers of other men's sins? *Ans.* When we consent to them, connive at them, rejoice in them, give counsel or command for them, by not hindering of them, by not publishing and punishing of them if in our power, by not mourning over them, but especially by joining with them in the sinful practice of them; all these ways are they partakers of other men's sins.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light;

Here the Ephesians are put in mind of the darkness and blindness of their heathen state, before the light of the gospel came among them; they were not only dark, very much in the dark, but darkness itself: he next acquaints them with their happy condition, by entertaining of the gospel of Christ, they thereby became *light in the Lord*, they were savingly enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God; and accordingly he urges them to walk answerably to their christian profession, *walk as children of light*. Note here, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature, and before conversion, is a state of spiritual darkness; like men in the dark, they go they know not whither, they do they know not what, they stumble and fall they know not how nor when. Note, 2. That all those whom God calls effectually out of the darkness and ignorance of their natural and unregenerate state, he doth enlighten them by his Word and Holy Spirit. Note, 3. That such as are so called and enlightened, ought to walk suitably to their privilege, and answerably to their high and honorable profession. *Walk as children of light*; that is, holy, humbly, cheerfully, thankfully before God, exemplarily, and unblameably before the world.

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

These words contain a reason why the Ephesians, who were once in darkness, but then enlightened by the Holy Spirit, should walk as children of light, namely, because the fruits of that light, or of the Holy Spirit, the author of that light which they had received, is in all goodness, righteousness and truth; that is, it consisted in these things, these are the fruits of the enlightening and enlivening Spirit of God; so that the

force of the argument lies thus: such a walking as is here directed to, namely, in the love and practice of universal righteousness and goodness, is the genuine fruit and natural result of the Holy Spirit, and accordingly, as such, they were obliged to it; none can walk as children of the light, but such as are renewed and quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, and made children of light, and such will be found in the practice of those duties wherein that walk consisteth; *proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*; That is, first, To study the word, and find what is pleasing unto God. Secondly, To embrace with our hearts what we find to be so. And, thirdly, To practise in our lives what we embrace with our hearts. The scripture acquaints us with some persons and some performances which are very acceptable unto God; such persons as live most by faith, as are very upright in their walking, very sincere in all they do, such are greatly acceptable unto God; so the performances are also acceptable, namely, when we do justice and judgment, this is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice; both commutative and distributive justice betwixt man and man, more pleasing to God than the highest acts of worship performed to him without this, Prov. xxi. 3. To serve Christ with a pure intention, with good will, or a willing mind, and to suffer patiently for well doing, this is highly pleasing and acceptable unto God, 1 Pet. ii. 20.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general is branded; it is styled darkness, a work of darkness, works of darkness, and an unfruitful work. Sin is styled darkness, because it originally springs from darkness, it naturally delights in darkness, it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Sin is called a work of darkness, to imply the drudgery and toil, the labor and pains, that the sinner is at in the service of sin; the work of sin is a mere drudgery; it is not a pleasurable service, but a laborious servitude. And the apostle calling sin by the name of works, doth intimate to us, that one sin never goes single and alone, but has a dangerous train and retinue. Finally, sin is an unfruitful work; not materially and subjectively unfruitful, for the corrupt nature of man is a rank soil in which sin thrives apace: but terminatively and untimely, it is unfruitful in the conclusion, in the event and issue, Rom. vi. 21. *What fruit, &c.* Observe, A dehortation, or a negative precept, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness:" it is both the duty and interest of every christian to have nothing to do with any sinful work; the preceptive will of God requires this, sin being contrary to the holiness of his nature and will; and the dignity and purity of the gospel calls for this, which is a law of holiness, and a rule of holy living. Observe, 3. A positive injunction, *but rather reprove them*, how are we to reprove the unfruitful workers and works of darkness? Two ways, 1. By our lips; with plainness, but yet with prudence; with faithfulness, but yet with meekness; in reproof never use sharp words, if soft words will serve the turn. 2. With our lives; thus Nehemiah, by his princely demeanour, did reprove the covetousness of former governors, Neh. v. 15. "So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord;" a holy life is a visible and daily reproof given both to sin and sinners.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret,

13 But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light:

Here our apostle assigns particular reasons why the Ephesians should have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers and works of darkness, but reprove them, namely, 1. The abominable filthiness of those sins which the wicked Pagans committed, especially in their heathen mysteries, prescribed by the devil as parts of his worship; such things done in secret, as it was even a shame to speak of. 2. Because admonitions and reproof make the works of darkness manifest to the sinner's conscience, set sin forth in its black and ugly colors. A discovery of sin in its vileness, odiousness, and ugliness, is necessary to a sinner's conviction of it, and conversion from it; and God doth not only bless the ministry of the word from the pulpit, but sometimes by a word of reproof from the mouth of a private christian, and the light of his holy example, for this great end. A reproof piously and prudently given to open sinners, by private christians, shall not miss of its end, it will certainly have its effect, either in the sinner's conversion and salvation, or in his obduration and condemnation; as all things reprobable are made manifest by light, so a prudent reproof and pious conversation puts sin to shame, if not to silence.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The last argument which our apostle offers to consideration, for enforcing the duty of reproof the unfruitful workers and works of darkness, is drawn from the example of God himself, whose great design it is, by his holy word, to awaken men out of the sleep of sin and death, that Christ may give them light. Here note, The dangerous and deplorable, though not hopeless and desperate state of an unconverted and impenitent sinner, namely, spiritual sleep, and death; every man by nature is in a dead sleep till the renovating change: he apprehends things as a man asleep; all his thoughts of God and Christ, of heaven and hell, of sin and holiness, are slight and hovering notions, not real and thorough apprehensions; the most substantial realities are with them but phantasms and imaginations:—imaginary dangers startle them, like men in a dream; but real dangers, though never so near do not affect them: as in natural sleep, all the senses of the body, so in spiritual sleep, are all the senses of the soul bound up; and accordingly, this sleep is not casual, but connatural to our present sinful state; a soul drenched in sensuality sleeps as it were by choice, and not by chance. But how, O sinner! canst thou sleep under such a load of sin and guilt, with so many wounds in thy conscience, with so many ulcers in thy soul? Can a diseased man sleep? Can a condemned man sleep? Can a man in debt sleep? All this the sinner is; and yet though God thunders above, and hell gapes from beneath, and the sin-

ner hangs over it by the fretted thread of his life, yet he is in a profound sleep; but his damnation slumbers not if he doth not speedily awake, "and arise from the dead, that Christ may give him light."

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

These words may be considered two ways; either, first, As a direction to those, who, according to the foregoing exhortation, do reprove sinners for their unfruitful works of darkness, namely, to walk very circumspectly themselves; see then how circumspectly you walk, so the words may be rendered; and it intimates to us, that those only are fit to reprove sin in others, who walk very circumspectly and unblameably themselves; such only have authority to reprove, and such only can hope for success in reproof, ver. 11. "Rather reprove them; see then that ye walk circumspectly. Secondly, The words may be considered as a new precept, added by St. Paul to the former given in this chapter, for directing the Ephesians to an holy life; he assures them, that if they will walk holily, they must walk circumspectly, and that circumspect walking is a wise walking. Observe here, 1. The necessity of circumspect walking, see that ye walk circumspectly. Learn hence, That it is impossible for a christian to maintain a holy course of obedience to the commands of God, without great care and caution, heedfulness and circumspection; none can walk holily, that do not walk circumspectly and watchfully; such is that weakness and inconstancy of our nature, so many and so subtle are our spiritual enemies, and so intimate with us, so strict and exact is the law of God we are to walk by, and so holy and jealous is that God we are to walk before, that it is impossible to walk before him acceptably, if we do not walk circumspectly. Observe, 2. As the necessity, so the excellency of circumspect walking: it is not foolish, unadvised, unaccountable walking, but it is truly wise walking: such walking as the wisdom of God recommends to us, and such walking as bespeaks us truly and really wise; such as walk loosely, walk foolishly; careless walking is foolish walking, but circumspect walking is wise walking, for it is to be wise for ourselves, and wise as to our best and true interest; it is to be wise for time, and wise to eternity; wise both for this, and for the coming world. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Observe here, 1. A most important and necessary duty exhorted to, namely, to redeem the time: this cannot be done in a natural sense: time once past, is irrecoverably lost, we can no more recal it: but in a moral sense, time may be said to be redeemed, when our diligence to improve it is redoubled, when we do much work in a little time; to redeem time, supposes and implies a right knowledge of the use and end of time, and high valuation of the worth and excellency of time, and resolution to rescue it out of the hands of those that would devour it; idleness, excess of sleep, inordinate adorning of the body; immoderate recreations, vain company, an excess of worldly business, all these are

robbers of our time, and time must be rescued out of their hands. *Quest.* Who are the persons more especially concerned to redeem time? *Ans.* All those that are young; such as have idly wasted a great part of their time; all that are ignorant and graceless; all that are weak and aged, and have but a few sands in their glass; all those that are recovered from sickness; and all such as, through poverty, restraint, or service, are scant of their time, should wisely redeem it, and industriously improve it, for God and their souls; because upon this moment depends eternity, and according to our present choice, will be our eternal lot. Observe, 2. The apostle's argument here, to excite all persons wisely to redeem their time, namely, *because the days are evil*; that is, full of sin, by the scandalous lives of professors; full of error, by the subtlety of heretical seducers; full of affliction and misery, by reason of sharp and hot persecutions; when days are most evil, most sinful, or calamitous, then it is a christian's duty to improve his time well and wisely, for God and his soul. "Redeem the time, because the days are evil."

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

As if he had said seeing the times are so perilous, and your opportunities of doing good so uncertain, be wise, and understand what are the proper duties of your place and station, and know how to manage yourselves in every relation, with reference to the duties, dangers, snares, and temptations which may be before you, and this according to the will of God revealed in his word. Learn hence, That it is a special part of divine wisdom, to understand and know what is the mind and will of God concerning us, in every condition of life which his providence brings us into; to the intent that we may fill up every relation, with the proper duties of it, to the glory of God, and our own and others satisfaction: "Be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's reasonable dehortation, *be not drunk with wine*; drunkenness, as well as uncleanness, and drunkenness with uncleanness, for they commonly go together, were sins which the Ephesians and unconverted Pagans were generally guilty of: St. Paul therefore cautions these new converts against this old sin which transports men to insolvent and outrageous practices, as the next words intimate, *for therein is excess*; the original word may be rendered lewdness and lusts, to denote that when persons are inflamed with wine, they are liable to all manner of excessive wickedness, and particularly to the sin of uncleanness. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, in order to the prevention of that sin, and that is, to labor and endeavour, instead of being filled with wine, to be full of the Holy Spirit of God, to be filled with the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit: blessed be God, he allows us to seek after the greatest and fullest measures of the Holy Spirit; and injurious we are to ourselves, if we content ourselves with

small measures and degrees of it. The sense of the words seems to be this: let no christian allow himself in any sinful excesses; let him never fill himself with wine or strong drink, or with meat and drink to the full, for that fulness will breed all manner of sensual lusts in him; but let his desires and endeavours be carried out after the grace and Spirit of God, let him be filled therewith; for that fulness will keep the soul holy, the body chaste, and render the christian fit for the service of God on earth, and meet for the fruition and enjoyment of God in heaven. Take your fill of the Spirit, you can never be overfilled.

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

The apostle in the foregoing verse, cautions the Ephesians against that drunkenness and uncleanness which did commonly attend them at the solemnities of their heathen god; their Bacchanalia, or feasts dedicated to Bacchus the god of wine, were usually concluded with excessive drunkenness and uncleanness. In these drunken feasts, they had their drunken hymns, which they sang to their drunken deity, in praise of him whom they called the god of wine: now in opposition to these drunken and impure sons, the apostle exhorts the christian Ephesians to sing the psalms of David, or the hymns composed by spiritual men, such as Zacharias and Simeon, or by the *afflatus* of the Holy Spirit, which in those times did immediately inspire persons both to pray and sing in their assemblies, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. singing these with the mouth, and also *making melody in your hearts to the Lord*. Note here, The hearts and spirits of good men are full of spiritual mirth and joy; they are as merry in the Lord, as sinners in their lust; that it is lawful and laudable for them to express their mirth, and give vent to their spiritual joy, by singing; that psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs do best become their mouths, when they perform those spiritual exercises; that in singing these, there must be an inward harmony, and musical melody in the soul and heart, as well as in the tongue; besides, a melodious turning of the voice, the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motions of the affections, must accompany them that will make melody in the heart to the Lord in their singing. Singing of psalms then, both in public assemblies, and in private families, and sounding forth the high praises of God for mercies received, is a special duty to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns."

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God, and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The next duty St. Paul exhorts to is, that of spiritual *thanksgiving*. Where note, 1. The time when it ought to be performed, *always*, that is, at least every day, and upon every solemn occasion, keeping the heart continually in a praising, as well as a praying frame. Note, 2. The matter for which we are to give thanks, *for all things*; that is, first, for all providences, whether prosperous or adverse; for sickness as well as health, God intending our good by both

Secondly, For all mercies, for sparing mercy, preventing mercy, recovering mercy, for common benefits, for peculiar and distinguishing favors, for mercies received, for mercies expected, for what we have in hand, and what we have in hope. Note, 3. The person to whom our thanksgivings are to be offered, to God and the Father, to God our Creator, to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him. Note, 4. The person through whom our thanksgivings are acceptable unto God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; as all spiritual addresses, both of praise and thanksgiving, must be offered up to God, so their acceptance with God is only to be expected by or through our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he is the Saviour of the body.

24 Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to such general duties as belong to all christians, comes now to exhort them to the practice of relative duties, as they are members of societies, and particularly as they live in a family society one with another, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; much of the life and power of religion appearing in the conscientious practice and performance of relative duties. But, first, he gives them a general direction, to *submit themselves one to another in the fear of God*; that is, by yielding and mutually condescending to each other, stooping to the meanest offices of love and kindness one towards another, and this *in the fear of God*; that is, either in obedience to the command of God, which enjoins this submission, for them we perform our duty towards one another acceptably, and as we ought, when we eye the command of God in what we do; or else *in the fear of God*; that is, making the fear of God the rule and measure of our submission one to another; for we are by no means bound to submit ourselves, in order to the pleasing of our neighbour, any farther than is consistent with that subjection and obedience which we owe to God. Learn hence, That where that noble and divine principle of the fear of God prevaileth in the heart, it will make a man conscientiously careful of his duty towards man; the fear of God in him will have both the force of a motive to quicken him up unto, and also of a rule to guide and direct him in that submission, which, in obedience to God, is due and payable to his neighbour. Having laid down this general rule, now he comes to press us to the practice of particular duties; *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, &c.* Note here, he begins with the wife's duty first, before the husband's, probably because her duty of entire subjection is the most difficult duty, and being conscientiously discharged, is a compelling motive (No. 56.)

to the husband to set about his duty in like manner. Note, 2. The particular and special duty which the wife is exhorted to, and that is submission; *Wives submit yourselves.* This supposes the wife's due esteem of, and her affectionate love unto her husband, as the root of this submission. Note, 3. The universality and extensive nature of the command, it is to all wives, to pay this tribute of subjection to their own husbands; no honor, superiority, or antecedent dignity in the wife, no personal infirmity, no moral infirmity; nay, no error in religion, can give a discharge from this obligation; there is no wife, whatever her birth and breeding, whatever her parts or privileges may be, that is exempted from this tie of subjection to her husband, for the law of nature, the ordinance of God, and her own voluntary covenant and promise in marriage, do oblige and bind her to it. Yet, note, 4. The qualification and manner of this submission: it must be *as unto the Lord*; that is, in obedience to the command of the Lord, who has given the husband power over the wife, and required, and will reward her obedience to him; or else, *as unto the Lord*, it pointeth out a similitude, and likeness, and resemblance, in the wife's subjection to the husband, with that which they owe to Christ the Lord; that is, it must not be feigned, but sincere; it must not be constrained, but willing, from a complacency taken in the doing of this duty. And, lastly, *As unto the Lord*, that is, in all lawful things; the wife is by no means to obey the husband in any commands which are contrary to that submissive obedience which she owes to Christ, her supreme Lord. Now, with this limitation, the wife in subjecting herself to her husband, is subject unto the Lord. Note, 5. The reason given by the Holy Ghost for enforcing this duty of submissive obedience upon wives, ver. 23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, &c.* That is, the wife ought to submit herself to her husband, because, 1. He is her head; and, 2. Therein doth resemble Christ's headship over his church. Observe here, That this metaphor of an head, applied to the husband, denotes both the dignity and duty of the husband; it implies his eminency, by reason of his sex; it implies his authority to govern and direct, as the head has the power to guide and govern the whole body; and it points out his duty, as well as his dignity; as the head is the seat of wisdom and knowledge, so husbands should be endowed with greater measures of knowledge and prudence, to enable them to guide and govern in the place God has set them. And further the apostle would have wives consider and observe, that God will have some resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, held forth in the husband's authority over the wife. Is Christ an Head of dominion and direction also to his church? So shall the husband be to his wife. Doth Christ exercise his dominion and power over the church, not rigidly and tyrannically, but with meekness and gentleness? So should the husband rule. In a word, is Christ the Saviour of the body meritoriously? So should the husband be ministeriously, to defend the wife from injuries, to supply her necessities, and to improve his whole power and authority over her for her good. Note, 6. The manner of the subjection specified, and declared; as the church is subject, so let the wife be subject. Is the church subject to Christ willingly, cheerfully, dutifully, delightfully? So let the wife be subject. Doth the church subject itself to Christ universally? So let the wife be subject *in all things*: Not absolutely in all things, but in all things lawful, godly,

and honest: nothing is excepted out of the wife's subjection to her husband, but that which is contrary to her duty to him who commanded this subjection; when there appears little discretion in the husband's command, then there will appear a great sense of duty in the wife's obedience.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word;

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.

The apostle having propounded the wife's duty, recommends the husband's next duty: hers was the duty of submission, his of love and intire affection. This the apostle mentions because the husband, for want of love, is too ready to abuse that sovereignty and superiority which God has given him over his wife, by proving rigorous and bitter unto her; therefore says he, *Husbands, love your wives*, that is, with a special, peculiar, conjugal love, such as no other must share in. This duty of love is very comprehensive, and it includes a very affectionate regard to her, a tender care over her, cohabitation with her, contentment and satisfaction in her alone, a patient bearing with her weaknesses, a prudent hiding of her infirmities, a providing a supply for her wants suitable to her rank, a readiness to instruct and direct her, a willingness to pray for her, and with her: where true conjugal love is found, these duties included will be performed. Observe next, as the apostle propounded the church for a pattern of subjection to the wife, so he propounds Christ as a pattern of love to husbands; *Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church*. Did he love his church with an active and operative love, with a real and sincere love, with an intire and undivided love, with a lasting and constant love, notwithstanding all his church's weaknesses and failings? Such ought the husband's love to be; that is, every husband to his own wife: no meanness of birth, no want of education, no homeliness of person, no frowardness of disposition in the wife, will discharge the husband from the obligation of this duty towards her; Christ's example hath the force of an argument to excite us to it, and is also an exact rule to guide and direct us in it: *Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the church*. Observe farther, The instances and evidences which Christ has given of his love unto his church: He gave himself for her, *that he might sanctify and cleanse, and present her to himself a glorious church, without spot or blemish*. Here note, 1. The church's polluted and impure condition, supposed before Christ gave himself for her; the church in herself was, as the world is, polluted, otherwise she had stood in no need of Christ's washing and cleansing,

Note, 2. The care of Christ to purify and cleanse his church from this pollution; he gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her; he loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood. Note, 3. The instrumental means of the church's sanctification, it was with the *washing of water by the word*: the word and sacraments are the great and instrumental means, in the hand of Christ, by which he applies the virtue and efficacy of his death, for the sanctifying and cleansing of his church and children. Note, 4. The holy and glorious condition which the church shall be found in at the great marriage day, *without spot or wrinkle, that he might at the last day, present her to himself a spotless spouse*, a glorious church, having no spot of sin, or wrinkle of deformity, or any such imperfect thing, but be perfectly beautiful, holy, and without blemish; intimating, that the church hath her spots and wrinkles now in her militant state; but when Christ shall at last present the church triumphant to himself, then shall she be like himself, without spot. Blessed be God, believers have now a righteousness in Christ, without spot or wrinkle; then shall they have an holiness in themselves, without spot or wrinkle; nothing of imperfection cleaving to them, or inheriting in them. The blood of Christ has already perfectly justified, and thoroughly cleansed believers from sin's guilt; ere long the Spirit of Christ will perfectly cleanse them from all sin's filth. Oh, what a pure and spotless, what a perfect and beautiful creature will the church come out of Christ's hands, and be presented to the Father, at the great day, in the shining beauty of perfect holiness! God strengthen our faith in the belief of it, and prepare us for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church;

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Our apostle here propounds a further argument to enforce this duty of love from husband to wife, taken from that near conjunction between them, showing, that they are one flesh and one body, not in a natural, but in a relative sense; and accordingly a man should so love his wife, even as himself: doth a man love himself superlatively, cordially, tenderly, industriously, perseveringly? So ought he to love his wife. Will a man be out of love with himself, much less hate himself, though he be deformed, or by some accident maimed? In like manner ought not any natural defect, or accidental mischance, to cause a remission, much less a cessation of the man's love unto his own wife; as it is an unnatural thing for a man to hate his own flesh personal, so his own flesh relational. Again, A man is so far from hating his own flesh, that he nourisheth and cherisheth it with the utmost care and tenderness; in like manner ought he to be kind to, and tender over his civil-self, the wife of his bosom; in imitation likewise of Christ's example, who nourishes and cherishes his church, as being *flesh of his own flesh, and bone of his own bone*; that is, as near to one another by a mystical and spi-

ritual union, as Adam and Eve were by a matrimonial union, O stupendous privilege, for believers and Christ to be as one flesh! Husband and wife are not so near, soul and body are not so near, as Christ and believers are to each other.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

Here the apostle uses a farther argument to excite the husband's love to his espoused wife, taken from the law of marriage, which maketh them two one flesh in a civil sense, therefore the man should leave father, and mother, and cleave to his wife: not that their obligations cease to their parents, or as if they were to cast off natural affections to them; but he shows, that there is a nearer union betwixt husband and wife, than betwixt parents and child, and that the bonds of matrimonial love are stronger than those of nature. Their being said to be *one flesh*, implies a most strict union, and most intimate communion, whereby they have one interest, common goods, common friends, yea, and all things common, as if they were but one person; but the apostle further intimates to us, at the 31st verse, that this matrimonial union betwixt man and wife was designed by God to shadow forth and represent that mystical union which is betwixt Christ, and his church. Both the conjugal union give the wife an interest in the estate and honor of the husband, be she never so meanly descended in herself? In like manner from the saints' union with Christ, does there immediately result a sweet and blessed communion or fellowship with Christ in graces and spiritual privileges; all that Christ is, and has, is theirs by communication to them, or improvement for them; well might the apostle therefore say, *This is a great mystery, &c.* In the 33d verse, the apostle shuts up his discourse upon this argument, with a repeated exhortation to the husband to love his wife, and to the wife to reverence her husband: *Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself: so love, that is, with an extensive love, reaching the whole person, soul and body; with an intensive love, above all persons and relatives whatsoever; with an hearty love, without dissimulation; with an holy love, without pollution: with a constant love, without alteration; and with great love, beyond comparison.— And let the wife see that she reverence her husband.* The great duty which the wife owes to her husband is *reverence*. This is made up of three ingredients; namely, estimation, love, and fear; the wife that reverences her husband, esteems him, and dares not think meanly of him; her esteem of him provokes her love unto him; and her love of him is accompanied with an ingenuous fear to offend and grieve him; and the wife expresses this reverence in her gestures, by a respectful demeanour towards him, in her speeches to him,

when with her, and of him when absent from her, always mentioning him with respect and honor; in her actions, by complying with his desires, by following his directions, by hearkening to his reproofs, and by her cheerful and respectful behaviour towards him at all times, and in all places, as well at home, as abroad before the world. And that the wife may thus reverence her husband, let her be earnest with God in prayer, for wisdom and understanding, for prudence and patience, for humility and meekness; a proud spirit would not agree with an angel, but the humble will agree with any person.

CHAPTER VI.

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: For this is right.

2 Honor thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise.)

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Our apostle, in the foregoing chapter, began to treat of relative duties, and concluded that chapter with the duties of husbands and wives; he begins this with the duty of children and parents to each other: and here we have observable, that he begins with the duty of the inferior first, of the child to the parents, as he did before with the duty of the wife, chap. v. 22. He first puts them in mind of their duty who are to obey; that being the most difficult duty, and the persons concerned in it usually more defective, and the work less easy and pleasing to our nature. Observe, 2. The important duty which children are directed to, the duty of obedience and honor; *Children, obey; honor your father and mother*; this duty of honor and obedience implies inward reverence, and a lawful estimation of their persons, and honoring of them in heart, speech and behaviour; it implies also outward observance, a pious regard to their instructions, executing all their commands which are not sinful, depending on their counsels, and following their good examples, owning with thankfulness their parents' care and concern for them, and covering the failings and infirmities found in them. Observe, 3. The object of this duty, both parents; not the father alone, or the mother only, but both father and mother jointly; *Children, obey your parents, honor thy father and thy mother*: as obedience belongeth to all children, of what age or sex, or condition soever, so are children obliged to obey both parents, the mother as well as the father, yea, she is named first, Lev. xix. 3. her sex being weaker, she is the more subject to contempt; and because the mother, in old age, is liable to be despised, God has particularly guarded about her, by his positive and express command, to free her from contempt, Prov. xxiii. 22. saying, *Hearken to thy father who begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.* Observe, 4. The noble principle from whence this obedience in children to parents ought to flow, namely, from the fear of God; *obey them in the Lord*, that is, in obedience to his command, and in all things agreeable to his will, fear-

ing his displeasure in case of disobedience; let not your obedience be barely natural and prudential, but christian and religious. Observe, 5. The arguments used by our apostle to excite to the practice of this duty. The first argument is drawn from the equity of it, *this is right*, that is, the law of God and nature requires it. The great motive which ought to excite us to the practice of any duty, is not so much the advantageousness, as the righteousness and equity of the duty, as being commanded by God, and well-pleasing in his sight *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*. A second argument is, because this is the first commandment of the second table, which has a particular promise annexed to it; *This is the first commandment with promise*, that is, with an explicit and express promise; for every commandment hath both a promise and a threatening implied in it, and annexed to it; but this is the first commandment with a promise expressed, and that is a promise of long life, *that thy days may be long*; and this promise is always fulfilled, either in kind or in equivalency, either by enjoying a long life on earth, or a better life in heaven. Learn hence, That although our first and chief motive to obedience, be the equity and righteousness of what God requires, yet we may as a secondary encouragement, have respect to the promised reward, and particularly to the temporal advantage of our obedience. Long life is here promised to children, as an encouragement to obedience, which is in itself a very valuable mercy and blessing; and having eyed the command of God, in the first place, they may and ought to have respect to the recompence of reward in the next place.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Here the duty of both parents to their children is laid down. Where note, 1. The apostle's dehortation, or negative precept, *Provoke not your children to wrath*, that is, be not too severe towards them, abuse not your parental power over them, provoke them not, nor embitter their spirits against you, by denying them what is convenient for them, by inveighing with bitter words against them, by unjust, unseasonable, or immoderate correction of them. To provoke or stir up any to sin, especially young ones, and particularly our children, renders us guilty before the Lord, of all that sin which they have committed through our provocation; *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath*. Note, 2. St. Paul's positive injunction given unto parents; *Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*: Where, 1. He directs to their education; *Bring them up*. 2. To join nurture and admonition with their education: *Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; That is, give them good instruction, withhold not early correction; set before them good example, begin with them beimes, and suffer not the devil, the world, and the flesh, to bespeak them for their service, before you engage them for God's: and remember, that there is a tie of nature, a tie of interest, and a tie of religion, which parents are under thus to do; *Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition, &c.*

5 Servants, be obedient to them that

are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing, that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Observe here, 1. The general duty incumbent upon servants, that of obedience to their masters, according to the flesh, that is, in temporal things only; obey your earthly masters in things pertaining to the world, leaving the soul and conscience to God only, who alone is the sovereign Lord of it. Christian liberty is not inconsistent with civil subjection; such as are God's freemen may be servants to men, though not the servants of men; and, as servants, obedience is their duty in all lawful things. Observe, 2. The qualifications and properties of this obedience, which is due and payable from servants to masters. 1. It must be with *fear and trembling*, that is, with fear of displeasing them; yet they must not act barely from fear, but out of love both to God and their masters. 2. It must be in *singleness of heart*, in great simplicity and sincerity of spirit, without guile, hypocrisy and dissimulation. 3. They must eye their great Master in heaven in all the services they perform to their masters here on earth, *not with eye-service*. But how should servants have an eye to their great Master in heaven? *Ans.* They should have an eye to the presence of their great Master, to the glory of their great Master, to the command of their great Master, and to the assistance and acceptance of their Master in heaven. Learn hence, That our eyeing of God in all the services we perform, and making him the judge and spectator of all our actions, will be a singular help to make us sincere and single hearted in all we do, and in all we design. Again, 4. Their service must be performed *with good will*, that is, with cheerfulness and delight, not grudgingly, unpleasantly, or from fear of punishment only; eyeing the Lord Christ in all that service they do for men. Learn hence, That the meanest and basest services and employments, in the place and station which God sets us in, being done with right qualifications, with faithfulness and cheerfulness, from right motives, and for right ends, is service done to Christ, and, as such, shall be accepted and rewarded by him, *with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men*. Observe lastly, The reward which the Holy Ghost propounds, as an encouragement to poor servants, in their obedience to their masters; and that is, the assurance of a reward from God; whatever disappointment they may meet with from men; *knowing that whatever a man doth out of obedience to the Lord, a reward of the same shall he receive, whether he be a poor bond-servant, or a free man and master*. Note here, How the basest drudgery of servants, when performed in obedience to God, and with an eye at his glory, is called here a *good work*, and shall not

fall of a good reward: "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth;" when a poor servant scours a ditch, or does the meanest drudgery, God will reward him for it; for he looketh not at the beauty, splendor, and greatness of the work, but at the integrity and honesty of the workman: the mean and outwardly base works of poor servants, when honest and sincere, shall find acceptance with God, and be rewarded by him, as well as the more splendid, honorable, and expensive works of their rich masters; "the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Here the master's duty to his servants is directed to, both generally, and more particularly; in general, he directs masters, to do the same things to their servants; not the same things for kind, but for manner of doing them; that is, in obedience to the same command of God, with an eye to the same glory of God, with the same singleness of heart, with the same love and good-will. Here note, That the greatest master, yea, the greatest prince and potentate upon earth, lie under obligations, in point of duty, to their servants and inferiors; and it ought to be as much their care to discharge their duty sincerely, cheerfully, with good will, and, eyeing their great Master in heaven, as it concerns the poorest servant to obey them in and after the same manner; *ye masters, do the same things unto them.* Next follow the particular directions given to masters, namely, *To forbear threatenings*; that is, let them not exercise their authority over them imperiously and with rigor, but mildly, and with gentleness; rule them not tyrannically, but govern with moderation and temper. Lord! how ordinary it is for men in place and power a little above others, to insult over, and trample upon others, forgetting that there is one above them, whom they must be accountable unto themselves! "Forbearing threatenings, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons." Here we have Almighty God described two ways: 1. From his magnificence and stately palace in which his illustrious glory shineth; *your Master is in heaven*; not as if he were only there, and no where else, but eminently there, though every where else. 2. God is here described by his justice and impartiality in judging; *There is no respect of persons with him*, that is, when the rich master and poor servant come to stand upon a level before him, he will not respect either of them for their outward circumstances, but, as a just judge, reward them both according to their works. Thus our apostle concludes his exhortation to the practice and performance of relative duties, between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant. He now closes his epistle with a special exhortation to all christians, to look upon themselves as spiritual soldiers, listed under Christ's exalted banner, engaged in a continual warfare with the world, and the prince of the world; and accordingly, he bespeaks them in martial phrase to the end of the chapter,

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong
(No. 57.)

in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Our apostle, calling us here forth to the christian warfare, gives forth first the word of encouragement to battle. "Be strong in the Lord, and in his mighty power." A christian above all men, needs resolution, and a daring courage; if he be possessed with fear, he is unfit to go into the field; if dispirited with strong impressions of danger, how unready for the encounter! Cowards win neither earth nor heaven. But where lies the christian's strength? Verily, in the Lord, and not in himself; the strength of the whole hosts of saints lies in the Lord of Hosts, and accordingly it ought to be the christian's great care, in all difficulties and dangers to strengthen his faith on the Almighty power of God. Observe, 2. A direction given how a saint may come to be strong in the Lord, namely, by putting on the whole armor of God; that is, by being clothed with the following graces, which are hereafter mentioned in this chapter; as, "the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, &c." Now these are called armor of God, because they are of his appointment and institution, and of his make and constitution; and this armor must be put on, that is, our grace kept in continual exercise: it is one thing to have armor in the house, and another to have it buckled on in the field; it is not sufficient to have grace in the habit and principle, but it is grace in act and exercise that must conquer spiritual enemies. Observe, 3. A reason assigned why the christian is to be thus completely armed, *that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*; intimating, that the devil is one chief enemy we have to combat with in the christian warfare, and that this enemy is a wily, subtle enemy, discovering his dangerous policy, first by tempting and alluring into sin, and then by vexing and tormenting for sin. But satan, with all his wits and wiles, shall never finally vanquish (though he may, in a particular battle, overcome) a soul clad in spiritual armor; nay, he that hath this armor of God on, shall certainly vanquish and overcome him: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against, &c."

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

The apostle mentioned our enemy in the former verse: here he describes the combat in this verse, *We wrestle*: A christian's life is a perpetual warfare, a continual wrestling, but with what? and with whom? *Ans.* Negatively, *not with flesh and blood*; that is, not only or chiefly with flesh and blood, with human enemies, but we must grapple and contend with angelical powers, with devils, who are principalities and powers, &c. Note here, How the devil and his angels are described; 1. By their prince-like authority and government which they exercise in the world, called

therefore principalities and powers, to denote that satan is a great and mighty prince; a prince that has the heart and knee of all his subjects. 2. By the seat of his empire, he rules in this world, not in the other: the highest the devil can go, is the air; heaven fears him not: and he is a ruler of the darkness of this world, that is, in such sinners as labor under the darkness of sin and ignorance. 3. Satan and his angels are here described by their spiritual nature, called *spiritual wickedness*, that is wicked spirits, intimating to us, that the devils are spirits; that they are spirits extremely wicked; and that these wicked spirits do chiefly annoy christians with, and provoke them to spiritual wickedness. 4. They are described by their residence or place of abode, in *high places*; that is, in the air, of which he is called the prince. From the whole note, How plainly Christ our captain deals with all his soldiers, and the difference between Christ's dealing with his followers, and satan with his: satan durst not let sinners know what that God is whom they fight against, but Christ is not afraid to show his saints their enemy in all his power and strength; well he might, because the weakness of God is stronger than the powers of hell.

13 Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

14 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Observe here, 1. How our apostle having described the enemy in the foregoing verse, and set him forth in all his formidable strength and power, comes forth at the head of his Ephesian camp, gives them a fresh alarm, and bids them arm! "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day;" intimating that an evil day is before us; that it will be of mighty advantage to us, to be able to stand in the evil day; and that without the help of divine armor, we cannot stand in that day. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit, are this armor; he that has not these, let his common gifts be never so gay and glorious, he will never hold out to fight the last battle, but fall into the enemy's hand, and be taken captive by him at his

will. Observe, next, How our apostle comes to describe the armor of God, piece by piece, which the christian is to put on before he takes the field against the enemy: here is the soldier's girdle, his breastplate, his shoe, his shield, his helmet, and his sword, all described; his offensive and defensive weapons, wherewith soldiers of old used to arm their bodies from head to foot; now the apostle assigneth to particular graces, an use and excellency answerable to these pieces of armor, and shows that there is some resemblance between every grace and that piece of the bodily armor to which it is here compared; but *observable* it is, that although there be pieces of armor for all other parts of the body, here is none assigned for the back, nor back parts, because there must be no running away, no hope of escaping by flight, in this spiritual warfare; if we turn our back upon our enemy, we lay open to his darts, and are in danger of destruction; if we fight on, we have our second in the field, and are sure of victory, provided we enter the field in order, and stand to our arms, maintain our watch, keep our ground, and appear armed *cap-a-pee*, from head to foot, with the several pieces of armor here recommended: The first of which is the girdle of truth, ver. 14. *Having your loins girt about with truth*, that is sincerity of heart. Doth a girdle or belt adorn the soldier? So doth sincerity adorn the christian. Doth the girdle strengthen the soldier's loins? So doth sincerity strengthen the soul, and every grace in the soul; it is sincere faith, that is, strong faith; it is sincere love that is mighty love. Secondly, *the breastplate of righteousness*; by which is to be understood the love and practice of universal holiness. But why is this compared to a breastplate? *Ans.* Because, as the breastplate defends the most principal parts of the body, where the heart and other vitals are closely couched together; thus holiness preserves the soul and conscience, the principal parts of a christian; from the wounds and harms of sin, which is the weapon which satan uses, to give conscience its deadly stab with. The third piece of christian armor, is the spiritual shoe, fitted to the soldier's foot, and worn by him, so long as he keeps the field against sin and satan; the soldier's way is sometimes full of sharp stones, and sometimes by the enemy strewed with sharp iron spikes struck into the ground: the soldier will soon be wounded or fundered if not well shod; therefore the direction here is, *Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*; that is, maintaining an holy readiness of spirit, and a resolute frame of heart, to undergo any suffering, and endure any hardship in your christian warfare; which frame of spirit being wrought in us by the doctrine of the gospel, is therefore called *the preparation of the gospel of peace*. The fourth piece of armor recommended above all, to be put on, is the *shield of faith*; this is that grace, by which we believe the truth of God's word in general, and depend upon Christ in particular, as crucified, for pardon and life, and this upon the warrant of the promise. But why is faith compared to a shield? *Ans.* Because, as the shield defends the whole body, so faith defends the whole man; the understanding from error, the conscience from searedness, the will from rebellion against the will and command of God: and, as the shield defends the whole armor, as well as the soldier's whole body: it defends the breast-plate, as well as the breast; so faith is our armor upon armor, a grace that preserves all other graces whatsoever. The fifth piece of armor is mentioned ver. 17. *The helmet of salvation*; by which the grace of

hope is understood, which has for its object salvation, called therefore the hope of salvation; salvation is the ultimate and comprehensive object of the christian's expectation; and it is compared to an helmet; because, as the helmet defends the head, so doth the hope of salvation defend the soul; it keeps the head above water, and makes the christian bold and brave: hope is a grace of singular use and excellent service to a christian, in the whole course of his christian warfare; it puts him upon noble services, it keeps him patient under the greatest sufferings, and it will enable the soul to wait long for the performance of divine promises. The sixth piece of spiritual armor is the sword, ver. 17. The former were defensive, but this is both an offensive and defensive weapon, such is the word of God: but why compared to a sword? *Ans.* In regard both of necessity and excellency; the sword was ever esteemed a most necessary and useful part of the soldier's furniture; of such usefulness, necessity and excellency, is the word of God, by which the christian doth defend himself, and offend his enemies: but why is it called the *Sword of the Spirit*? *Ans.* Because the Spirit was the author of it; the Spirit of God is the interpreter of it; and it is the Spirit that gives the word its efficacy and power in the soul; the word of God, contained in the scriptures, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome and vanquish all their enemies. The seventh and last piece of spiritual armor is mentioned, ver. 18. that is, *prayer*; *praying always with all prayer, &c.* Here note, The time for prayer, *praying always*; the sort and kind of prayer, *praying always with all prayer*; the inward principle of prayer, from which it must flow, *in the spirit*; the guard to set about the duty of prayer, *watching thereunto*; the constancy to be exercised in the duty *with all perseverance*; the comprehensiveness of the duty, *for all saints*. Learn, That prayer is a necessary duty, for all christians, and to be used, with all other pieces of spiritual armor, by the christian soldier.

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel:

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Our apostle having directed the Ephesians to the duty of prayer in general, desires them here to pray for himself in particular. Where observe, 1. His exhortation and direction to pray for himself, and all the ministers of the gospel; *and for me*. Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are and ought, in an especial manner, to be remembered in the saints' prayers. Observe, 2. The mercy which he desires them to pray for, *that utterance may be given*; namely, a readiness to deliver to others what God has handed in to us. Ministers depend upon God for utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest with God to give it to them. Observe, 3. The end why he desires this utterance, that he may open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. Where note, 1. The sublime nature of the gospel, it is a mystery. 2. The work of a gospel minister;

and that is to make known that gospel mystery. 3. The manner how he is to perform this work, *that I may open my mouth boldly*; namely, in asserting truth, and in reproving sin, with a wise and prudent, with a meek and humble, with an active and zealous boldness. Observe, 4. A double argument to back and enforce his request, to pray for him; 1. From his office, *for which I am an ambassador*; The ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors; and shall not their people pray for the success of their embassies? 2. From his afflicted state *he was an ambassador in bonds*; his zeal for God, and his truth, confined him to a prison; he preached himself into a gaol; well therefore might they pray for him, who had now lost his liberty, and soon afterwards to lose his life for them; no prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts of such as suffer tribulation and persecution for the sake of Christ; "Pray for me, that I may make known the mysteries of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds."

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Observe here, 1. The tender love and affectionate regard which St. Paul bore to these Ephesians, in the midst of his sufferings, and during his imprisonment; he not only wrote, but sent to them; no doubt the apostle had but few, very few fast friends with him at Rome, whom he could repose an entire confidence in, and receive great consolation from; however, he will deny himself, to serve them: a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, is so tenderly affectionate towards his flock, that he prefers their spiritual edification before his own private and particular advantage; though St. Paul was now a prisoner, and under a daily expectation of death, and had few to attend him, yet he sends one of his most beloved friends away to them, choosing rather himself to want an attendant, than that they should want a comforter; nothing better becomes a minister of Christ than a public spirit. Observe, 2. The character of the person whom St. Paul sent unto them; he is described, 1. By his name, Tychicus. 2. By his state, he was a brother, that is, a christian, a beloved brother, a brother in Christ. 3. By his office, he was a minister, yea, *a faithful minister in the Lord*, that is, in the work of the Lord: between whom and St. Paul there was a sweet harmony, an happy union of hearts, a joint care and endeavour to carry on the interest of Christ amongst the churches: behold! how good and pleasant a thing it is, when ministers of Christ are dear to each other; when instead of divisions, emulations and strife amongst them, they can give testimonials of each other, as well deserving; without endeavouring to conceal and obscure the gifts and graces of God, which are eminent in any of their fellow-laborers, on purpose only to set off themselves, that their own performances may be the more taken notice of. St. Paul was far from this spirit, as appears by the character which, upon a fit occasion, he gave of Tychicus. Observe, 3. The de-

sign and end which St. Paul had in sending Tychicus unto them, and that was two-fold: 1. That he might acquaint them with St. Paul's condition and state; *that ye might know my affairs, how I do, and what I do, I have sent Tychicus to declare unto you all things.* What! all things without exception? Yes, both doings and sufferings, the apostle was ashamed of neither. Learn thence, That the life and conversation of ministers, both public and private, must and ought to be such, that they need not be ashamed to have it known, or concerned that the church should know what they do, how they manage, to the intent that their people may be edified by their conversation, as well as instructed by their preaching; "Tychicus shall declare unto you all things." The second end St. Paul had in sending Tychicus from himself to the Ephesians, was, that he might *comfort their hearts.* But how could Tychicus do this? These ways; 1. By making known to them the true cause of his sufferings. St. Paul's enemies had laid heavy things to his charge, these might perhaps fly as far as Ephesus; now, though the apostle regarded little what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to be set right in the thoughts of the churches, and accordingly sends Tychicus to acquaint them with the cause of his imprisonment. 2. To keep them from discouragement, and being inordinately cast down at the report of his sufferings: no doubt, St. Paul's chain entered into their souls, and his sufferings were their sorrows; he therefore sends Tychicus to prevent their immoderate sorrow and mourning upon his account. 3. To comfort their hearts with the report of that holy joy and cheerfulness of spirit which was found with him in and under all his sufferings, Oh! it is an excellent sight to behold the saints at liberty mourning over their afflicted brethren; and them that are sufferers become comforters of them that are at liberty. Lord! never doth thy holy religion appear more glorious, than when thy ministers commend it by their sufferings for it: and no way can they commend it higher, than by an holy, humble cheerfulness of spirit, in their suffering for it; thy ministers preach with far greater advantage from a prison, than they can from a pulpit. 4. Might not St. Paul send Tychicus now to the church at Ephesus, to engage the churches to pray with earnestness for himself, as well as to comfort them? O! none so covetous of prayers as the ministers of Christ, and no ministers like suffering ministers. St. Paul sets all the churches at work to pray for him in prison; and great reason for it: a prison has its temptation as well as a palace; when men play the persecutors, the devil forgets not to be a tempter; sometimes he will attempt to soften them with impressions of fear; at another time he hopes to overcome them, and weaken their courage, by their friends' tears and entreaties; sometimes the devil hopes to embitter a suffering saint's spirit against his persecutors, and to sour him with the leaven of malice and wrath. Oh! it is no easy matter to receive evil, and yet wish none to him from whose hands we have received it; to reserve love for him that shows wrath and hatred to us, is a glorious, but a difficult work. But if all this fails, yet the devil hopes to blow him up with pride and a high conceit of himself, who dares suffer, when others shrink, and is ready to lay down his head, when others pull in their heads, and seek to save themselves in a whole skin. Pride is a salamander, that can live in the very flames of martyrdom; if any saint need the humility of many saints, it is he that is called to suffer for Christ. St. Paul was very sensible of this; he well knew that a suffering condi-

tion is full of temptation; that a christian's strength to carry him through it, is not in his own keeping; God must help, or the stoutest champion will fail: he also knows that prayer is the best means to fetch in that help, and accordingly St. Paul here sends Tychicus to Ephesus, to engage the auxiliary forces of the saint's prayers on earth, and the *possé celi* from heaven, that he might glorify God in a suffering hour.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our apostle being now come to the close and conclusion of this excellent epistle, he shuts it up with very fervent and affectionate wishes and prayers for them. 1. He wishes the brethren, the converted christians, in and about Ephesus *peace*, peace with God, peace with conscience, peace especially one with another, and all manner of outward prosperity, comprehended in the word *peace*. 2. Mutual love among themselves. 3. The grace of faith, the fountain of the former; all which he wishes from God the Father, not excluding, but including the Son and Holy Ghost, and from Jesus Christ—the Mediator, through virtue of whose merit and intercession all saving benefits are conveyed unto believers: St. Paul's example is instructive to the ministers of Christ in all succeeding ages. Would we have our ministerial endeavours attended with manifest success? We must be much in prayer, in serious and fervent prayer to God, to work those graces in our people, *faith, love, and holiness*, which we have been by our ministry recommending to their care and practice; that minister who is most prayerful, is usually most successful.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Still our apostle goes on praying; he began and closes his epistle with prayer; and the blessings prayed for, are *grace and peace*; peace in the former verse comprehending all temporal felicity, and grace in this, comprehending the special favor and loving-kindness of God; this he prays may be the portion of all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, or incorruption, as the word signifies, that is, not for time only, but for eternity, not in show and appearance only, but in reality. Sincere love to our Lord Jesus Christ is a sure character and undoubted mark of such a person as has found grace in God's sight, and is very high in the divine favor. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ: he doth not say with a seraphim's, but with a sincere love.* *Quest.* But when, and how, may a person know that he loves Christ in great sincerity? *Ans.* If Christ be enthroned in thy heart as a chief commander: if he be esteemed by thee as thy chiefest excellency, and thy choicest treasure; if he be thy chiefest refuge, unto which thou fliest in all dangers and distresses; thou mayest conclude, thy supreme love is placed upon him, that thou lovest him in sincerity; and the more thou lovest him, the more lovely wilt thou be unto him, and the more will thy heart be let out in desires after him, and in fervent longings for the full fruition and final enjoyment of him; for those whom we love, we long to be with.

*Come then, Lord! down to me,
Or take me up to thee.*

THE
EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE
PHILIPPIANS.

St. Paul being warned by the Holy Ghost to go into Macedonia and preach the gospel, as we find, Acts xvi. he plants first a church at Philippi, a principal city in Macedonia, so called from Philip king of Macedon, who beautified and enlarged it
But St. Paul's charge being to preach the gospel to all the Gentiles, he travels from place to place till he came at Rome, where he was in bonds, and consequently in necessity and straits; which the Philippians understanding, they sent Epaphroditus, their bishop or chief minister to him, with a liberal contribution to supply his wants: by whom St. Paul sends this affectionate letter to them, partly to testify his thankfulness for the relief received from them, but principally to confirm them in the faith, to prevent their being offended at his sufferings for the gospel, to encourage them to walk worthy of the gospel, to warn them against seducers and Judaizing teachers, and to quicken them to divers christian duties: and so concludes his epistle with particular salutations, and an apostolical benediction.

CHAPTER 1.

The design and scope of our apostle in this first chapter, is, to encourage the Philippians to constancy in the faith, to perseverance in holiness; not to be discouraged at his sufferings for the gospel, seeing christianity had already gained very much, and would, he was very confident, gain much more, by the sufferings he underwent for the sake of the gospel: accordingly, he exhorts them to courage and constancy, by several weighty arguments, to the end of the chapter.

PAUL and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;

Observe here, 1. The penman of this epistle, St. Paul, joining Timotheus with him in the salutation, because his companion and fellow laborer, and one that had assisted in the instructing of the Philippians, and was a person much valued and esteemed by them. Observe, 2. The great modesty of St. Paul, in the character he gives of himself; he doth not style himself here an apostle, but the servant of Jesus Christ; in his other epistles which he wrote alone, he styles himself an apostle, Rom. i. 1. Gal. i. 1. &c. He doth not say here, Paul an apostle, and Timotheus a servant of Jesus Christ, magnifying himself above Timothy, but sets himself upon a level with him, saying, "Paul and (No. 57.)

Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ" Learn hence, 1. That true humility teaches christians to speak sparingly of themselves, and of their own authority, and credit, except upon a just and necessary occasion, and when weighty reasons do urge and oblige them to it. Learn, 2. That the ministers and dispensers of the gospel are, in a special manner, the servants of Jesus Christ, wholly devoted to his service, and discharging themselves faithfully in the performance of it. Observe, 3. The superscription of this epistle, of the persons to whom it was directed, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus," in general, "which were at Philippi, and to the bishops and deacons; to all the saints at Philippi;" so he calls them, because they were all holy by visible profession, and many of them no doubt, by real sanctification, being inherently as well as externally holy; and the denomination is here taken from the better, though not the greater part, for whose sake the whole community are here called saints; But why saints in Christ Jesus? Because, as it is necessary to make a man internally holy, that he be in Christ Jesus by real implantation; so to denominate a man externally and federally holy, requires a visible profession, and an external union with Christ, John xv. 2. In particular, this epistle is directed to the *bishops and deacons*; they were both the church's overseers: the bishops to oversee and inspect the lives and manners of persons; the deacons to oversee the necessities of persons, and to serve the church in taking care of the poor. Note here, The great and special care which our holy Lord has taken of his church, in appointing stated officers to undertake the oversight of his whole family, to rule and govern, to direct and instruct it;

yes, not only has he appointed officers for the oversight of the souls of his people, but others to inspect their bodily necessities, that those who are indigent might be supplied by their care, and the charity of the church; "To the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

2 Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace from God the Father, or grace from God as a Father; intimating that God bestows not his grace as a Creator, but as a Father, as a Father in Christ: *and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ*; he being the purchaser of our peace; he, upon whom was laid the chastisement of our peace, and in whom, and for whose sake, God becomes reconciled to us, and at peace with us. Learn hence, 1. That such as have received most grace from God, do yet stand in need of further measures, and fresh supplies of it: grace to pardon sin, and grace to subdue sin. 2. That peace, as well as grace, may and ought to be the subject of a christian's prayer and care, to obtain peace with God, peace with conscience, peace with one another, and, if it be possible, peace with all men.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Observe here, 1. The proper character of a gospel-minister, he is his people's constant remembrancer, and the remembrancer of all his people; *I remember you all*, says the apostle, "I remember you always, and in every prayer." This is a very great part of our ministerial duty, to pray for the people; not in our public offices only, but in our private addresses also, and this continually, and without ceasing; we should never rise off our knees, without bearing our people upon our hearts before the Lord. Did minister and people more strive together in their prayers one for another, there would be less strife and contention between them, one with another; ministers must be their people's remembrancers; St. Paul here remembered the Philippians, *all the Philippians always*, and in every prayer. Observe, 1. St. Paul could and did remember the Philippians with joy; though he was in sadness himself in a prison, yet he could think of them, as a people converted by his ministry with joy, *making request with joy*. When the ministers of Christ see any success of their labors in the lives of their people, it is matter of inexpressible joy to them, how sad soever the case is with them, as to their outward circumstances: when they sigh in a prison with respect to their personal sufferings, they can sing and rejoice, if they find their people's proficiency in knowledge and growth in grace; "I thank my God for you, making request with joy." Observe, 3. The ground and occasion of this his joy, ver. 5. *For your fellowship in the gospel*; that is, for your ready embracing of the gospel at my first preaching of it to you, for the real subjection of some, and the professed subjection of all to the faith of Christ, whereby ye were brought into fellowship with Christ and his church; and also for the continuance of you in

the faith and profession of the gospel, *from the first day until now*. Learn hence, That when a people, upon a plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, do readily receive and obey it, and remain constant in their profession of it, and obedience to it, it is matter of unspeakable thanksgiving and praise to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; "I thank God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now;" that is continuing in the faith, and persevering in your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, I bless God for this.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Here we have a further cause assigned of St. Paul's joy on the Philippians' behalf, namely, the firm and full assurance which he had of their perseverance in grace unto the end: God, that has begun, will perfect, that is, augment and increase it, till it arrives at perfection in glory. Note here, 1. The nature of grace described, or the proper title deservedly given to the grace of God, it is called "a good work; he that hath begun a good work, &c." Well may regenerating grace be called a *good work*, because it is the living foundation and vital principle, from whence all good works do proceed and flow; the grace of God in the heart is the root of all true holiness in the life; as good works are necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is necessary to good works. Note, 2. As the nature of grace described, so the author and augmentor of grace declared; and that is God, "he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it," that is, augment it, and increase it; as the good work of grace in the heart is God's work, and he is the author of it, so he will maintain it and carry it on unto perfection, and be both the increaser and perfecter of it: God never doth his work by halves, Note, 3. The certainty of grace asserted, *being confident of this very thing*: but what ground had St. Paul for this confidence? *Ans*, Because grace is the care of the whole Trinity: all the persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do concern themselves, both in the production, preservation and perfection of it; the Father decrees it, the Son purchases it, the Spirit infuses it, the Father begets it, the Son excites it, the Holy Spirit conducts it; and as they did all concur to its production, so do they all co-operate and work together for the preservation of it. Learn hence, that such persons, in whose souls Almighty God has begun a good work of grace, may with much assurance expect, by the influence of God's care, and the exercise of their own endeavours, that they shall hold out and persevere in a state of grace unto the end: *until the day of Christ*, that is, the day of judgment.

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

In these words, our apostle assigns a ground and reason of that confidence which he expressed himself to have of the Philippians' perseverance in grace and holiness, in the fore-

going verse, namely, because they were partakers of the same grace with himself, and were ready to suffer for Christ, as he was; we may warrantably be persuaded of their perseverance in grace unto the end, in whom we see both readiness of obedience to the gospel, and also zealous and cheerful suffering for and in defence of the gospel. Thus did St. Paul here; Where observe, The apostle accounted it a grace and favor from God, that he was thought worthy to suffer for the gospel, and the Philippians with him; *Ye are partakers of my grace.* Learn hence, That to suffer bonds and imprisonment for the gospel's sake, is a special grace and favor of God, not considered in itself, but in the fruits and consequence of it. A second ground of his confidence was their respect to him, *I have you in my heart*, and I find you *have me in your hearts*; you partake of the misery of my bonds, you suffer with me in my sufferings, and sympathize with me in my sorrows; they relieved and refreshed him in his imprisonment, which he underwent for the sake of Christ and his gospel; and from hence he had a good confidence that they would persevere unto the end. An operative love to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, especially when they are under persecution, is a good evidence of the sincerity of their love to Christ, and of their steadfastness and perseverance in grace unto the end.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

These words are expressive of that passionate degree of christian love which St. Paul bore to the Philippians; he durst appeal to God, as to the sincerity and fervency of it; *God is my record.* I call him to witness, and can appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, *how greatly I long after you*; that is, how passionately and sincerely I love you, with the most intense and hearty affection, *in the bowels of Jesus Christ.* The expression may denote both the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause of his love; 1. That the author of this his love unto them was Christ, he was the spring and procurer of it; and consequently, it was no carnal or selfish love, to serve his own end and designs upon them, but truly spiritual. 2. That Christ's love to him was the pattern and example, according to which he loved them, with no common love, but with an entire and intense affection, from the ground of the heart, and the most intimate bowels; no words can be more expressive of that fervent love and earnest longing, which St. Paul had for the welfare of the Philippians; a love which not only exceeds the love of all relations; he doth not say, I long after you in the bowels of a Father, or in the bowels of an husband, but in the bowels of Jesus Christ; humbly comparing his love towards them to the love of Jesus Christ; not for the degrees of it, not for the fruits and advantages of it, but for the truth and sincerity of it; "I greatly long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, no more endearing affection between any relations upon earth, than between such ministers of Christ, and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert to God; when present with them, they passionately love them; when absent from them, they affectionately long after them; imitating, as much as they can, their Lord Jesus Christ, both in the reality and sincerity, and also in the measure and degree of endearing affection: "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

After salutations given by St. Paul to his beloved Philippians, he next pours out his soul in fervent prayer and supplication for them; and the mercy which he prays for, is observable, first, namely, growth and proficiency in grace; "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;" that their love to God, their love to him, and their love one to another, may yet more and more abound. Love is the root-grace from which most graces spring; therefore he prays for the strengthening of that grace in particular, and that there may be found with them judgment, as well as affection in the exercise of it; we ought to love judiciously, as well as affectionately; the more judicious a saint grows in his christian course, and the more understanding and judgment is found with him in the way of his duty, the stronger his grace is, and the more glory will he bring to God. The understanding and judgment being the guiding and the leading faculties in man, there can be no more acceptable holiness in the will, than there is knowledge in the understanding; I can hate sin and love God, no more than I know of the evil of sin, and of the perfections that are in God: the more judicious then a christian grows, the more his holiness grows; and accordingly, St. Paul's prayer is, that they may grow more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. Observe, 2. The great ends mentioned by the apostle, for which he did so earnestly desire their proficiency in knowledge and judgment, and their growth in love and every other grace; namely, *That they might approve things that are excellent*; that is, all such things as the gospel requires: implying that the things prescribed to us in the gospel, are things excellent and good for us, things worthy to be prescribed by God, and things reasonable to be practised by us; and that the approbation of these things, by a steadiness in judgment and practice, is every christian's duty, and ought to be their great endeavour. 2. That they might be *sincere* in their holy profession, incorrupt and pure, both in doctrine and manners. 3. That they might be *without offence*, unblameable in conversation, and be kept from being occasions of stumbling unto others, even unto the end of their days. 4. He prays, that they may not only be inoffensive persons, but fruitful christians, "being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God; that is, that they may abound in good works, undertaken in Christ's strength, and with an eye at God's glory. Learn hence, 1. That a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation; it is not enough that christians be harmless and inoffensive towards others, but they must labor after an holy fruitfulness in good works; they must be "filled with all the fruits of righteousness." Learn, 2. That our works be truly good, and fruits of righteousness, it is necessary that they be done by Christ's

strength and assistance, and with an eye at the glory and praise of God, in order to their acceptance: "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Learn, 3. That no shorter time ought to be assigned for our inoffensive walking, and fruitfulness in conversation, than the day of our death; *unto the day of Christ*, says our apostle; that is, till the great reckoning-day, when Christ will render to us our complete reward; if we be faithful and fruitful to the death, we shall then receive the crown of life.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Our apostle's design in these words, is to prevent the Philippians stumbling, and being scandalized at his present sufferings, assuring them, that the things which happened to him, through the malice of his persecutors, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, than any ways to the hinderance of it, as they feared. Learn hence, That the sufferings and persecutions which the messengers and ministers of Christ do undergo for the sake of the gospel, are oftentimes so over-ruled by the wisdom of God, that they rather increase than diminish the church, and rather promote than prejudice the interest of the gospel. Next, he declares the special and particular advantages which had redounded to the gospel, by those sufferings which he had patiently endured for the gospel's sake. 1. His bonds in Christ, that is, his imprisonment for the gospel of Christ, were manifest in the *palace*; that is, were manifestly taken notice of in Nero's court, and elsewhere in the city; so that people inquiring into the cause of his suffering, found, that it was not any misdemeanor, but that his preaching and practising the doctrine of christianity, was the only reason of his sufferings. 2. Another advantage which accrued to the church by his bonds, was this, namely, that many ministers of Christ who preached the word of God far and near, hearing of his constancy under sufferings, were both encouraged and emboldened thereby; encouraged to shake off fear, and emboldened to preach Christ with greater resolution: "Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Note here, the title given by this great apostle to the inferior ministers of the gospel, he calls them *brethren*, and *brethren in the Lord*, putting himself and them in mind of their mutual and respective duties, which was to live and love as brethren; to admonish, exhort, and encourage one another, to stand up in defence of the just credit and reputation of one another, and jointly to set their shoulders to the work of Christ together. Note, 2. That the ministers of Christ, observing how God upholds some of their brethren under sufferings and persecutions, should encourage themselves to go on with resolution in the work of the Lord, not

fearing their own personal sufferings, knowing, that the same assistance which supported one, stands ready to succour others: "The brethren in the Lord waxed confident by my bonds."

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will.

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that several of his brethren, in the work of the ministry, through his constancy in suffering, were emboldened to preach Jesus Christ with more resolution than before. But here he discovers, that there was a vast difference between those preachers; all did not preach Christ alike, with the same mind, from the same motives, for the same sincere ends. Some, alas! preach Christ *out of envy and strife*; that is, envying the success of the apostle's ministry, and endeavouring to draw people off from approving him, to applaud them, hoping to grieve and gail them thereby; but others preached the gospel of Christ *of good will*, with a purity of intention, and sincerity of affection, both towards Christ, and towards himself, who, for the defence of the gospel, now lay in prison. However, seeing Christ was preached and made known by both, by some in pretence, by others in truth, the apostle rejoiced at it, and took comfort in it. Learn hence, 1. That such ministers of the gospel are gladly and joyfully to be heard, who preach Christ and his pure word soundly and truly, with what mind soever, from what motive soever, and for what end soever they preach Christ and his holy gospel. The word is his which they bring, how vicious soever the person, and how bad soever the intention be of him that brings it; and, if the message be his, it is our duty to receive it without prejudice, be the principle what it will in him that delivers it. Many preach in Christ's name, who perish in his wrath; for Christ takes notice of the inward intention, as well as of the outward action, and observes not only the matter which ministers preach, but the end for which, and the motives from which they preach, whether from love and good-will, or from envy and strife. Learn, 2. That such christians who find their hearts inflamed with zeal for the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls, do and will rejoice exceedingly, that Christ is preached, whoever the person is, whatever the principle may be in him that preaches; "If Christ be preached," says St. Paul, "I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation, and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

Still our apostle pursues and prosecutes his former design, namely, to prevent the Philippians, being offended at his sufferings; and accordingly he shows, that as the gospel of Christ had gained much already, it should gain yet more by his imprisonment and afflictions, which he was very confident would tend to the furtherance of his salvation, through the help of their prayers, and the supplies of grace from the Spirit of Christ; where, by *salvation*, is meant deliverance out of his present sufferings, which he fully expected by the help and benefit of the church's prayers. Great are the expectations of the saints, even as to temporal salvation and outward mercies, from the joint prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ: "this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer." But if, by *salvation*, be meant eternal happiness, then his confident persuasion was this, That all the designs of his adversaries against him should be so over-ruled and ordered by God, that through the influences and supplies of the Holy Spirit, all should work together for good, and his eternal salvation be advanced thereby, through the concurrence and assistance of their prayers. In the 20th verse he tells them, that according to his former expectation and hope, he was resolved that no terror should ever make him ashamed to own the truth of Christ. but that with a convincing boldness, he would now, as heretofore, appear in the defence of it, and that Christ should be "magnified by him, in the body, whether by life or death;" that is, whether my life be further prolonged, or be now, by martyrdom ended; Christ will be magnified, if I live; the power of Christ will be magnified in my deliverance from death: If I die, his power will be magnified in enabling me to undergo death for his name and sake; so that I am at a point, either to live or die, as the wisdom of Christ shall determine; I am, as to myself, indifferent for either, well knowing that Christ will be glorified in me, and by me, both by life and death. Learn hence, That nothing lies so near the heart of a saint, as the honor and glory of Christ; this he resolves shall be promoted by him, living and dying, by his great services, supporting his life, and by his extraordinary sufferings and martyrdom, in case of his death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and-to die is gain.

Our apostle had declared, in the foregoing verse, his firm expectation that Christ would be magnified and glorified by him both in life and death; in this verse he discovers what reason he had to think so; for, says he *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*; that is, If I live, Christ shall be the scope of my life, and the end of my living; I resolve to live to his service; If I die, death will be a real gain and advantage to me: intimating, that both life and death are gain to a good man, and that it is Christ that makes both life and death gainful and advantageous: *To me to live is Christ, to die is gain*. Words both short and sweet, few in expression, but large in extension; in them we are taught both how to live and how to die. Observe, 1. The scope and end of a

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christian's life. *To me to live is Christ*. 2. The hope and fruit of a christian's death, *To die is gain*. Learn, That Christ is the believer's life, and death the believer's gain. The life of a real christian is resolved into Christ, and his death is resolved into gain. Note, 1. Christ is the believer's life: both his life of grace, and his life of glory is resolved into Christ. As to his life of grace, Christ is the life of this life; he is the efficient or principal cause of this life; he is the exemplar cause or pattern of it; he is the final cause or scope of it; and he is the conserving cause, or preserver and maintainer of it. So for the life of glory, which believers have in reversion, Christ is also the life of that life; thus he has purchased it for them, he has given it to them, he has taken and keeps possession of it, in their names, he has prepared it for them, and them for it, and will put them into the full and actual possession of it, in his own time. Note, 2. That death is the believer's gain; death in general, violent as well as natural death; it is not only not injurious, but advantageous; no hurt, but profit; no loss, but benefit; not only to die for Christ, but "to die in Christ is gain: blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," as well as those that die for the Lord. Death appears again to the believer, if we consider the private evils it frees and delivers him from, namely, from sin, from all temptations to sin, from all inclinations to offend, from all possibility of sinning, from all temporal afflictions, from all sufferings for God, from all sufferings from man for God's sake; especially if we consider the positive good that the believer gains by death, namely, perfection in grace, fulness of joy, the blessed vision, the society of glorified saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. So then, if a state of perfect holiness and purity be better than a state of corruption and temptation, if a state of rest and peace be better than a state of labor and sorrow, if it be better to be triumphing above, than sighing and groaning below; then dead saints are better where they are, than where they were, and death to them is gain, and infinitely advantageous. Note, 3. That the gain which comes by death to the believer, is procured by Christ, namely, by his meritorious satisfaction, by his glorious ascension and possession, by his prevailing intercession; *To live is Christ, to die is gain*.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

But if I live in the flesh, that is, If I shall continue to live longer in this mortal body, this is the fruit of my labor; that is, I foresee what will be the blessed fruit of my labor, namely, the conversion and gaining of more souls unto God and Christ: at least, as it is worth my labor, so shall it be my endeavour to glorify Christ, by my continuance in the world. Learn hence, That as it is the end of a minister's life, so he makes it the end of his living, to glorify Christ, by gaining souls unto him; and in order to the obtaining this great end, he is willing, for the present, to deny

himself the advantage of being with Christ. Observe next, St. Paul's strait which he was now in, which to choose, either life, or death, if God should leave it to his choice; "I am in a strait betwixt two," that is, I am divided in my thoughts and desires, whether to wish for life, or death; his ardent love to Christ and himself inclined him to desire a dissolution, "I desire to be dissolved, and be with Christ;" but his affectionate regard to his beloved Philippians inclined him to desire a continuation of his time and talents; "nevertheless, to abide still in the flesh is more useful for you." Learn hence, 1. That the life of pious ministers is far more profitable for their people than death. 2. That their death being a departure unto Christ, is far better, and more desirable to themselves than life; their life is profitable to civilize some, to convert others, to convince the erroneous, to confirm the weak; the world wants them, the church wants them, their flocks want them, their families want them, and they want them most that think they could spare them best. But their death being a departure, an immediate departure unto Christ, is far better, and more desirable to themselves than life; "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better:" better in point of honor; for as they here labored in the work of the ministry for him, they shall there sit down upon the throne with him, Rev. iii. 21. Better in point of profit; "He is heir, and possessor of all things," and they shall be joint heirs, and joint possessors with him: thus may the words be considered, with relation to St. Paul, as a minister of the gospel; but they may be further considered, with reference to him as a private christian; *I desire to depart*. Hence learn, That it is not only warrantable but highly commendable, for a christian to be not only fearless, but desirous of death. There are, 1. Unwarrantable and sinful desires of death; as when they are rash and hasty; when they are positive and peremptory, when they are directing and prescribing to God, either as to the time, or kind, or manner of our dissolution, and when our desires are purely selfish, desiring death only as a freedom from present evils, and as a prevention of future sufferings. 2. There are warrantable and justifiable desires of death and dissolution; namely, when we desire it to free us from the indwelling presence of sin, to put us into a state of perfect holiness, to bring us to the sight of Christ, to give us the possession of that happiness, which was contrived by infinite wisdom, purchased by infinite merit, prepared by infinite power, and bestowed by infinite love. 3. There are also commendable desires, or the last mentioned desires are highly commendable; they commend our faith and proclaim our certain belief of a future state; they commend our love to God, to Christ; they commend our obedience, &c. Learn, 2. That the souls of believers, at their departure from the body, are with Christ. *Quest.* What is it to be with Christ? *Ans.* It implies *intuition*, we shall see him, and see him as he is, not as he once was in a state of abasement; it implies *fruition*, we shall enjoy him, as well as see him, and enjoy him to satisfaction, Psal. xvii. ult. and it implies *duration*, we shall for ever be with the Lord. *Quest.* But how doth it appear, that the souls of good men, upon their departure from the body, are with Christ? *Ans.* Thus; they are immediately capable of his presence and enjoyment upon their departure, and they are fully prepared for it: if we be not fit for heaven when we die, we shall never be fit: all is done upon us that was ever intended to be done; and neither Christ's ardent desires to have his children with him,

nor the vehement longings of their souls for the fruition and enjoyment of him, can or shall be delayed; such delays would make their hearts sick; no, they expect satisfaction, and God will not disappoint their expectation.

25 And, having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.

St. Paul having in the foregoing verses, told the Philippians how needful it was for him to abide in the flesh, with respect to them, he here gives them a sort of confident assurance (which was given him by immediate revelation) that his life should at this time be preserved for the benefit of the church, and be set at liberty, and that he should come and spend a part of his time amongst them, for the furtherance of their faith, and the increase of their joy, that so they might have more abundant matter of rejoicing in Christ, having received a new proof of his power and good-will towards them, in delivering him their apostle from death, and sending him to them again. Learn hence, 1. That God always can, and sometimes will, so calm the rage of persecutors, that they cannot execute the evil by them intended and resolved against his faithful ministers and servants: Notwithstanding Nero's cruelty, St. Paul had a confident persuasion, that he should come out of prison, and once more visit the churches. Learn, 2. That Almighty God, in great mercy to his church, doth sometimes prolong the lives of his faithful ministers, and most useful servants, and keep them longer out of heaven, that his people may reap the greater advantage by their labors here on earth. Learn, 3. That the more unexpectedly the life of a laborious minister, or a pious and extraordinary christian is given him by God, the more abundant ought the church to be in their expressions of joy and thanksgiving to God for such an invaluable blessing; "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you."

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

Observe here, 1. The general charge given by the apostle to his beloved Philippians, that their lives should answer their light, and their practices correspond with their profession; "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel." A gospel-profession requires and calls for a gospel-conver-

sation : as the gospel is a gospel of truth and faithfulness, of sincerity and plainness, so our conversation should be sincere and upright, without deceit or fraud ; as the gospel is a gospel of peace, so a christian conversation is a quiet, calm, and peaceable conversation : christians should be men of peace, peace-makers, peace-preservers, lovers of peace, and lovers in peace. The gospel is a gospel of love and mercy, of grace and goodness ; the badge and cognizance of Christ's disciples, the mark and brand of Christ's sheep, is love unfeigned ; thus a gospel conversation is an amicable, loving, and charitable conversation. Again, the gospel of Christ is a gospel of meekness and humility, and its chief lesson is humility ; " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29, and " be ye clothed with humility," 1. Peter v. 5. In a word, the gospel of Christ is a gospel of holiness and purity ; a christian's conversation must be a pure and holy, and spotless conversation : saints by profession should be saints indeed ; and there is a comeliness, in a gospel-conversation, both as to the inward and outward man ; walk " as becometh the gospel of Christ," that is, answerable to the precepts and commands of the gospel, answerable to the promises and encouragements of the gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, and answerable to that high and glorious hope which the gospel raises us up to the general expectation of ; this is to walk as " becometh the gospel of Christ." Observe, 2. The apostle, having given a general injunction to walk as becometh the gospel of Christ, next gives a particular injunction for concord and unity amongst themselves. " That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind." Learn hence, That all those who would walk worthy of the gospel, should endeavour after a close, holy, and lasting union amongst themselves. We can never expect to thrive in grace, if we do not live in peace : let us prize unity and peace as the beauty and strength of the body, and let us pursue peace and union with the utmost strength of our soul. Observe, 3. Another duty exhorted to, and that is, an united contention, " striving together for the faith of the gospel:" before, he exhorted them to an holy union ; now to an united contention ; unite, but strive ; yet let your striving be in communion, not in contention : strive together in all holy and united endeavours to comfort and confirm one another in the faith of the gospel. Observe, 4. He exhorts them, as to an holy union, and an united contention, so to an humble boldness, " in nothing terrified by our adversaries;" in nothing, that is, terrified at nothing they can do, and terrified in no degree at any thing they shall do. Be not afraid to be holy ; for your adversaries can never hurt you, if they do not hinder you in your duty : the less they fear God, the less you need to fear them. Observe, 5. A double argument to persuade them to the foregoing duty, " in nothing terrified by their adversaries." 1. This will be to them an evident token of *perdition* ; that is an united, humble, peaceable boldness in your holy course, whereby you walk in the spirit and power of the gospel, without fright or fear, will be to your persecutors an evident token of *perdition*. Persecution is a black mark of a son of perdition, and a very evident token to a man's own conscience that he is in the way of destruction. 2. But to you of salvation, that is, such as suffer patiently, yet resolutely, for the gospel, are in the way of salvation, and their sufferings shall promote their eternal salvation ; it is added, *Salvation, and that of God* ; now this implies two

things ; 1. That the salvation of suffering christians shall be sure, they shall certainly be saved, for God has undertaken for it : now, if it be God that saves, who shall destroy ? satan will say, " Serve me, and I will serve you ; but he is feeble, and cannot ; false, and will not save ; the world will say, " Cast in your lot among us, and we will save you harmless ;" but there is no more trust to be given to the children, than to the father of lies : but if the God of truth and power says, *I will save* ; who shall say nay ? 2. That their salvation shall be great, as well as sure ; he will save them with a mighty salvation, from their mighty sufferings and mighty fears : suffer for Christ, and then fear none of those things which you shall suffer.

29 For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake :

These words came by the way of encouragement, to the practice of the forementioned duty, namely, of courageous suffering for the gospel of Christ ; he tells them, that as ability to believe on Christ, so likewise power to suffer for Christ, were both the gift of God, and as such, purchased by Christ for them, and freely bestowed upon them. Learn hence, 1. That it is the duty of the disciples and followers of Jesus, not only to believe in him, but cheerfully to suffer for him, when he calls them to it ; *not only to believe, but to suffer*. Learn. 2. That suffering for Christ is the gift of God, as well as faith in Christ ; " unto you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer ;" afflictions are the donatives of the gospel ; suffering for Christ is the gift of Christ, 1. Ability to suffer is his gift ; it is the purchase of his merits, it is the fruit of his mediation. Preparation for suffering, and patience under suffering, are the gift of Christ. 2. As abilities for suffering, so the comforts of suffering, are the gift of Christ ; through him it is that the saints' glory in tribulation, and their trials are not only tolerable, but joyous. In short, to suffer for Christ is, first, a free gift ; and secondly, an honorable gift ; and thirdly, a special and peculiar gift : it is a gift peculiar to saints, yea, peculiar only to some saints ; it is only peculiar to saints ; the angels glorify Christ by doing, but not by suffering. I doubt not, but had the angels bodies of flesh, as saints have, they would be glad to lay their necks on the block for Christ, as saints do : but this is the peculiar privilege of believers, " unto you it is given, and not to them." And although a suffering disposition, a readiness and preparation of mind to glorify Christ by suffering, is given to all believers ; yet the honor of actual suffering death for Christ, is given but to a few. Learn, 3. That faith in Christ must go before suffering for Christ ; it must first be given to us to believe on him, before we can suffer for his sake : then only are sufferings truly christian, and an evidence of salvation, when the sufferer is first a believer ; without the shield of faith, we can no more resist the fury of the persecutors, than we can repel the fiery darts of the destroyer : " Unto you it is given, on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but, &c."

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now *hear* to be in me.

Here is the last argument made use of by the apostle to encourage them unto patient suffering for the gospel of Christ ; as it would render them conformable to Christ their Head, so

to him their apostle, who suffered many hard things when he was at Philippi, as they had seen; and stood ready to suffer, not only bonds, but death itself, now he was at Rome, which they heard of: "Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Here observe, 1. The title given by St. Paul to his sufferings for the gospel, he calls them a conflict. Learn, That christian courage under sufferings cannot be kept up without a mighty conflict: we must conflict with our enemies, with the rage of our persecutors; we must conflict with ourselves, and with our own spirits, to keep them from fainting under persecution; and we must even conflict with God himself, wrestle with him, by prayers, for extraordinary measures of strength to support us under sufferings, and to enable us to glorify God in and by them. Well might the apostle then call his sufferings a conflict. Observe, 2. St. Paul encourages the Philippians to conflict with sufferings, from his own example before them, "having the same conflict which you saw in me." Learn, That the prudent and patient sufferings of the ministers of Christ for the truth of the gospel are, and ought to be, a powerful encouragement to all their people to conflict with the like difficulties and trials for the testimony of Christ; the Captain goes first, leads the van, his ministers follow, and their people bring up the rear; and, having suffered together, they shall be also glorified together; a suffering head, and suffering members, shall never be separated.

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle, in the concluding part of the foregoing chapter recommended to the Philippians' care and practice, the duty of constancy in the faith of the gospel, and of christian unity amongst themselves, the professors of the gospel; but he could not satisfy himself with a simple and naked proposing of this duty, but in this chapter he urges and enforces it with a most elegant and prevalent ostentation, charging and abjuring them, as it were, by all that is dear and precious to them, and as they had any regard unto, or value for the most glorious privileges of christianity, to be like-minded, to be found in the exercise and practice of unity and humility; and accordingly he begins this chapter with a most pathetic insinuation, which has also the force of a most rational argumentation: saying, in the first verse unto them,

I*f there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies:*

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.

Here we have observable, 1. The important duty which the apostle exhorts the Philippians to, and that is love and unity; unity in judgment and opinion, unity in heart and affection, unity in design and endeavours; so necessary and advantageous is the duty of unity and concord among all the professors of christianity, that all the cautions and warnings, all the advice and counsel, all the melting entreaties and passionate importunities of the ministers of Christ are little

enough to excite persons to it, and direct them in the practice of it. Observe, 2. What an heap of arguments the apostle makes use of to excite and quicken the Philippians to the love and practice of this duty: "If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, and fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies." As if he had said, If ever you have tasted, by means of my ministry, any sweetness and consolation in Christ and his holy religion, if ever you have found any comfort in his love, if ever you have enjoyed any communion with the Spirit, if ye be men, and have any bowels of mercy for yourselves, if ye be christians, and have any pity for me in my bonds, "fulfil ye my joy in this, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind." O, the tenderness, the gentleness and meekness of soul which was in St. Paul, and ought to be in every spiritual pastor towards his people, to win them, and prevail upon them to love the truth and peace! *Fulfil ye my joy*, says the apostle; as if he had said, Sufferings, I have enough already; O do not you, by your divisions and dissensions add more: I am already a prisoner, expecting the sentence of death, preparing for the sword of persecution, but none of these things move me: I can rejoice in a dungeon, sing in the stocks, triumph in death, if I can but hear you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel: but, if I hear that you are broken by divisions my heart is broke; the news of differences and dissensions among you will be heavier to me than my chain, darker than my dungeon, sharper than Nero's sword. Do not thus add to my sorrow and sufferings; but as you have begun and occasioned joy in me. I beseech you fulfil and complete my joy, by your being of one heart, of one mind, entirely one.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory.—

Here our apostle dissuadeth the Philippians from a double vice, destructive to unity, namely, contention and vain-glory, which are the very bane of unity and unanimity; let nothing be done amongst you through emulation and envy, through contention and vain-glory: pride and ambition are usually attended with strife and contention: a vain-glorious person over-rates himself, undervalues others, and breaks the peace with all.

—But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Here our apostle directs to humility, in order to peace and unity; which humility he styles *lowliness of mind*, a grace whereby a man thinks meanly of himself, and highly of others, having a better opinion of others' wisdom and piety than his own; now this a man may do, and not sin though he be mistaken; the publican judged the pharisee better than himself: and though it was not so God did not disapprove him for it, but he went away justified. It is no crime to judge another better than ourselves, though he be not so; but it is pride to judge another worse than ourselves, though he be really so. Learn hence, That true humility doth not consist in lowliness of expression, but in lowliness of mind and opinion; not the man who speaks meanly of himself, but he that thinks so, is the humble man. Learn, 2. That the humble or lowly-minded man is so conscious to himself of his own infirmities; so modest in the estimating of his own graces and virtues, and so forward to hope and be-

lieve the best of others, that not only in outward expression, but in real estimation, doth he give others a preference before himself: *In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

The apostle here dissuadeth from another sin, which is very destructive of unity and peace, of concord and love, and that is the sin of inordinate self-love, whereby we regard only our own honor and profit, wholly neglecting the concerns of others; *look not every man on his own things*, that is, his own private advantage only or chiefly, but take care of the things which tend to the advantage of others; not but that a christian may and ought to look at his own things, but not wholly: our regard must extend further than ourselves, and our own things; we must look on the things of others also; we must be as just and true to another's reputation as to our own, and regard both the honor and profit of our neighbour as well as our own: and where christians are of this public spirit and temper, it contributes much, very much, towards the preserving and maintaining of unity and peace among them.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

That is, this humble mind. Here the apostle presses the duty of humility, from Christ's example; he was a perfect pattern of humility when here on earth; example therefore should recommend this grace and virtue to us, which was so orient in the life of Christ, whose humility was as conspicuous as his innocency; and accordingly the apostle descends in the next verse, to give particular instances of the humility and humiliation of the Son of God.

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Behold here the greatest example of humility, of lowliness and abasement, that ever the world was acquainted with; the mighty God becomes less than man! To make a due estimate hereof, we must first observe, what Christ was before his incarnation and humiliation, namely, the great and mighty God: for, says the apostle, he was in the *form of God, and equal with God*; that is, being the substantial form, and essential image of the Father, enjoying the divine nature, with all its glory, and all the ensigns of majesty which God himself had eternally and invariably. As to be in the form of a servant, signifies that he was a servant; so to be in the form of God, signifies that he was God: and observe, 2. He was in the form of God, before he was in the form

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of a servant: *And being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*: now if he thought it no robbery, it could be no robbery: and if no robbery, he must be equal; and if equal, he must be God by nature, as the Father is. Learn hence, That our Saviour possessed that glory which is truly divine, before he assumed our nature as man; he had a peerage or equality with his Father in glory; the angels adored him in heaven before his incarnation on earth, Isaiah vi. 1, 2. Observe, 3. What mighty abasement the holy Jesus, God, blessed for evermore, underwent, when he humbled himself; *He was found in fashion as a man; he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.* Behold here, the Sun of Righteousness under an (almost total) eclipse: He that was eternally beautiful and glorious, being the brightness of his Father's glory, was so veiled, clouded, and debased in the day of his humiliation, that he appears not like a God, scarce like a man. Note, 1. *He took upon him the form of a servant*; now this was a lower degree of condescension, than the assuming the naked human nature; for a servant is not simply a man, but a mean man, a man in a low estate. Lord, what abasement was here, that Christ, who was in the form of God should degrade himself into the form of a servant, and take the human nature, without honor, after it had lost its primitive innocency, after sin had blotted the original glory of it, and withered the beauty and excellency thereof! O inconceivable condescension! Note, 2. He emptied himself, *or made himself of no reputation*, that is, in the day of his incarnation he laid aside the robes of his glory, he emptied himself of that divine splendor and majesty which before he had; not by ceasing to be what he was, but by assuming something to himself which before he was not, the Son of God descended from his throne, and put on our vile mortality; he parted with his glory, that he might part with his life for our salvation. Note, 3. *He was made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man*; that is, he was truly and really a man, made in the likeness of other men, without any visible outward difference; *he was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.* Rom. viii. 3. He is said to *appear in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, in flesh that had the marks, and miserable effects of sin upon it: not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled by sin, but he assumed the human nature, attended with a whole troop of human infirmities, which sin first let into that nature, as hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, mortality and death: by reason of which, though he was not a sinner, yet he looked like one, and they that conversed with him took him for one, seeing all these effects of sin upon him. Lord, what a stoop was this! To be made in the likeness of innocent flesh, had been much; but to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, rebellious flesh, flesh though not defiled, yet miserably defaced by sin! O, what is this! and who can declare his humiliation? Note, 4. The nature of this humiliation; *he humbled himself*: the word imports both a real and a voluntary abasement: real; Christ did not personate an humble man, nor act the part of one in a debased state, but was really and in very deed humbled, both in the sight of God and man. And, as it was real, so also was his humiliation voluntary: it is not said, *he was humbled*, but that *he humbled himself*; he was willing to stoop to this low, and abject state for us: and it was the voluntariness of his humiliation that made it so accept-

able to God, and so beneficial and serviceable to us. Note, 5. The degrees of our holy Lord's humiliation: *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*. Here we have the depth of Christ's humiliation specified: it was *unto death*, and also aggravated, *even unto the death of the cross*; he humbled himself, not only to become a mortal man, but a dead corpse; and that too hanging on a tree, dying the death of a malefactor: there was pain, shame, and a curse, in the death of the cross; Christ underwent the pain patiently, the shame meekly, the curse obediently, all of them willingly and cheerfully, that the justice of God might be satisfied, his wrath pacified, his majesty reconciled, death and hell vanquished and destroyed. Behold the transcendancy of Christ's love to the children of men! *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*: but greater love had the Son of God than this, that he laid down his life for his inveterate enemies; *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name;

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth:

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The former verse spake of the depth of Christ's humiliation: these, of the height of his exaltation. Where observe, 1. The dignity itself, conferred by God upon Christ; God *exalted* him, highly exalted him, exalted him above all exaltation, as the word signifies. Christ, in his resurrection, was exalted; in his ascension, he was very highly exalted; in his sitting at God's right hand, he was very highly exalted, above all exaltation. Observe, 2. How the *steps* of Christ's exaltation did punctually answer the steps of his *humiliation*; the first step of his humiliation was his incarnation, by which he was made man, and as our Surety, was made sin. The first step of his exaltation, was his resurrection, by which he was declared to be the *Son of God with power*; and, as our Surety, having paid our debt, was released from the prison of the grave. The second step of his humiliation was his poor and contemptible life, and his painful, shameful, and accursed death; answerable thereunto is Christ's ascension into heaven, and sitting there at God's right hand, advancing him above all principalities and power, that is, above all the angels, and placing him next to himself in dignity and honor. Observe, 3. The connexion between Christ's humiliation and exaltation, *he humbled himself and became obedient unto the death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him*. Where note, That some make the humiliation of Christ the meritorious cause of his exaltation; and his exaltation the reward of his humiliation; others make the humiliation of Christ only the antecedent of his exaltation; he humbled himself, and God has exalted him to a dignity above all dignities and pre-eminency whatsoever, making him king and head of his church, and giving him all power, both in heaven and earth, requiring, that the divine honor due to God, should be

given to him also. Observe, 4. The particulars of our Lord's exaltation declared, and they are three. 1. God hath *given him a name above every name*: that is, dignity and power, majesty and authority, over all creatures both in heaven and earth. 2. *That every knee, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, should bow to the name of Jesus*: every knee, that is, every creature, in heaven, earth, and hell shall bow, that is, yield subjection to Christ, some voluntarily, others unwillingly; the good angels and good men paying a cheerful homage, the evil angels and bad men yielding a forced and constrained subjection to him. 3. *That every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*: every tongue, that is, every person, men of all nations and languages, shall confess Christ crucified, to be the Lord and judge of the world, acknowledging his royal sovereignty and dominion. Observe, 4. The end of Christ's glorious exaltation, it was *to the glory of God the Father*; that is, it pleased God the Father, for his own glory, that the Lord Jesus Christ, after he had been deeply humbled, should be highly exalted. Observe lastly, The apostle's great design and scope in setting before the Philippians the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and that was to excite them to the grace and duty of humility, that the same humble mind should be in them which was also in Christ Jesus: as if he had said, our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself greatly for us, and afterwards was highly exalted by God, above us; so in proportion may you expect to be exalted by God, if you humble yourselves, in order to maintain and preserve the church's peace and unity; for before honor is humility.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

13 For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of *his* good pleasure.

Observe here, 1. The commendation given by St. Paul of his beloved Philippians, for their cheerful obedience to the precepts of the gospel; they *always* obey, that is, ever since their first conversion to christianity, not only while the apostle was upon the spot with them, but since the providence of God necessitated his absence from them, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence. But how came it to pass, that their obedience was greater, when they wanted the apostle for their instructor? *Ans.* In the absence of one teacher, they had another, and him a better than the inspired apostle, even the inspiring Spirit of God, who in the apostle's absence, was more immediately present with them by his inward motions, to excite and enable them, both to will and to do what is well pleasing to him. O how good is God, at the supplying the wants, and making up the losses of his people! If persecution drives his church's ministers into dungeons, and they cannot hear a voice behind them, they shall have the presence of his Holy Spirit, and hear a voice within them, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*. Observe, 2. A special duty which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be found in the practice of, namely, *To work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*; implying, that it should be every christian's great work, to be daily

working out his own salvation, that is, diligently making use of all means and faithfulness, practising all duties in order thereunto. Note here, 1. The excellency of the object proposed, and that is, salvation; there is salvation held forth and tendered by God, to lost sinners, in the gospel. Note, 2. The difficulty of salvation, supposed and implied in the word *work*, which signifies an exerting our utmost endeavours, in order to the attaining of it. The work of salvation is no lazy man's business, but a work of labor and difficulty, though the difficulties may be overcome by an industrious diligence. Note, 3. The necessity of perseverance, in order to our attaining of salvation: *Work out your own salvation*; that is, perfect and consummate the work which you have happily begun. Note, 4. The manner how we should work out our own salvation, namely, *with fear and trembling*; intimating, that an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of ourselves, will be of singular use and advantage to us in the working out of our salvation. Observe, 3. The argument or motive to excite unto this labor and diligence in and about the work of salvation; and this is very encouraging, because God works with us, and in us, ver. 13. *For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do*: That God works with us is great encouragement to us to work; but we must remember God works arbitrarily, and not necessarily, he worketh but of his own good pleasure, as a free agent, who can cease when he pleases; therefore work with fear and trembling. Learn from the whole, 1. That we can do nothing without God. 2. That he will do nothing without us: we can do nothing without his assistance, he will do nothing without the concurrence of our endeavours, he worketh in us both *to will and to do*, and we must work with him, in order to the working out of our own salvation.

14 Do all things without murmurings, and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Here our apostle seems to resume the exhortation, which he began to press before, namely, to love and concord, to unity and peace among themselves; he exhorts them, as to do all things without contention, so without *murmurings*, and not *disputings*, in which, usually, the laws of charity are violated, and the peace of the church, and quietness among christians interrupted: and, to provoke them thereunto, he discovers to them the many great and blessed advantages which would redound unto him by their unity and concord. 1. Hereby they should be *blameless and harmless*, the sons of God *without rebuke*, that is, very inoffensive persons, or as the Greek word renders it, that ye may be the spotless sons of God; not absolutely spotless, pure and perfect, but without such spots as are inconsistent with your sonship; there is a spot which is, and a spot which is not, the spot of

God's children. Deut. xxxii. 4. Sins of infirmity, are spots found upon the best of his children; sins of presumption, if at any time found upon you, they are not the spots of his children. 2. Hereby they should shine as *lights* in the world, that is, in the pagan world, and in the christian church: this imports both the high dignity and special duty of christians, to be as so many suns, to arise and shine like mighty luminaries in the firmament of the world, casting out their rays and beams in a holy and heavenly conversation. 3. Hereby they would *hold forth* the word of life; not only hold it fast for their own comfort, but hold it forth for others' benefit, that is, in their christian practice and profession; the lives of christians should publish the word of life, to the intent, that the enemies of it may fall in love with it. Perhaps as many have been converted to christianity, by holding forth the word of life in practice, as by holding it forth from the pulpit; an holy life is the loudest proclamation, and the best way of holding forth the word of life. 4. Hereby he should have joy and rejoicing, as well as they reap benefit and advantage: "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain;" that is, that I have not preached the gospel unprofitably amongst you. Here note, That the work of the ministry is a laborious work, a spending work; the apostle here sets it forth by running a race, which is a wasting and strength-consuming exercise; *I have run, I have labored*. Note, 2. That the labor and pains of the most faithful and indefatigable ministers of Christ may be, and too often are lost upon, and *in vain*, unto the people that are constantly made partakers of them: they may run in vain, and labor in vain, as to their people; but blessed be God, it shall not be *in vain* as to themselves, Isa. xlix. 4. Though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious." Note, 3. That the glory which shall be put upon our people in the day of judgment, who were converted to God by our ministerial endeavours, will add to our joy as ministers, and be our crown of rejoicing in that day: "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain."

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.

Behold here, how St. Paul, the under shepherd, imitates Christ, that great and good Shepherd, in his readiness to lay down his life for his sheep: not for their reconciliation, but for their confirmation; *If*, says he, it shall please God that *I be*, by martyrdom, *offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith*; that is, to establish you in the faith which I have taught you, and to confirm and seal the truth of it with my blood, I will rejoice therein for your sakes, and I desire you to rejoice with me, and to bless God for me in so doing. Note here, the emphasis and elegance of the apostle's words. *If I be offered up*; a manifest allusion to the Jewish sacrifices, in which there was wine poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice, and then offered up to God. Thus, says he, if my blood, like wine, be poured forth, whilst I am employed by the preaching of the gospel, to render you Gentiles an acceptable sacrifice, and a sweet-smelling savour unto God, I should rejoice even thus to die in your service, and for the confirmation of your faith,

Hence learn, That life itself is not, and will not be thought too dear, or accounted by the ministers of Christ too much to lay down in the service of their people's souls, and for the confirmation of their faith; "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice." Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should not preach any thing to their people, but what they dare seal and confirm the truth of with their very blood, if God calls them thereunto; St. Paul had before preached the doctrine of the gospel to the Philippians, and now he stood ready to seal it with his blood.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state.

20 For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him, therefore, I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Our apostle having finished the first part of the chapter, which contained exhortations to duty, comes now to the second part of it, containing arguments of comfort; and here, first, he comforts the Philippians, by promising to send Timothy unto them shortly. Observe, here, 1. The greatness of St. Paul's soul, widened with desires to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ; his pious zeal put him upon contriving some way of making a supply of his necessitated absence from the Philippians; what he could not do by himself, he desires and endeavours to do by another, even Timothy; him he promises to send as a living epistle, to instruct and exhort, to quicken and comfort the church at Philippi, in his constrained absence from her, "Blessed apostle! So that Christ might be advanced, thou caredst not by whom it were, whether by thyself, or by another; thou wert willing to stand in the crowd, and be hidden, so that Christ might stand upon another's shoulders, and be seen!" *I trust in the Lord to send Timotheus to you shortly.* Observe, 2. St. Paul, being about to send Timothy to Philippi, sends first a commendation of him: and that which he particularly commends Timothy for, was his affectionate love unto the Philippians, and his tender care and concern for them; *I have no man like minded, who will care for your state*; now, this care in Timothy for and towards the Philippians, is here commended by St. Paul in several observable instances of it. 1. It was a spiritual care chiefly, he careth for *your state*, that is, for your spiritual state; not that he was without concern for their temporal happiness, but the prosperity of their souls was the prime object of his care. 2. It was a solicitous care, the Greek word signifies an anxious care, a soul-cutting, a soul-rending care; his care was not to cut and wound the souls, to vex and grieve the spirits of his peo-

ple, but he cuts his own soul with caring for his people: 3. It was a sincere care, a natural genuine care, *he naturally careth for your state*; naturally, that is, heartily, sincerely, not artificially, and in appearance only; some can artificially act the part of a zealot, when their own interest or applause makes it necessary; but Timothy was unskilful in such arts, he did naturally, cheerfully, and constantly care for *their state*; there was a reality, yea, a large quantity of love, a hearty affection toward the Philippians, found with him. 4. St. Paul commends this care in Timothy towards them, for the rarity of it; *I find none like minded*, that is few, very few, like-minded with him, and equal-hearted to him in the cause of Christ: St. Paul had divers ministers now with him, but one Timothy; others sought their own things, but he the things of Jesus Christ: yet, I conceive this is not to be understood universally, but synecdochically; not as if all ministers, except Timothy only sought themselves, and regarded their own private interest, but the most and far greatest part did so, refusing to undertake such a tedious journey from Rome to Philippi, as Timothy stood ready to undertake. Learn hence, That it is a great sin in all, but especially in the ministers of Jesus Christ, to be of a self-seeking spirit. Observe, 5. He commends this care of Timothy's towards them by their experimental knowledge of it, and acquaintance with it; for, when old Paul was at Philippi, young Timothy was an assistant to him, as a son to a father, obeying his counsels, following his directions, imitating his example, in all things tending to the edification of the church, Now from the whole, that is, from St. Paul's care to send Timothy thus qualified, to labor in the gospel at the church in Philippi, we note, That such as have power to send forth ministers to flocks, and pastors to take care of the souls of the people, should send such as are both able and willing to spend and be spent for the good of souls, and, if it may be, such as are well known unto, and approved of by the flock, for their zeal and diligence in the work of Christ. St. Paul here is a pattern for all patrons, laying before them the qualifications of the persons whom they should recommend to the cure of souls, such as with Timothy have a compassion for souls, a truly solicitous care and concern for the happiness and welfare of souls, such as the people have had some knowledge of, or at least a liberty to inquire after; the man of good ministerial abilities, not of great simoniacal gifts: for if patrons in the execution of that vast trust (but little considered,) do seek only their own things, no wonder that their clerks seek not the things of Jesus.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; But God had mercy on him; and

not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, declared his resolutions to send Timothy to the Philippians as soon as he should see how it would go with himself at Rome, and what would be the issue of his bonds; and having also discovered his own purpose to come himself to them, as soon as the providence of God should set him at liberty; in the mean time, he assures them, he would no longer detain their own special minister Epaphroditus from them, whom they had so kindly sent with a liberal supply unto him, in the prison at Rome; "I suppose it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother, my companion in labor, my fellow soldier, your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants." Here, note, 1. How copious St. Paul is in the recommendation of Epaphroditus; he calls him *his brother*, his brother in Christ, his brother in the ministry, his *companion in labor*, his fellow-laborer in Christ's vineyard, travelling from one part of it to another, to plant and propagate the gospel of Christ: his *fellow soldier*, also, a faithful and constant associate with him in the christian warfare: their apostle or messenger, the bishop of Philippi, say the ancient fathers; their messenger, to carry the church's alms to St. Paul, say others: behold here, in St. Paul's sending away Epaphroditus laden thus with commendation, the great modesty, sincerity, and humility, of this chief apostle. St. Paul had many prerogatives above Epaphroditus, he was immediately called by Christ, extraordinarily fitted, and furnished for his calling; he labored more abundantly; and suffered more abundantly than all the rest; yet he almost equalizes and levels Epaphroditus with himself, calling him *brother*, *fellow-laborer*, *fellow soldier*, and highly magnifies the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in him, without the least diminution, teaching such as are dignified in the church, and exalted by their merits above others, not to despise the persons, nor to extenuate and lessen the gifts, and graces, and usefulness of their inferior brethren. Pride in any person is odious, but in a minister, it is monstrous; they that have received more than others, and know better than others, ought to be patterns of humility unto others. Note, 2. The reasons here assigned, why St. Paul judged it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to his charge at Philippi. 1. He longed after his flock, ver. 26. *He longed after you all*, even unto heaviness; we do not read of his longing after his family, or his friends, or the fleece, but his flock, his church and charge at Philippi; this lay near his heart, this he longed to be with. 2. This longing and heaviness was mutual, the Philippians longed for him, and were full of heaviness because of his sickness. When the head of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ makes his people's hearts ache; mutual longings between minister and people in case of absence, and mutual heaviness and mourning in case of sickness, is a certain argument and evidence of mutual love one towards another. Note, 3. How our apostle confirms the report of Epaphroditus' sickness, and celebrates the mercy and goodness of God in his unexpected recovery; "indeed he was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him." &c. Here observe, 1. The eminency of the person who was sick, Epaphroditus, a great man, a good man, a man of God. St. Paul's *brother*, *companion*, *fellow-soldier*, falls sick, when engaged in Christ's and the church's special service; saints as well as sinners, ministers as well as people (No. 58.)

ple are subject to sickness, diseases, nay, death itself may meet them in the work of Christ. Observe, 2. As the eminency of the person, so the extremity of the disease, *he was nigh unto death*. But why did not St. Paul, who had the gift of healing, help Epaphroditus now sick, as well as raise Eutychus when dead? Acts xx. 9. *Ans.* The apostles had not the gift of healing to make use of at their pleasure, but as God was pleased by a special instinct and a strong faith to excite them to it, when it was his pleasure to have them use it: these gifts were given for the sake of unbelievers, to convince them of the truth of christianity, but God did not think fit to have them ordinarily exercised upon believers. Observe, 3. The recovery of Epaphroditus, and the author of it, *God had mercy on him*; he who is Lord of life and death, said in mercy to him, "Return, and live." When God preserves the lives, and restores the health of his faithful ministers, it is an act of no small mercy both to their people and themselves: to their people, as they become the greater instruments of their good: to themselves, as it increases their own reward; the longer a minister lives, the more glory he brings to God; and the more glory he brings to God on earth, the more glory shall he partake of with God in heaven; in short, the longer he lives the more souls he converts, and every soul is a new gem added to that crown, which shall one day be put upon his head. Dan xii. 3. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Observe, lastly, The share which St. Paul had in the mercy of Epaphroditus' recovery, "God had mercy, not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Paul had much sorrow, a great load of sorrow upon him at that time; he was now among strangers, yea, among prisoners, in the midst of persecutors, and his mind oppressed with sorrow, partly for the Philippians, partly for Epaphroditus; therefore, the Lord, in tender pity to him, did not take away by death his dear and useful companion, lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow, and cause his wounds to bleed afresh. Learn hence, so compassionate is God towards his dear children, that, though he often causes them grief and sorrow, yet he will not overcharge them therewith, nor add affliction to the afflicted, nor suffer them to be exercised and tried above what they are able; "God had mercy on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

28 I sent him, therefore, the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him, therefore, in the Lord, with all gladness, and hold such in reputation;

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me.

Here first St. Paul assigns the reason why he was so careful to send back Epaphroditus to the Philippians, namely, to assuage his own grief, and to increase their joy, "that when ye see him ye might rejoice, and I be the less sorrowful."

Next the apostle exhorts them to receive him with all joy and gladness, and to give him, and all such as he was, due honor, and deserved respect; and, doubtless, the Philippians received him with inexpressible joy, as the minister of Christ risen from the dead, recovered from the grave; received to life and service, when all hopes of enjoying him were cut off. O the folly and frailty of human nature! We prize our mercies more by the want, than by the worth of them. Lastly, He assigns a special reason why he would have them receive him with such demonstrations of joy, namely, because it was in their and his service that he was brought to the very brink of the grave, *for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death*; the work here meant is properly his journey to Rome, which was long and tedious; his watchings and pains-taking with and for the apostle there were very spending, he endeavoured to supply the absence and want of the whole church to St. Paul; his zeal for God, and his affection to St. Paul, carried him out beyond himself, beyond his strength, to the apparent prejudice both of his health and life. Learn hence, 1. That to relieve the members, but especially the ministers of Christ, in their necessities and wants, is the work of Christ; *for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death*; ministers are not only engaged in the work of Christ when they preach, &c. but when they visit their flock, inquire into the wants of the poor, and administer to the necessities of the distressed, this is the work of Christ. Learn, 2. That sickness may overtake, yea, death itself may meet the faithful servants and ministers of Christ, when they are engaged in his own work: it was in the work of the Lord that Epaphroditus met with his sickness; and had he met with death itself he had been happy; for, "Blessed are they that die in the work of the Lord, they shall rest from their labors, and their works shall follow them."

CHAPTER III.

The design and scope of our apostle, in this chapter, is to arm the church of the Philippians against those false judaizing teachers, who confounded Christ and Moses, circumcision and the gospel together; this he doth by several arguments, namely, first, from the disposition, quality, and end of those false teachers; they are dogs, unclean beasts, that bark only for the belly, and do not only bark, but watch their times to bite too. Our apostle therefore wisely warns the Philippians, in the chapter before us.

FINALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.—

There is no duty which believers do more willingly hear or more difficultly observe, than the duty of spiritual rejoicing; had our apostle called upon the blessed angels to rejoice, who have neither sin, nor sorrow, nor fear, nor sufferings, nor enemies to annoy them, that might have seemed agreeable: but is it at all congruous to persuade sinners, loaded with guilt, and defiled with corruption, clothed with infirmities, assaulted with temptations, persecuted by the world? To bid them rejoice, may seem strange: but the wonder will cease, if we consider the object which he directs them to rejoice in, and that is the Lord; not in themselves, but the

Lord Jesus Christ: *My brethren, rejoice in the Lord*. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his own people; the object of joy is a present good, a precious good, a proportionable good, a perpetual good, such is our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn, 2. That it is the duty of all sincere and serious christians to joy and rejoice in him. *Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord*; rejoice in his person, in the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in him, which render him an object worthy of angelical adoration; rejoice in his mediation, in the great things he has done and suffered for you, in the graces of his Spirit conferred upon you, and in the hopes of that glory to which he has intitled you.

—To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

To write the same things, that is, not the same things which I wrote before, but the same things which I preached to you before, and which you often heard by word of mouth from me before; though I inculcate and press the same truths upon you by my writing, which I have done by my preaching, it is neither grievous nor burdensome to me, nor unnecessary or unprofitable for you. Learn hence, That the often repeating, and frequent inculcating of such truths as are most useful and necessary for the instruction and edification of the hearers, ought to be esteemed neither burdensome by the minister, nor wearisome by the people. Learn farther, That we have here St. Paul's judgment against oral tradition, which the church of Rome prefers before the written word; so did not St. Paul, knowing that what is delivered by word of mouth might soon slip out of the memory, but what is written, is remaining: Blessed be God for his written word.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Observe here, 1. The cautionary direction given the Philippians to beware of false teachers, who adulterated and corrupted the doctrine of Christ, by joining the works and observances of the law with the doctrine of the gospel, in point of justification, making them at least the partial ground of their confidence and rejoicing; beware of such, says our apostle. Observe, 2. The cutting reproof given to these judaizing teachers, in that odious character he gives of them, and in that brand of infamy which he claps upon them. 1. He calls them *dogs*; a term not of diminution only, but of utmost disgrace; *Is thy servant a dog?* 2 Kings viii. 13. supposing that nothing could be thought more vile and base. The Jews called all the Gentiles dogs, because unclean; St. Paul here calls the false teachers dogs fitly, because, as dogs, they did rend and tear the simplicity of the gospel, and divide the glory of man's salvation betwixt faith and works; because, as dogs, they did bark out reproaches against the apostles and their doctrine, delivered in its native purity and simplicity; because, as dogs, they did take a great deal of pains to compass abundance of ground to gain their game; or in our Saviour's words, *They compass sea and land to make proselytes*. 2. *Evil workers*, because pretending to labor in the gospel, they did subvert and overthrow the great design of the gospel, pretending to be

fellow-workers with the apostles, but pulling down what they built up. 3. *The concision*: so in contempt he calls circumcision, which these judaizing teachers pleaded the necessity of; as Hezekiah called the brazen serpent *Nebush-tan*; because circumcision, being no longer an ordinance of God, was no better than a cutting off the flesh; and they that made it necessary to justification, cut themselves off from Christ, and from the church of Christ; by urging the necessity of circumcision, they cut and rent asunder the church of God. Note here, 1. How different the temper of this apostle was in different cases; in things of an indifferent nature, and less necessary, who more mild, indulgent, and complying, breathing forth the spirit of the meek Jesus? But when opinions were broached, which tend to pervert souls, and to subvert the gospel, then he speaks fire and thunder, and no terms are bad enough for such seducers: let us follow St. Paul, as he followed Christ, and learn when to be mild, and when to be zealous. Note, 2. With what an excess of care he cautions the Philippians against these false teachers, saying, *Beware, beware, beware*; three times together in one short verse, thereby instructing the ministers of Christ, that their utmost zeal and diligence is necessary in warning their people to guard against seducers.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

That is, we Christians are alone the true and spiritual circumcision, and accounted circumcised by God, because we have that which the outward circumcision signified, namely, the circumcision of the heart, and the mortification of all carnal lusts and desires: we have the substance of that ordinance, which is infinitely more pleasing to God than the ceremony and shadow: though you have the sign, we have the thing signified. But how doth that appear? Three ways: we worship God in the Spirit, we rejoice in Christ Jesus, we have no confidence in the flesh. 1. We worship God in the Spirit, that is, 1. We give him the worship of our souls and spirits, and do not put him off with mere bodily worship, or with the old antiquated Jewish worship. 2. We worship God in the spirit, that is, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit; he excites and quickens to the duty, he assists and enables in the duty, and he encourages and emboldens the soul to expect audience and acceptance after the duty. Again, 2. We rejoice in Christ Jesus; this was a second evidence of their being the true circumcision. Let them glory in their carnal ordinance of outward circumcision, we will rejoice in Christ Jesus, who hath freed us from the slavery of that ordinance. 3. We have no confidence in the flesh, not in circumcision, or any fleshly privileges, or carnal prerogatives; we confide only in Christ, and in nothing but Christ. Note, That by *flesh* here, is meant particularly, the circumcision of the flesh; but more generally, by *flesh*, may be understood, all the externals of religion, which men place their trust and confidence in, all outward privileges and ordinances are flesh, in the apostle's sense here; prayer is flesh, ordinances are flesh, the righteousness of the law is flesh; nay, grace itself, trusted to and confided in, is flesh: the sincere and serious Christian rejoices in Christ Jesus, confides in him, but dares not place

any confidence in the flesh: "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel; of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee:

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.

As if our apostle had said, "Let no man think that I undervalue the Jewish privileges, because I want them; show me ever a judaizing teacher of them all that can pretend to more, or so many of them as myself; so that, were this a ground of confidence, I can vie with any one of them in carnal privileges, Jewish prerogatives, and outward performances: yea, I can boast of as much self-righteousness as the best of them, and beyond them all, for I was circumcised, and had the seal of the covenant applied to me, yea, I was circumcised the eighth day, the very day prescribed by the law; the Jews maintaining, that circumcision before the eighth day was of less value? *Of the stock of Israel*, one of that nation which God set apart for himself, when he rejected all the nations of the earth beside: *Of the tribe of Benjamin*, of a noble tribe, as well as descended of an honorable people; a tribe, which kept close to God, when other tribes revolted to the worship of Jeroboam's calves: a tribe honored with the first of Israel's kings, king Saul: *An Hebrew of the Hebrews*, that is, born a Jew both by father's side and mother's side: *As touching the law, a Pharisee*; that is, as touching the interpretation and observation of the law, a Pharisee; or one of the strictest sects among the Jews for the profession of religion: *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*; that is, as touching zeal for the Jewish religion, I have showed that above others in my fiery and furious persecution of the church of Christ; I was active according as my judgment and conscience directed me: "And as touching the righteousness which is in and by the law, that is, as to my personal obedience unto the law, I was blameless, without spot, as the original word signifies, that is, in my account, and in man's esteem, my conversation not stained with any gross sin, but very exact in my deportment and behaviour, living up to my knowledge, my practice corresponding with my profession." Behold here a man that had a large stock of Jewish privileges and prerogatives: all these grounds of confidence the apostle had before his conversion; and he might have rested there, and have gloried, and confided therein, as well as the Judaizing doctors did, who gloried in their external privileges: but how far St. Paul was from this spirit and temper, the next verses inform us.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.

That is, the forementioned privileges, which heretofore he accounted gain, and thought to gain justification and salvation by, now, since his illumination, he counted them all *lost*; he saw he had lost his soul for ever, had he trusted to these; but Christ being made known to him as the only way to gain pardon of sin and acceptance with God, he renounced all his former privileges, his former legal righteousness, he durst not lean upon these broken reeds, he would have no more confidence in the flesh, but in Christ only; "what things were reputed gain to me, those I accounted loss for Christ's sake." And he repeats the words over again with confidence and assurance, that he might not be thought to speak unadvisedly, and in a heat; *yea doubtless and I count all things but loss*: he did not only count them loss, but he had actually renounced them as such: an allusion to a merchant, who is content to suffer the loss of all his goods to save his life. But how did St. Paul suffer the loss of them? *Ans.* He did not make shipwreck of holy duties and cast off the performance of them, but he cast off all dependency upon them, and cast away all expectation of happiness and salvation from them, which he had before. Observe further, He did not only count them loss, but cast them away as dung, as filthy carrion, as garbage cast to dogs, as the word signifies. Such things as these, false teachers (whom he called *dogs*) might delight in, but as for himself, he could relish and savor nothing in them, in comparison of Jesus Christ. In the words, observe, 1. The low esteem and mean account which St. Paul had, and every enlightened christian has, of the greatest advantages which this world doth or can afford; "in comparison of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, I count all things but loss;" all my spiritual privileges, with all my worldly advantages, I do, upon the greatest deliberation and thought, undervalue them all for the sake of Christ and his grace. Observe, 2. The high and honorable esteem which he had of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; he declares there was a transcendent excellency in it; for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the way and method of salvation by and through him, is an excellent knowledge; every thing of Jesus Christ is excellent and worthy to be known; the dignity of his person, as God, as man, as God-man, or Mediator between God and man; the dignity of his offices, as the great King, Priest, and Prophet of his church; the eminency of his example, the depth of his humiliation, the height of his exaltation, the transcendency of his love in all his undertakings for us, and the way and method of his justification of us by faith in his blood. We may conclude of the act by the object; Christ is the most excellent object, therefore the knowledge of Christ is, and must be, the most excellent knowledge; not only all the excellencies of the creatures are found in him in the most excellent manner, but all the excellencies of the God-head, the fulness of the God-head, dwells in him bodily, that is,

personally and substantially. Observe, 3. The effect which this knowledge of Christ had upon our apostle; it enabled him to *suffer the loss of all things*: those that have attained the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, will not think much, for to suffer the loss of any thing, yea, of all things, for the obtaining of him, and salvation by him. Observe, 4. The end and design of St. Paul, in parting with all for Christ, or the motive and encouragement which induced him thereunto, namely, that he *might win Christ*; that is, that he might obtain an interest in him and the blessings purchased by him; for this was he willing to part with all his privileges, all his accomplishments, all his enjoyments, all his own righteousness, his exactness in the outward observation of the law; he renounced it all, not in point of performance, but in point of dependance; he renounced all confidence in it for his justification before God; *yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, &c.*

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Observe here, 1. The subject matter of St. Paul's desire was to be found in Christ. Beza, upon the place, brings in the justice of God pursuing Paul as a malefactor; and Christ as the city of refuge which he desires to flee unto, and be found in. By being found in Christ, then, understood ingrafting, and incorporating into him by faith, to find acceptance with God, through him, as our surety and representative, and to persevere in our obedience to him to the end of our lives. Learn, That such as desire, above all things, to be found in Christ, are willing to do, to suffer any thing, yea, all things; and care not in what condition they be found, how poor and low, how afflicted and despised soever, so they may be found in Christ. Observe, 2. The manner how St. Paul desires to be found in Christ; this is expressed both negatively and positively. 1. Negatively, *not having mine own righteousness which is of the law*: that is, not depending upon any thing he could call his own, neither upon his spiritual privileges, nor natural accomplishments, no religious performances, nor upon his most perfect righteousness, and best obedience, for his justification before God, knowing it to be both unwarrantable and unsafe so to do; unwarrantable, because our good works never had the impress of God's ordination for that end; they were never designed to justify our persons, but to justify our faith; and unsafe it is to trust to our own righteousness and best services, because of the many sinful imperfections cleaving to them; alas! they cannot justify themselves; how then should they justify us? Our best duties deserve to be thrown as so much dung upon our faces: surely we may plead the excellency, and preach the necessity of good works, though we do not set them in Christ's chair: such then as would be found in Christ, though they are ever so careful to maintain good works, (which it is their duty and interest, their daily care and endeavour to do) yet they dare not rest in them, nor rely upon them for justification, or make any thing in themselves, or done by themselves, the ground of their confidence. Christ's perfect obedience, entitles us to heaven; our own imperfect (if sincere) obedience, will evidence that title. Some rely upon a natural righteousness, that which they call

good nature; others rely upon a negative righteousness, because they are not so righteous as some; others rely upon a positive righteousness, a moral righteousness, in observing the duties of the second table, a religious righteousness, in performing the outward duties of prayer, hearing the word, receiving the sacraments. But though St. Paul was one of the most religious men that the Jewish religion ever had, yet he durst not be found with this righteousness alone, but desired to be found "in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law." Observe, farther, The way how the apostle desired to be found in Christ, is not only, 1. Negatively; but 2. Positively declared, "that which is through the faith of Christ, that righteousness which is of God by faith." Here note, 1. The righteousness which secures a guilty sinner from the dint of God's wrath is Christ's righteousness; he is made unto us of God *righteousness*, 1. Cor. i. 30. Now, this righteousness is here called, 1. The righteousness of God, because of his appointing, ordaining, and accepting it. 2. The righteousness of faith, because this righteousness is made ours by faith; faith apprehending and applying the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, the fruit and benefit of his undertaking, becomes the believing sinner's, and God is at peace with him: such as will be found in Christ must have a righteousness, the meritorious righteousness of Christ, to answer the demands of the law, and a personal righteousness of their own, to answer the commands of the gospel. St. Paul here, though a transcendent saint, though an eminent apostle, yet divests himself of his own righteousness, that he might be clothed upon with the righteousness of the Mediator, be found in him as his Surety in the day of account, and obtain pardon for the sake of his satisfaction. Note, 2. That there is no gain to be had from this righteousness by a lost sinner, except it be apprehended by faith; it was not a righteousness of his own that St. Paul desired to be found in, but faith was his own, inherent in him, and acted by him, which did entitle him to that righteousness, called therefore here, "the righteousness which is of God by faith."

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Our apostle had, in the foregoing verse, expressed his earnest desires to be found in Christ, with respect to his justification; in this verse, with respect to his sanctification, he desires to *know Christ*, as the Messiah and Mediator, that he might experience the *power of his resurrection*, raising him from the death of sin, to a life of grace and holiness, and taste something of that comfort and joy which is found in suffering with him and for him; and to be made *conformable to his death*, by a daily dying unto sin: knowing, that if he were conformed to him in the likeness of his death, he should be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Here note, 1. What it is that a person justified by the righteousness of Christ doth most desire, namely, a spirit of holiness, and sanctification, flowing from Christ, to enable him to live unto him, "that I may know the power of his resurrection," that is, experience that divine power in my soul, quickening me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body when it lay in the grave. "It is as great a work of the Spirit to form Christ in the heart of

(No. 58.)

a sinner, as it was to fashion him in the womb, or to raise him in the grave," (says the pious bishop Reynolds upon the place.) Note, 2. That such as are justified and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, are willing to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, not ambitious to share with him in the merit of his sufferings, but desirous to participate with him in the benefit of his sufferings; and also, to be conformed to him in their own sufferings; the members think it an honor to be like their head, their suffering head, as well as their glorified head; and well they may; for in and under all their sufferings, especially for him, they have his presence with them, his compassion to moderate them, his strength to bear them, his intercession to preserve from falling away in them; and his crown, after they have suffered a while, to reward them for them.

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead:

By the *resurrection of the dead* here, is not to be understood the general resurrection, for all men shall attain that, whether they strive for it or no; but he intends, that complete holiness, and absolute perfection in grace, which shall attend the state of the resurrection; so he explains it himself in the next verse, "Not that I have already attained, &c. or am already perfect;" and he shows how diligent he was in endeavouring, in the use of all possible means, to arrive at it, and attain unto it. Learn, That the glorious resurrection of the just, or grace consummated in glory, is attainable, and deserves and requires the uttermost care and diligence of the most holy and zealous christians, to be exerted and put forth, in order to the attaining of it; "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, If that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

14 I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Our apostle here compares himself to a person running in a race; the prize which he did contend and run for, was perfection in grace. The highest degree of which, in this life, consists in a desire and endeavour to obtain the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness that are here attainable; the manner how he ran for this prize, he tells us, was by *looking forward* not backward; he did not look back to the things which he had left behind, namely, to the privileges of judaism, nor to his past performances; but like a racer kept himself continually upon the stretch, with his eyes fixed firmly upon the prize at the end of the goal, that he might lay hold upon it, and be crowned with it. Note here, christianity is a race; every christian in

this life must run this race: in his running, he must *look forward*, and not backward, not reckon how much of the way is past, but make the best of the way to come: he must keep heaven, as the mark and prize he runs for continually in his eye, to hearten him on against all hardships and discouragements whatsoever; and, in a word must be *apprehended* before he can *apprehend*: St. Paul was apprehended by Christ, and caught hold of by him, when he fled from him, otherwise he had never apprehended; Christ takes hold on us, before we have any desire to lay hold on him; we move as moved of him, and assisted by him.

15 Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Let as many as be perfect, that is, grown christians, instructed thoroughly in their christian duty, who, compared with others, may be called *perfect*, *be thus minded*, as I am, namely, to believe the circumcision of the flesh abolished, and that no confidence is to be placed in any righteousness of our own, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith only; and if any, seduced by the judaizing teachers, be otherwise minded, and think that the ceremonial law is not abrogated, nor the practice of circumcision abolished, God, in his due time, will show them their error, and convince them that none of those things are now necessary for the obtaining of his favor. Nevertheless, in the mean time, he exhorts all persons, according to the measures of light and knowledge which they had received, to walk according to the rule of the scriptures, preserving mutual love, and avoiding further rents and divisions. Observe, here, That in the first and best age of the christian church, there was, and we cannot expect but there ever will be, a variety of opinions, and differences in judgment, amongst the members thereof. Observe, 2. That in this case of unavoidable differences amongst good men, there ought to be mutual charity and meekness, moderation and forbearance, no censorious judging of each other, but, look first at what is wanting in ourselves, and next, at what is useful in others; the one will make us humble, the other charitable, and both peaceable.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ;

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Here our apostle propounds his own example to their imitation; *follow me*, who have renounced all my Jewish privi-

leges, all confidence in any thing of my own; and mark them for your patterns, who walk so as to have us for an example. O! how happy it is when the ministers of Christ go before their people, and tread out the steps which they are to take towards heaven, when they can say to their people, (without any upbraiding from their own consciences) be followers of us, and of all such as have us for an example. Next, he warns them against following the doctrines and practices of the false teachers, the judaizing doctors, those great zealots for the observation of the ceremonial law, and the rite of circumcision; these he paints out in their proper colors: 1. He calls them the enemies of the cross of Christ, because they preached up the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; and so, in effect, denied Christ to be come in the flesh, or affirming, that he died in vain: *We whose end is destruction*; if they persist in their wicked doctrines and practices, their end will be everlasting destruction: *Whose God is their belly*, who chiefly mind the gratification and pleasing of a sensual appetite: they who serve their belly before God, or as they should serve God, do make a God of their belly; we may provide for the belly, but not serve it, that is, to serve us, by fitting us to serve God, our neighbour, and ourselves, *Whose glory is in their shame*; that is, they glorified in their wicked practices in general, whereof they ought to be ashamed, and in the circumcision of the shameful member in particular; they are puffed up with that which should rather make them blush; *They mind earthly things*; the riches, honors, pleasures, applause of the world, are things wholly upon their hearts, *counting gain godliness*, not regarding Christ's interest, but only promoting their own designs. Lord! what a dismal character is this of those men that undertake to be teachers of others? With what a black coal doth the apostle draw their picture, and yet his hand was guided by the Spirit of God, whose judgment of them was according to truth.

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As if our apostle had said, "As you love your souls, follow not these false teachers afore described, for they are citizens of this world; but imitate and follow us who are citizens of heaven, where our Head is, where our heart is, where our happiness is: it is true, we live here below, but we belong to the corporation and society above, our citizenship is in heaven; for we have an high esteem of that happiness, and our chief concern, is to make sure of it, and we please and delight ourselves with the joyful expectation of it, and we live answerable to our expectation; as we hope hereafter to live like the angels in glory, so we now endeavour to live like the angels in holiness." Learn hence, All the faithful, both ministers and people, have a right to heaven, as to their city; they are therefore with their hearts and affections to be daily aspiring after it, and live in hopes of getting, ere long, the full possession of it.

21 Whoso shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Observe here, 1. All the faithful who have their conversation in heaven, do expect and look for Christ coming from thence, not as a terrible judge, but as a gracious and powerful Saviour, Observe, 2. What they do expect at the coming of this Saviour, namely, the changing "of their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Note here, 1. The present condition of the body of man, it is a vile condition, vile in the original; our body is made of vile dust; vile in regard of its moral vileness, and sinful vileness; vile in regard of its accidental vileness, as their body is the seat of their vile diseases, and subject to vile abuses; vile, considered with respect to its ultimate vileness at death; how does a body, as beautiful as ever was Absalom's, when death comes, run into rottenness and putrefaction! our sin made us vile in the sight of God whilst we lived, and renders our bodies viler in the sight of men when we die. Note, 2. The future condition which the bodies of good men shall be in, at the appearance of Christ; this vile body shall be a beautiful and a blessed body, the body we lay down shall be rebuilt, formed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; resembling his incorruptibility and immortality, in purity and spirituality, in power and activity, and in happiness and felicity. Note, 3. The efficient cause of this great and glorious change, with reference to the body, and that is Christ, *he shall change our vile bodies*; together with the means by which all this is to be effected and accomplished, namely, the wonderful power of Christ, "according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." Surely, it is as easy for Christ to give a body to a soul at the resurrection, as to breathe a soul into a body every day in the work of creation. But the power of Christ is but a weak argument to build our hopes of the body's resurrection upon, without a revelation of his will; he can quench all the fire in hell in a moment; but where has he said he will do it? But now in the case before us, Christ is not only able to raise, but has declared he will raise and change our vile bodies; so that faith is enabled to make a sufficient reply to all the astonishing difficulties that reason can muster up; and those christians that can now say, *Our conversation is in heaven*, may add, "from thence we look for a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

CHAPTER IV.

Our apostle, coming now to the close and conclusion of this excellent epistle, exhorts the Philippians to the practice and performance of several duties which were of great importance to the honor of God, the credit of religion, and their own benefit and comfort; the first of which is constancy in the faith, and steadfastness in the true religion, ver. 1.

THEREFORE, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my dearly beloved.*

Observe here, The loving, affectionate, and endearing compellations, which St. Paul bestows upon his beloved Philippians; he calls them his *brethren* twice in one verse,

his dearly beloved and longed for, his joy and crown; thereby testifying his fervent affection towards them, his passionate longing for their spiritual welfare, and that their conversion, by his preaching, was matter of great joy and comfort to him, yea, the crown and honor of his ministry, *my joy and crown*; that is, my chief joy, and crown of rejoicing, that which he rejoiced in more than he could in any earthly crown. Behold in this glass the heart of every faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ: It would not please them so much to have an imperial crown set upon their heads, and to be made the emperors of the world, as to see souls brought off from the world, by their ministry, to the obedience of the word. This made the Philippians St. Paul's joy and crown at present, and gave him hopes that they would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ: may the same mind be in us, which was in this great apostle. Observe, 2. The great and important duty which St. Paul here exhorts the Philippians to, and that is, steadfastness in the faith and doctrine of the gospel in general; and in particular, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, without obliging themselves to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law: "Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, my joy and crown." Learn hence, 1. That steadfastness in the true religion, and perseverance in the faith of Christ, is the great and indispensable duty of every christian that has a due regard to his salvation. 2. That such a steadfastness in the faith of Christ, and his holy religion, is a present joy, and will be an eternal crown of rejoicing to the ministers of God.

2 I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women, which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life.*

The former verse was an exhortation to constancy; this, to concord. Here observe, 1. The persons exhorted to the duty, two women of eminent note in the church, Euodias, and Syntyche, who *labored* with him in the gospel, that is, in offices proper to their sex, not in public preaching, but in private teaching of youth, and instructing other women in the principles of religion: between these two good women, it seems, there was some difference, a want of love and unanimity; it is but too frequent for persons truly pious and painful in the work of the Lord to be at odds amongst themselves; and such are the fatal consequences of such differences, though between two persons only, that they are looked upon as worthy to be taken notice of by a great apostle. Observe, 2. The great care and pains which St. Paul takes timely to compose this petty difference between these two persons; he writes to an eminent minister in the church at Philippi, whom he calls his *true yoke-fellow*, (because they had faithfully labored together in planting a christian church in that city,) to exert his utmost endeavours in reconciling these two disagreeing parties. Such as are sensible of the dangerous mischiefs of strife and contention, of discord and division, will account it their duty

to look to breaches betimes, to quench such fires at their first kindling, and will call in all the help they can, by engaging the prayers and tears of God's ministers, and the endeavours of all faithful christians, in order thereunto: and all this care, God knows, is little enough in order thereunto. Observe, 3. The charitable thought and good opinion which St. Paul had of his fellow-laborers at Philippi, he believed *their names were in the book of life*; that is, he adjudged them truly gracious persons, and in a state of salvation; though none can pass a certain and infallible judgment upon others, yet such as are holy in conversation in themselves, and contribute their utmost endeavours to promote holiness in others, may in the judgment of charity, be pronounced persons whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, christian cheerfulness and joy, a duty which glorifies God, adorns religion, is beneficial to ourselves, by enabling us to bear afflictions, to glory in them, and to triumph over them, Observe, 2. The object of this duty, a glorious and replenishing object, Christ the Lord; *Rejoice in the Lord*. 3. The perpetuity and constancy of the duty; *Rejoice always*: that is, at all times, and in all conditions. 4. The difficulty of the duty, implied in the repetition of the command: *Again, I say, Rejoice*. From the whole, note, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his children and people. 2. That it is their duty to be joying in him always, and always rejoicing for him, and to rejoice in their knowledge of him, in his undertaking for them, in their interest in him, in their influences of grace and comfort derived from him, in their hopes of glory, to be eternally enjoyed with him. 3. That to get the heart up to this duty, at all times, and in all conditions is no easy work, therefore the exhortation is doubled, *Rejoice always; and again I say Rejoice*: pointing out how averse we are to this spiritual and very beneficial duty.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

This is, Let your mildness and gentleness towards others, your meekness and patience under your own trials, be very conspicuous, because the Lord is at hand to execute judgment on his own crucifiers, and on the persecutors of his own people. Learn, That the consideration of the certainty and suddenness of Christ's coming to judgment, ought to be improved by us as an argument to all mildness and gentleness towards others, and to all meekness and patience under our present sufferings: *Let your moderation be known unto all men, &c.*

6 Be careful for nothing: But in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, namely, to be

anxiously and solicitously careful for nothing; it is not care, but carefulness, that is, inordinate care, heart-cutting, distracting, soul rending care and solicitude, which is here forbidden; there is a prudent provident care for the things of this life, which is an unquestionable duty. Observe, 2. The remedy prescribed for the prevention of solicitous care, and that is fervent prayer; "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known." The people of God may and ought to have recourse to him in every thing. Observe, 3. The apostle directs to thanksgiving in every thing, as well as to prayer, "In every thing by prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known: when afflicted, we are to be thankful for the expected benefit of afflictions; when tempted, to be thankful that God will not leave us to be tempted above, what we are able; when we fall into sin, there is cause of thankfulness that we are not left to run into all sin, that we were not cut off in the very act of sin, and did not die in our sins; thus are we in every thing to give thanks. Observe, 4. The benefit and advantage which St. Paul assures them would redound unto them by the practice of the forementioned duties, namely, *sweet peace which passeth all understanding*; that is, which none can conceive that have not felt it, and none can express that have experienced it. This peace, he tells them, will keep and guard their hearts and minds; a sound peace is the soul's guard against all inward terrors and outward troubles; as the persons of princes are secured by guards of armed and valiant men, who watch while they sleep; so are christians guarded and secured by the peace of God, better than any prince ever was by a guard of forty thousand men. "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus;" that is, through the assistance of Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Here we have a very comprehensive precept, describing the duties of all christians; *whatsoever things are true*; truth is the principal character of our profession, and is to be expressed in our words and actions; *whatsoever things are honest*, venerable or grave; that is, answer the dignity of our high calling, and agree with the gravity and comeliness of the christian profession; *whatsoever things are just*, according to divine and human laws; *whatsoever things are pure and chaste*; intimating, that we must preserve the heart, the hand, the tongue, the eye, from all impurity; *whatsoever things are lovely and of good report*; as easiness to pardon, readiness to oblige, compassion to the afflicted, liberality to the distressed, sweetness of conversation, without gall and bitterness; these are of universal esteem with mankind, and soften the most savage tempers and dispositions. Note here, 1. That there are things naturally honest, just, and lovely in their own nature, and praiseworthy in themselves, which do raise and refine the human nature; and, without a command, their goodness is a strong obligation to observe them. Note, 2. That christianity doth adopt morality, or

precepts of good life and manners, into its frame and constitution, and it is indeed an integral part of the christian religion; not that any moral precepts though never so good, can raise a soul from the death of sin to a life of holiness, without faith in Christ, and assistance from his Spirit! but the morality which the scriptures teach us, is founded not barely upon principles of reason, but divine revelation, and obliges us to the practice of moral duties, in obedience to Christ's command, in conformity to his example, in the strength of his assistance, and with an eye to his glory.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do; And the God of peace shall be with you.

Observe, 1. With what great confidence and good assurance St. Paul here recommended his own practice and example to his people's imitation; all those things which he had by his doctrine and life commanded to them, were to be carefully observed and imitated by them; it is a blessed thing, when people's eyes are taught by their minister's holiness of life, and their ears by the soundness of his doctrine. Our people have eyes to see how we walk, as well as ears to hear what we preach; therefore it is a minister's great duty, by strictness and gravity of deportment, to maintain his esteem in the consciences of his people, yet always tempering gravity with a condescending affability: that minister only can go off the stage with honor and comfort, who has left behind him the good seed of sound doctrine, and the good savor of an holy example; that can say with our apostle, "The things which you have both heard and seen in me, do;" Observe, 2. The promise annexed to the foregoing precept, *these things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.* Where note, 1. Who will be with us, the God of peace; now he that is the God of peace, is the God of power; he that is the God of peace, is the God of patience, who, though he can punish, yet will pardon the infirmities of his people. Note, 2. How he will be with us; the heart of God will be with us, the help of God will be with us, and the presence of God will be with us, to guide and direct us, to lead and conduct us, to cover and protect us; and, if God be with us, we shall shortly be with him. Learn hence, That those which obey the gospel, whatsoever or whomsoever they want, shall ever abide in a peaceful and blessed condition: "These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you."

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity:

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both *how* to be abased, and I know *how* to abound: Every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to

(No. 58.)

be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of his epistle, acquaints the Philippians with what great joy he had received their charity sent unto him; and that it came no sooner, he believed did not proceed from any disrespect towards him, but only for want either of ability or opportunity of sending to him; yet withal gives them to understand, that he could bear want, or a strait condition, very well; for having Christ for his teacher, "he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therein to be content;" he could bear either plenty or scarcity, fulness or want; yea, "could do all things through Christ that strengthened him." Observe here, 1. The vicissitudes and great uncertainty of St. Paul's outward condition; at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he is full, at another in want; teaching us, that the dearest of God's children, in regard of their outward condition, are subject to variety of changes. Observe, 2. The general lesson which they have learnt, with reference to this variety of conditions, and that is the lesson of contentment; "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Observe, 3. The particular lessons learnt by him, "Both how to abound, and how to be abased:" they are both hard lessons, but, of the two, perhaps it is harder to know how to *abound*, than how to be *abased*.

Quest. 1. When may a man be said to know how to abound? *Ans.* When he sets a due value and a right esteem upon the things of the world, and neither prizes them too high nor too low; when a man so uses his abundance, as to avoid the temptations which do attend and accompany that abundance; when he is willing to part with his abundance, at the call and command of God, and, in a word, when he attends more to the duties of his prosperous state, than to the sensual pleasures and satisfaction of it. *Quest. 2.* What is it to know how to be abased? *Ans.* Not to be discouraged, or suffer the spirit to sink or faint in the day of adversity; to be not only humbled by affliction, but humble under it; to suffer what God inflicts, without impatience or complaint, without sourness of spirit or discontent; to believe firmly that whatever we meet with, is from the hand of a father; that whatever we part with, is but a perishing creature; that God is able to restore all our lost comfort with advantage to us, and will do it, if it be good for us, either in kind or in equivalency; this is to know how to be abased. *Quest. 3.* How doth it appear harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased? Thus; there are more duties, and harder duties, required of those that abound, than of them that want. There are more temptations, and stronger temptations which attend those in abundance than them that want. Hence it is that God gives so many solemn charges and commands to those that abound to take heed to themselves, more than to those that are in want. See Deut. vi. 12. "When thou art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God, and thy heart be lifted up." In a word, I do not remember one instance in all the scripture, of a full or prosperous condition, which was ever so much as the remote occasion of a sinner's conversion unto God; but I find in scripture, that an afflicted condition

has been blessed to many for this end, 2. Chron. xxxiii. 12. Hos. v. 15. Job xxiii. 14. Observe, 4. The school which St. Paul learnt this great lesson in, to know how to be abased, and how to abound, and to be thoroughly content in every condition: it was not at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's feet; "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Christ was both his tutor and his strengthener, he taught him his lesson and enabled him to practise it. See here, 1. That a real christian is able to do all things, all things that concern a christian, all things that belong to the glory of God, and his soul's salvation; all things, not in a legal, but evangelical sense; not all things, nor indeed any thing with a sinless perfection, but all things in respect of his love to the whole law, in respect of his purpose and resolution, in respect of his desire and endeavours. Again, *I can do all things*; understand it in an active sense, I can deny myself, believe in a withdrawing God, conquer the world, subdue unmortified corruption, and live a life of evangelical perfection, Take it also in a passive sense, I can suffer all things, I can bear Christ's cross, wear his yoke, endure any thing for him, or from him, when called forth to suffer. Note, 2. That as a christian can do all things, so his ability to do all things, lies not in himself, but in Christ. A believer receives an active power from Christ, to enable him to do whatever he requires him to do; ability to subdue corruption, to conquer temptation; to bear affliction, and to glorify God in every condition; all this is from Christ: and the sincere christian may say with this eminent saint, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

14 Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now, ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Although our apostle had declared, in the foregoing verses that he had fully learnt the lesson of contentment in all conditions, and could bear poverty and want without complaining; yet withal he assures them here, that they did well in sending such supplies to him in prison by Epaphroditus, as they had done; and thereby testifying, by their christian commiseration, that they shared with him in his afflictions and sufferings for Christ. Where note, 1. The apostle's thankful acknowledgment of the Philippians' present liberality towards him, now in bonds, for preaching the gospel to them; and how he takes occasion from thence to make an honorable mention of their former bounty towards him, even from his first preaching of the gospel to them; nay, when he was gone from them at Philippi, and preached to those at Thessalonica, yet did the Philippians send their bounty after him more than once, which no other church had then done besides themselves. Learn hence, 1. That there is a rule of equity to be observed, as between other relations, so between ministers and people, that as they bestow labor and pains, so they should receive encouragement and maintenance, and this not barely as a gratuity,

but as a due debt. 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ, though they may challenge a supply of temporal things from their people, for their spiritual things, as a due debt, yet do they fully receive it, and gratefully acknowledge it, to the honor and commendation of their people, with fervent prayer to God, that it may be fruit redounding to their account in the great day of account. "O ye Philippians, know, that when no church communicated with me, ye sent once and again to my necessities."

17 Not because I desire a gift. but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

Here remark, 1. The modesty and great ingenuity of the apostle, in assuring them, that his praising their liberality so much was not upon design to get more; *not because I desire a gift*; that is, any further gift for my own private advantage; I am far from the thought of spunging upon you: but I aim at your advantage in this, that your liberality may afford you the fruits of a plentiful reward in the day of Christ, who will not forget your work and labor of love in ministering to the saints." Having thus guarded against all suspicion of greediness in himself, and evidenced that his commending their liberality was not upon design, he proceeds again to praise their liberality yet farther, and extols it in such words as may cause admiration. Note, 1. How abundantly satisfied the apostle was with what he had received, *I have all and abound, I am full*; as if he had had the treasure of the Indies in his coffers: grace is content with a little, and thinks that little an abundance; the contented man is only rich. 2. How St. Paul gives an acknowledgment, under his hand, that Epaphroditus had faithfully delivered to him the whole of their charity sent by him; "I have received of Epaphroditus all the things which were sent from you:" Epaphroditus was their chief minister, or bishop, a person of great reputation, whose fidelity none could suspect: yet St. Paul gives it under his hand that he had executed his trust faithfully. Though a man be never so trust-worthy in himself, and be never so much intrusted by others, yet he ought, in wisdom, to guard against any suspicion which may be taken up against his honesty and faithfulness. Note, 3. The high expressions which St. Paul makes use of, in setting forth the Philippians' charity toward him; he calls it, "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God;" the very same words here which he makes use of, Ephes. v. 2. where he calls the death of Christ *a sacrifice, and sweet smelling savor*. The expression is borrowed from the Levitical sacrifices, which were of God's appointing and approving; and it imports, that our charity expressed towards the members, but especially the ministers of Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, is as

acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, as the sweetest incense and the fattest sacrifices were under the law. Here observe, That the Socinians, to lessen the meritoriousness of Christ's sacrifice, do parallel this text with that other, Eph. v. 2. "Is the death of Christ, say they, called a sacrifice and sweet-smelling savor? so is the Philippians' charity here called a sacrifice, both in a figurative and metaphorical sense only." But mark the difference; St. Paul, Eph. v. 2. says, Christ gave himself a sacrifice, which being once offered, was sufficient to take away sin, Heb. x. 10. but the Philippians are not said to give themselves a sacrifice, but their alms were as grateful to God as incense: if it be said, from Rom. xii. 1. That believers are required to present themselves living sacrifices unto God, and acceptable; *I answer*, so they are, and so they do present themselves gratulatory, but not expiatory sacrifices unto God, 2. Pet. ii. 5. "Ye are a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God, through Jesus Christ." Christ's oblation and sacrifice was acceptable for itself: believers, and their eucharistical sacrifices, are acceptable to God only in, by, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, Heb. xiii. "By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually." Note, lastly, The assurance which St. Paul gives the Philippians, that God would abundantly recompense their charity into their own bosoms, ver. 19. "My God will supply all your need, &c." As if he had said, "Do not think you shall want, because you have liberally supplied my wants; no, my God will supply you, for your supplying me: *According to his riches in glory*, that is, according to his rich mercy and glorious grace:" there is no need to be supplied in the glory of the next life, but there is a glory in rich grace, which readily and plentifully supplies all our needs in this life. Note here, 1. That such as administer now to the wants of others, may fall into want, and be driven to straits themselves, 2. That the more forward they have been to supply the wants, and administer to the necessities of others, in the time of their abundance, the more may they expect from the bountiful hand of God, in the day of their necessity and distress; "My God shall supply all your need." &c.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Note here, 1. The endearing title given to Almighty God, *God our Father*; the word *father* is a title of great honor; the word *our* is a word of singular comfort. The appropriating, positive terms, *mine, thine, ours*, have a great sweetness in them, and breathe abundance of affection. As Luther used to say, "The comfort of the gospel lay in pronouns possessive, when we can say with believing Thomas, *My Lord, and my God*; with blessed Paul, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Learn, That God is a Father in a more peculiar and special manner to all interested in his Son Jesus Christ. The word *father* implies spiritual generation, that we are begotten by him, and like unto him; it implies vehemency of affection, no bowels comparable unto a father's; it implies designed benefit by correction that he exercises unto profit. And in the word *our* is implied, that God is the Father of every believer, the weakest as well as the strongest: we are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus: and it points out our duty also, that as there is one God and Father of all, so all believers should

be of one heart and one mind amongst themselves. Note, 2. What it is which our apostle attributes and ascribeth unto God, namely, *glory*, and that *for ever and ever*: *Glory*, that is, the manifestation of all his glorious excellencies and perfections. Learn hence, That it is the fervent desire of all believers to have the worth and excellencies of God everlastingly acknowledged, and in a boundless manner displayed; *Unto God be glory for ever and ever*: This word *for ever and ever*, is upon different accounts, the saddest and sweetest word in all the Bible; when applied to the excellencies of God, and our interest in them, no word like this for comfort, This God is our God *for ever and ever*. O ravishing consolation! But when applied to sinners, and what they suffer from God as the desert, the due desert of their sins, then it is a word of the saddest weight, Rev. xiv. 11. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*, 2. Thes. i. 9. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." It is the word *for ever and ever* that sets all hell a roaring, and it is the same word that fills heaven with joy and rejoicing. "To God and our Father be glory for ever and ever." *Amen*.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household.

Our apostle closes his letter with respectful salutations; he salutes in his own name all and every saint in Christ Jesus; the soul of the poorest and meanest saint was not neglected by this great apostle: he loved the brotherhood, the whole fraternity of believers, the whole society of saints: all church members are saints by external and visible profession, and ought to be so by internal renovation and spiritual regeneration, and one as well as the other are here saluted by the apostle; *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus*. Next, he sends the salutations of all the brethren that were with him, and of all the saints that were at Rome, all those whom he had there converted to christianity, and particularly some of those that were in Nero's family, and called here *Cesar's household*. Where note, 1. That such a mighty efficacy had the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit, that it entered the houses of the greatest persecutors, and changed the hearts of some who were most unlikely to receive and entertain it. Behold, here are some in bloody Nero's family converted to Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, those of *Cesar's household*. Note, 2. That sometimes God endues the professors of the gospel in general, and young converts in particular, with such a spirit of zeal and courage, magnanimity and holy solutions, that they dare lift up a banner for truth, and publicly own the despised members of Christ without either shame or fear; "those of *Cesar's household* do greet and salute you."

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

He shuts up all with his usual apostolical valediction: by *grace*, we are to understand the free favor of God, as the

fountain: and all good things, as so many streams flowing from that fountain: this is called *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, because preached by his merit, and applied by his intercession. This grace he prays may be with them in the sweet effects of it, and in the sensible apprehensions of it,

to enlighten, sanctify, comfort, and quicken them more and more. Knowing then the exceeding riches of grace which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord, let us glorify him, eminently, abundantly; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him, and to his glory.

THE

EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO THE

COLOSSIANS.

This epistle was written by St. Paul when he was a prisoner at Rome, about the same time in which he wrote the foregoing epistle to the Philippians. It is directed to the Colossians, that is, the church of christians newly gathered in and about the city of Colosse, in Phrygia, by the preaching of Epaphras; St. Paul not having seen their face in the flesh, Chap. ii. 1.

Epaphras having founded a church here, and instructed the Colossians in the great and fundamental principles of the Christian religion, he left them for a time, and went to Rome, and was fellow-prisoner with St. Paul there. In his absence from them, the Colossians were infested with false teachers of two sorts; some were the judaizing doctors, that is, persons converted from judaism to christianity, who sought to impose upon them circumcision and the observation of the ceremonial law, long since abolished by the death of Christ; against these false teachers, most of the foregoing epistles were written and directed. The other sort of false teachers against whom this epistle is written, were such persons as were converted from gentilism to christianity, who obtruded upon the Colossians their Philosophical speculations, and some of their heathenish practices, particularly, their worshipping of angels; under this notion then, (as the church of Rome now,) that Almighty GOD is such an infinite glorious Being, that man, sinful man, must not dare to approach him without the interposure of the angels, as Mediators, between God and them. Now, in opposition to both these sorts of false teachers, St. Paul writes this epistle, showing the former, that christians, since the death of Christ lay under no obligation to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law; and convincing the latter, that Christ, and not angels, was the appointed Mediator between God and man; and that we, being reconciled to God by him, have access through him unto God in all our necessities.

CHAPTER I.

The former part of this chapter discovers the great affection which St. Paul bore to the Colossians both in his thanksgivings and prayers for them: he gives thanks to God for the spiritual graces conferred upon them, particularly for their faith in Christ, and love to all christians, and for their holy fruitfulness in good works: and prays fervently for their increase in knowledge, growth in holiness, courage under sufferings; and that they might be made every day more and more meet for the glory of heaven, styled by him, The inheritance of the saints in light.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. That this epistle to the Colossians contains many of the same things, and often the very same words, with that to the Ephesians, particularly the salutation here is the same with that to the Ephesians; in which, note, 1. The person saluting, *Paul*, once a persecutor, now a professor, yea, a zealous preacher of the faith of Christ, dignified with the title and office of an apostle, "an apostle of Jesus Christ;" that is called and sent immediately by him to plant and propagate the christian faith throughout the heathen world, but "by the will of God;" Christ, as head of the church, is intrusted with sending out ministers into his church; but the Father's will, and Christ's will do both concur and fully agree in sending forth his ministers to instruct and edify his church; and woe to such as intrude themselves into any office in the church without their call and commission; let them expect a blow instead of a blessing. Note, 2. The apostle joins Timothy in the salutation; though Timothy was not an apostle or a penman of any part of the scripture, yet because he was well known to the Colossians, and much valued and esteemed by them, and was a person of eminent worth and excellency in himself, and of singular serviceableness to the apostle, he therefore calls him his brother, being "his fellow-laborer in the work of the gospel." Where the great humility of St. Paul is remarkable, and worthy of imitation; who, though an inspired apostle, extraordinarily and immediately called by Christ himself, an aged person, long engaged in the work of Christ, yet is far from despising young Timothy, his inferior, greatly his inferior in all respects, that he gives him all fitting respect, and puts honor upon him, in calling him his *brother*, they being fellow-laborers in the work and service of the gospel. Note, 3. The persons saluted, the "saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse." He calls all the members of this christian church by the name of *saints*, they all making an outward and visible profession of sanctity and holiness: and many of them, no doubt, were what they professed, not only relative, but real (No. 58.)

saints; he styles them also "faithful brethren in Christ, that is implanted into Christ, some by outward profession, others by inward sanctification; or the expression, "saints in Christ Jesus," may intimate to us, that all our grace and sanctity must be exercised and acted by strength derived from Christ, and all our holiness be accepted in Christ Jesus. Note, 4. The salutation itself, "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." By grace, understand the free love, and gracious favor of God, together with all the effects and fruits of it; these are wished from God as the Father: intimating, that God bestows not his special grace as a Creator, but as a Father in Christ; next he wishes them "peace from our Lord Jesus Christ," he being the purchaser of our peace, upon whom was laid the chastisement of our peace, and by whom God is at peace with us, and reconciled to us. But why is there no mention of the Holy Ghost, as well as of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ? Because it is by the Spirit, that God the Father and Jesus Christ dwell in us, and do communicate this grace unto us; so that praying for this grace, is praying for the communion of the Holy Ghost.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you;

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have to all the saints*;

Our apostle, to give the Colossians a full assurance of the firmness of his love unto them, acquaints them, that himself and Timothy, from the time they heard of their conversion, did never cease to give solemn thanks to God for it, and particularly, for their faith in Christ, and for the love which they bore to all saints, to all their brethren, and fellow-members in Christ. Where note, 1. The person whom St. Paul offers up his prayers and praises, his supplications and thanksgivings to, and that is *God*; intimating, that religious invocation and adoration belong only to God; not to any creature, who can neither know, nor is able to supply our wants. This God whom St. Paul prayed to, is called the "Father of our Lord Jesus;" so he is, with respect both to his divine and human nature; in respect to his Deity, he is of the same essence with the Father, begotten of him from all eternity; and in respect of his humanity, he is his Father, being, as man conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. Note, 2. The mercies and blessings which St. Paul offers up his thanksgivings to God for, and this on the behalf of the Colossians; in general they are spiritual blessings: in particular, 1. For their "faith in Christ Jesus; Christ alone is the proper object of our assiance and trust; and by faith we repose the entire trust and confidence of our souls upon the sufficiency of his merits. 2. "For their love to all the saints." Where observe, That faith and love are inseparable companions: there is a necessary connexion between them: faith without love, is no living grace; love without faith, is no saving grace. Observe also, The proper object of a christian's love, it is the saints as saints, that is, for their sanctity and holiness: and to all the saints, let their private opinions and personal infirmities be what they will; we have "heard of your love to all the saints:" love is that brotherly affection which every true christian chiefly bears to his fellow-

members in Christ, for grace's sake: now the love of grace in another, being so good an evidence of the life of grace in ourselves, hence it was that St. Paul, hearing of the Colossians' love to all the children of God, ceases not to give thanks unto God for it, as the fruit and evidence of their conversion.

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth:

Here 1. St. Paul discovers the motives which excited the Colossians to such steadiness and constancy in the faith of Christ, and in love one to another; and that was "the hope laid up for them in heaven;" that is, the great and good things here hoped for, and there to be enjoyed. As the sinner's misery consists not in what he feels, but what he fears; so the believer's happiness lies not in what he has in his hand, but in what he has in hope; the reward which encourages his perseverance in faith and love, is laid up in heaven;" that is, safely and plentifully, as a parent lays up his treasures for the use of his children: it is both lawful and laudable then for christians to have an eye to the promised reward, as an encouragement to duty, "for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Observe, 2. The means by which they came to the knowledge of this hope, it was by "the word of truth," the preaching of the gospel to them by the ministry of Epaphras; this was so exceedingly blessed by God, that thereby the saving hope of this reward was wrought in them. Where note, The title given to the gospel, it is eminently "the word of truth," having Christ for its main subject, who "is the way, the truth, and the life; and being confirmed by Christ the Testator's blood. Note, farther, that the preaching of this word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, is the great instrumental mean, appointed by God for begetting in us a lively hope of the reward laid up for us in heaven; "for the hope laid up for you in heaven, whereof you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." Observe, 3. The commendation here given of the gospel, which had begot in these Colossians a lively hope of the heavenly reward: it is commended, 1. For being one and the same gospel which was preached by the apostles throughout all the world, "which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world;" that is with incredible swiftness into the most eminent parts and places of the world then known; an infallible proof of the divinity of the gospel, that it was thus owned and blessed of God. The gospel, at all times, and in all places, is one and the same; and Christ when he pleases, can swiftly drive the chariot of the gospel round about the world, and bring in not only persons and families, but cities, nations, and kingdoms, to the obedience of it. 2. The gospel preached to them is commended for its fruitfulness, "it bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you;" that is, fruits of piety and holiness towards God, and fruits of righteousness and charity towards man. Learn hence, That it is matter of praise, and un-

speakable thanksgiving, to the ministers of Christ, when the light of the gospel breaks forth among a people, where it never before shined, and is accompanied with early and constant fruits of piety, humility, faith and love, in the hearts and lives of those to whom it is preached. "The gospel bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day you heard of it, &c."

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Observe here, 1. The person who first preached the gospel of Christ to the Colossians, and converted them to the christian faith, it was Epaphras; "As ye learned of Epaphras." Observe, 2. The commendation given to Epaphras, and his character by St. Paul; he was regularly called to the work, and a diligent fellow-laborer with St. Paul in the work, of preaching and dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel to a lost world; "who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." Learn hence, That the knowledge of life and salvation is ordinarily wrought in persons by the preaching of the gospel, by men called of God to that sacred function. Observe, 3. A particular instance of the faithfulness of Epaphras towards the Colossians, he declared unto St. Paul their "love in the spirit;" that is, their spiritual love and fervent affection to him, though they had never seen his face nor heard his voice. The faithful ministers and members of Jesus Christ do affectionately love one another, though they see not the face of each other; there is no such loadstone of love as the grace of God: this will draw forth the heart and affections of a believer to the ends of the earth, to pray for, to mourn over, and to rejoice with such of their brethren as they never saw, but of whose condition they have heard. Observe, 4. The kind return which St. Paul makes to them, for their love in the Spirit towards him; "for this cause we do not cease to pray for you;" there is no such way to attain an interest in, and to obtain constant benefit and advantage by the prayers of the ministers of God, as to be expressive of our love and affection both to God and them. Observe, 5. The special blessings which he prays for on the Colossians' behalf, namely, that they might be filled with "the knowledge of his will," that is, attain to a more perfect and comprehensive knowledge of God's will and their duty, furnished with all divine "wisdom and spiritual understanding;" to regulate their lives according to their knowledge. Learn from hence, That there is a fulness of divine knowledge, which is attained by none, but should be aimed at by all, seeing they that know most of God's word and revealed will, come far short of what they should know. Learn, 2. That the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding which christians should especially labor after, and attain unto,

is of things spiritual: "that ye be filled with knowledge and spiritual understanding." O let divine and spiritual knowledge be our chief care and principal business! It is called here spiritual understanding, because it is from the holy Spirit, and conversant about spiritual things, which far exceeds the most refined notions concerning other things; and Christ tells us, that eternal life depends upon it, John xvii. 3. Spiritual knowledge fits us for the service of God on earth, for the sight of God in heaven: And Christ has told us, that he will take a second journey from heaven, to render vengeance on them which know not God, and on them which do know (*notionally*) but obey not practically the gospel of our Lord Jesus, 2 Thea. i. 8.

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Here the apostle sets down the end of his prayer in the forementioned manner for the Colossians, why he desired that their knowledge should so exceedingly increase; it was in order to practice, that they might "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, and be fruitful in every good work;" this is the true end of knowledge, practical obedience. All knowledge without this, makes a man like Nebuchadnezzar's image, with a head of gold, and feet of clay: some persons study to know, only to know, that is curiosity; others endeavour to know only to make themselves known, that is vainglory: but to know, that we may practise what we know, this is gospel duty. *Quest.* But how can any person be said to "walk worthy of the Lord?" *Ans.* Not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meetness, when we walk as it is meet, and fit for persons professing godliness to walk; when we walk "as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ," in obedience to his precepts, in imitation of his pattern, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and answerable to the high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises us to the expectation of, this is to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." The second branch of the apostle's prayer, on the behalf of these Colossians, was, that they might be "fruitful in every good work," that is, labor after universal fruitfulness in good works. By good works, he undoubtedly means works of piety towards God, works of righteousness towards our neighbours, works of sobriety towards ourselves, works of charity towards all. By fruitfulness in these good works, he means an unwearied diligence, and persevering constancy in the doing of them, that our fulness be an universal fruitfulness, an humble and self-denying fruitfulness, a proportionable fruitfulness, an abounding and abiding fruitfulness; that is to be fruitful in every good work. The third request, which in this verse he puts up for them, is, that they may increase in the knowledge of God. As fruitfulness in good works makes much for the increase of knowledge, so increasing in knowledge will contribute very much towards our fruitfulness in good works; the way to grow in grace is "to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. iii. 11.

11 Strengthened with all might accord-

ing to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness:

In the former verses, prayer was offered up to God by St. Paul, to enable the Colossians to do his will, his whole will, acceptably; in this verse he pleads with God, to strengthen them with an almighty power to bear afflictions, the sharpest and longest afflictions, patiently and joyfully: "Strengthened with all might, unto all patience with joyfulness." Learn hence, 1. That the cross of Christ, or sufferings for Christ are unavoidable, but not unsupportable; though they will shock an ordinary patience and constancy of mind, yet "might, all might, power, glorious power," which is here prayed for us, and elsewhere promised to us, can and will enable us to stand under them. Glorious power will be victorious power. Learn, 2. That patience, much patience, very much patience, yea, all patience, is needful, nay, absolutely and indispensably necessary, to enable a christian to bear some trials, and to glorify God in an afflicted condition. All patience, I say, is necessary in order to the cheerful bearing of afflictions, that is, patience at all times, patience under all crosses, patience, if possible, without any mixture of impatience; patience that may give a man the possession of himself, and quiet the whole man, the tongue, the hand, and the heart. Such measures and degrees of patience as will keep the heart from sinking, the tongue from complaining, the hand from revenging, Lord! grant, that whenever any of these are called forth to suffer either for thee, or from thee, they may be "strengthened with all might, according to thy glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness."

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

Our apostle having prayed for the Colossians in the foregoing verses, here breaks forth into the duty of thanksgiving on their behalf, "Giving thanks unto the Father, &c." Where note, 1. A description of heaven, or the blessed state of good men in another world, it is an inheritance, an "inheritance of saints and an inheritance in light," 1. It is an inheritance; now that is a possession only proper to children, *Hæreditas filiis debetur, non servis*. It is an unmerited and undeserved possession, and it is the best donative that a father has to give unto his children: particularly, this inheritance of heaven, which God gives to all, and yet to every one of his children, is the freest inheritance, the surest, the most satisfying, and the most delightful, and the most durable inheritance. 2. Heaven is the inheritance of the saints, or of holy persons only; such as are really holy, universally holy, perseveringly holy, to them, and only to them, does it belong, it is purchased for them, it is promised to them, it is given to them, they have already the firstfruits of it in the Spirit's inhabitation, which is given to them as an earnest of heaven; it is prepared for them, and they are prepared for that; and it shall be finally adjudged to them at the great and last day. 3. It is an inheritance in light, that is, an inheritance with God; an inheritance in joy, an inheritance in glory, and a common inheritance for all the saints: as the light of the

sun is a common blessing to all that have eyes to see it, and every person in a room has the benefit of the light of the candle, as if he enjoyed it by himself alone; so is the inheritance of heaven, it is fully and entirely enjoyed by all the saints, as if there was but one to possess and enjoy it. Note, 2. The qualifications of the persons who may, upon good grounds, expect to be made partakers of this glorious inheritance when they die, namely, such, and only such, as by the assistance of God's grace, and the concurrence of their own care and endeavours, are made *meet*, that is, fit prepared and ready for this inheritance whilst they live. Our persons must be justified by the blood of Christ, our natures renewed by the grace and Spirit of Christ, and our lives daily more and more conformed to the doctrine and example of Christ, or we can never partake of this inheritance; without likeness to God, we can have no expectation of living with him. Note, 3. The duty belonging to and expected from them whom the Father has made meet for this glorious inheritance, and that is the duty of eternal thanksgiving. "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet. As none shall enjoy this inheritance but such as are made meet for it; so those, all those who are made meet for it, must ascribe their meetness unto God, and give him thanks for it. It is a spiritual blessing, it is a transcendent favor, it is a discriminating favor, it is an everlasting favor; eternity will be too short to spend in the admiration of it, and in gratulations for it; let such of us as are interested in it, now begin the work upon earth, of giving thanks to the Father, for making "us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

In these words our apostle declares how God makes his children and people meet for the inheritance of heaven and eternal glory, namely, by bringing them out of that dark state of heathenism, sin and misery, in which they lay, and translating them into a state of grace, called here "the kingdom of God's dear Son. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness;" here we have the deliverer, God the Father, ver. 12. he delivered us; all that are made meet for the inheritance in light, were once under the power of spiritual darkness: the deliverance itself, and the manner of the deliverance; he hath rescued us by a strong hand, as the word imports, as Lot was delivered out of Sodom. Note, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature, is a state of darkness; sin originally springs from darkness, it naturally delights in darkness, it ultimately leads to eternal darkness. Note, 2. That it is God, and God alone, that can deliver a soul from the power of spiritual darkness. 3. That no power short of Almighty power in God, is able to deliver a sinner from the dominion of sin, and the power of spiritual darkness; such is the ignorance and blindness of the understanding; such is the rebellion that is found in the sinner's will, so great the irregularity and disorder of the affections, and indeed of the whole soul, that the sinner is not only unable to deliver himself, but stands in a direct opposition to the grace of God, which offers to work deliverance for him, till, of unwilling he is made willing, in the day of Christ's power, Psal. cx. 3. "And translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;" that is, brought us into a gospel state, made us members and subjects of his kingdom of grace, and heirs to

his kingdom of glory. Learn, 1. That Christ was God's Son, his dear and only Son, the Son of himself, and the Son of his bosom love: he is called his Son, being so by an eternal and ineffable generation; not upon the account of his miraculous conception only, nor in regard of his sanctification and mission only, nor in regard of his resurrection chiefly, nor in regard of the dignity of his person, nor in regard of the dearness of his person; but he is very God of very God, begotten of his Father, by whom all things were made; and accordingly he is, for nature, co-essential, for dignity, co-equal, and for duration, co-eternal with the Father, and consequently truly and really God; and he that denieth the divinity of the Son, in God's account denieth the Father also. Learn, 2. That Christ, as God's dear Son, is a Spiritual King, and exercises a kingly power in and over the souls of those whom he hath delivered from the power of darkness. Learn, 3. That such as are subjects of his kingdom of grace, shall certainly be translated into his kingdom of glory.

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;

Here our apostle further declares how we are made "meet for the inheritance of heaven, and delivered from the power of darkness, namely, by our redemption in Christ" from sin, satan, death and wrath: by a price paid by the Mediator, to the justice of God his Father. "In whom we have redemption," that is, the fruit and benefit of Christ's redemption, which eminently consists in remission of sin. Note here, 1. The deplorable state into which the whole race of mankind was brought by sin, namely, a state of slavery, and spiritual captivity unto sin; redemption supposes this; slaves and captives need a redeemer, none else. 2. That there was no delivery from this slavery, but by a price paid down to the justice of God: redemption is a delivery by ransom and price. 3. That no other price did, or could redeem us from our miserable captivity, but the blood of Christ; we have "redemption through his blood." 4. That although Christ did pay this ransom unto God, and not to satan, whose enslaved captives we are, yet, by virtue of the ransom paid, we are delivered from satan's slavery, and sin's dominion; when God the judge was once satisfied, satan the gaoler had nothing to do to detain and keep us any longer in prison. 5. That forgiveness of sin, or a full and final discharge from sin's guilt, and from all obnoxiousness to God's wrath, was one special fruit of Christ's redemption; he died to deliver us from the wrath of God, and from the rage of our lusts too, otherwise, he had but sealed us a patent to sin with impunity.

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.

The apostle having mentioned our redemption in the former verse, describes the person of our Redeemer in this and the following verses, in such lofty characters, as evidently bespeak him to be a divine person, truly and really God, and consequently the fittest person to undertake so great and glorious a work, as the redemption and salvation of a lost and perishing world. Note here, 1. The Redeemer described by his eternal relation to God, he is "the image of the invisible God," that is, his natural and essential image;

thus he is, in respect of his eternal generation as God; as a child whom we call the express image of the father, is of the same nature with his father, so is Christ of the same essence and nature with God, his nature is the same, his attributes are the same, his works the same, the worship given him the same; faith and affiance in him the same: John xiv. 1. "Ye believe in God, believe in me." Again, Christ is the image of the invisible God, as God-man; by him, as a lively image, did God the Father set forth unto us his glorious attributes of wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and power. The first person in the God-head is called invisible to the patriarchs; but the Son frequently appeared, as a *preludium*, to his incarnation, in which he appeared visibly to all. Note, 2. Christ is here described, as by his eternal relation to God, so by his eternal relation to the creatures; "He is the first-born of every creature;" that is, 1. He was before every creature, and therefore he himself cannot be a creature: the apostle says expressly, ver 17. "That he is before all things," that is, Christ had a being before there was any created; he was before all creatures, both in point of dignity, and in point of duration. Thus, Rev. iii. 14. Christ calls himself the "beginning of the creation of God," that is, the principal efficient cause of the creation, and so could not be a creature himself, but consequently must of necessity have been God from all eternity with the Father: Or else, 2. By the "first-born of every creature," may be understood, that he was the Lord and heir of all the creatures: in allusion to the first-born among the Jews of old, who were lords over their brethren, Gen. xxvii. 37. "Behold I have made him thy Lord;" the first-born is natural heir, and *heir* did anciently signify *Lord*. Now Christ is said in Acts x. 36. "to be Lord of all," and Rom. iv 14. "He is called heir of all things:" Now, how well may Christ be said to be the Lord and heir of all things, when "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made!" Learn hence, That the Socinians have no ground from this text to reckon Christ amongst the number of creatures, he having a being antecedent to all creatures; yea, being Lord of the whole creation; and accordingly the apostle styling him here the "first-born of every creature," never designed to insinuate, that the Son of God is a creature, as evidently appears by the next verses.

16 For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist;

Mark the connexion: the apostle affirms Christ to be the first-born of every creature, namely, because "by him were all things created, and by him all things consist:" now if all things were created by him, surely he himself cannot be a creature. And thus the sense of the apostle's words runs easy; Christ is the image of the invisible God, the Heir and Lord of the whole creation, for by him all things were created; he that created all creatures, cannot himself be a creature; for it is impossible that any creature should create himself. Mark

(No. 59.)

further, Christ is here represented as Creator of the universe; "all things were created by him in heaven and in earth," all the angels in their several orders, degrees and dignities. 2. as he is represented the Creator, so likewise the upholder of every creature: as "by him were all things created," so "by him do all things consist." 3. He is set forth as the last end of all the creatures; *all things were created for him*, as well as *by him*. Learn hence, 1. That all created beings from the vilest worm to the brightest angel are the workmanship of Christ's hand; they are not only creatures, but his creatures; he is the omnipotent Creator, and their rightful Lord. Learn, 2. *That all things were created for him*, as well as *by him*, for the manifestation of his own glory, as God; he that was the first cause, must be the last end: and accordingly, all the creatures throughout the whole creation do give glory unto Christ, some in an active way, as angels and saints; some in a passive way, as damned men and devils; some in an objective way, as sun, moon, and stars, giving us occasion to glorify the power and wisdom of their great Creator. Learn, 3. That seeing the whole creation was at first made, and is still upheld by the power of Christ, it proves him to be evidently and undeniably God: He that created all things, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power, is and must be God. Vain here is the Socinian evasion, who, by creation, understand a renovation of the mind, and a reformation of the manners of men by the gospel; for Christ is here said to create all things in heaven, that is particularly the angels in heaven; but they having kept their first station, wanted no renovation, so that it must be understood of the first creation of the natural world, and not of the renovation of the moral world. God forgive these men's perverting and bold practising upon the scriptures. Can any sensible man persuade himself, that when St. Paul says, that "all things were created by Christ in heaven and earth, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers," that the apostles should mean no more than the moral renovation of the world below by the preaching of the gospel, in which the angels were not concerned? For though Christ was an head of confirmation to them, yet they had no need of a renovation, or being made new, having always kept their first station.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence;

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, described what Christ is in himself, comes next to describe him, with relation to his church; showing, 1. That he is her Head, he is the Head of the body, the church; as the head and the members make one body, so Christ and his people constitute one church; he is of the same nature (as man) with his church, he poureth forth the same Spirit upon his church, he is both an Head of authority, and an head of influence to his church; he sympathizes with her in all her sufferings on earth, and longs for the full fruition and final enjoyment of her in heaven. 2. He is the beginning of the christian church, the root, the fountain, and foundation of it, the active beginning, or the first principle and author of it, and of all those influences of grace and spiritual life which do animate and enliven it. 3. He is called the first-born from

the dead. 1. Because he was the first that arose to an immortal life, never to die more; all others that were raised to life, besides him, died again, but death had no more dominion over him. Again, 2. Because he was the principal and efficient cause of their resurrection; all that were raised before him, were raised by him, by a power derived from him: and, 3. Because he is the pattern and exemplary cause of the resurrection; his members are not only raised by him, but like unto him. Phil. iii. 21. "Fashioned like unto his glorious body." Was his body raised substantially the same? So shall ours be. Was his body wonderfully improved by the resurrection? So shall ours, in point of purity and spirituality, in point of power and activity, in point of immortality and incorruptibility. Was his body raised to be eternally glorified? So shall ours. How fitly then is our Lord here called the "first-born from the dead?" Even herein he had "the pre-eminence."

19 For it pleased *the Father*, that in him should all fulness dwell;

Still our apostle proceeds in describing the person of our Redeemer, and the admirable qualifications found in him for the work and service of our redemption; he declares here, that there was a perfect and complete fulness of all divine graces and excellencies dwelling in the Mediator, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father; there is in him a fulness of merit for our justification, a fulness of grace for our sanctification, a fulness of wisdom for our direction, a fulness of power for our preservation, a fulness of mercy, pity and compassion, to relieve and succour us in all our distresses. And this fulness which is in Christ, is an original and independent fulness, and it is an infinite and inexhaustible fulness; it is a complete and comprehensive fulness, and it is a ministerial fulness; the fulness that is in him of grace and comfort, is on purpose to communicate unto us, to be dispersed and given forth to all his members. No sooner had our apostle said, that he is the "Head of the body, the church;" but he instantly subjoins, that "it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," namely, for his church's benefit and advantage. Learn hence, That for any one to be, or to pretend to be the church's head, it is necessary that he be endowed with all the fulness of the Godhead, and of all ministerial graces; and therefore it is the highest degree of blasphemy in the Pope, a vain sinful man, to assume this title to himself, being destitute of this divine fulness; full indeed he is, but full of pride, full of sin, full of himself; and, without repentance for this and his other blasphemies, will at length, be full of wrath.

20 And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

Here one special reason is assigned why all fulness dwelt in our Lord the Redeemer, namely, to fit him for the great work and office of a Mediator or Reconciler, that so he might happily make up that breach which sin had made between God, and the world, having removed the enmity which was betwixt them by his death and sufferings, called here the "blood of his cross," that is, the blood which he freely and voluntarily shed upon the cross. Note here, 1. That

God and man were once friends, though soon by sin made enemies; *reconciliation* doth suppose an antecedent friendship. Note, 2. That though man was first in the breach, yet God was first in the offer of reconciliation; "It pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself." Note, 3. That as there was no possibility of ever making up this breach, but by a Mediator; so no person in heaven or earth was or could be found, in all things fitted or furnished for the work of a Mediator, but only Christ. "By him to reconcile all things to himself." Note, 4. The universality of the subject reconciled, "all things both in heaven and in earth;" By "things in heaven," 1. Some understand the blessed angels; but there being no breach between God and them, Christ was not the author of reconciliation, though he was an head of confirmation to them. Others understand it of a reconciliation between the angels and man, thus: whilst man continued in his obedience to God, angels and men were in a state of perfect friendship one with another; but when man rebelled against God, the angel became averse to man for that rebellion; but God being reconciled to man by the death of his Son, the angels are become friends and ministering spirits to us, and both they and we constitute one church under Christ the head thereof; thus Christ reconciled all things in heaven and earth, that is, the angels in heaven he has reconciled to man on earth. 2. Others, by "things in heaven," do not only understand the angels, but the saints departed; the patriarchs, prophets, and all the faithful now in heaven or here on earth, they were all reconciled, in order to their being saved; intimating, that the blood of Christ did expiate the guilt of those persons who lived before him, as well as of those that died after him: he reconciled all things in heaven and earth, capable of reconciliation, appointed to it, and that stood in need of it. Note, lastly, The instrumental means by which all this was effected, namely, by "the blood of the cross;" to make up the breach betwixt God and the fallen creature, cost the Mediator no less than his precious blood. Lord! Who can look upon sin as any other than an infinite and immense evil, which cost the Son of God his life to expiate the guilt of it! How can a little sin be committed against a great God?

21 And you, that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight;

St. Paul having treated of Christ's work of reconciliation in general, in the preceding verse, in this he applies it to the Colossians in particular: where, 1. He describes to them the miserable state and deplorable condition they were in before they were converted to the christian faith; they were strangers, nay, enemies unto God: "Enemies in their minds," which implies a deep rooted enmity, advancing so high as to hate God, not as a Creator, but as a lawgiver: not as a Benefactor, but as a judge and revenger of sin. O deplorable degradation, to be at enmity in our minds against him who is the author of our being, and the fountain of our happiness! Observe, 2. The gracious change wrought in their condition by virtue of Christ's mediation, "you hath he reconciled;" not only laid down his life to purchase reconciliation

for them, but by the ministry of his word, accompanied with the operation of his Holy Spirit, working upon their hearts; even then when they had a strong aversion from God to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with him: "You, who were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, now hath he reconciled." Observe, 3. The way and means by which Christ effected this work of reconciliation for them and us, namely, by taking upon him a true body, subject to fleshly infirmities, though without sin; and in that body suffering death for us, that we might be presented at the last day perfectly holy unto God. In order to our reconciliation with God, it pleased Christ, the second Person in the ever-glorious Trinity, to assume a body of flesh, that he might be of the same nature with us, and in that body of flesh to die for sin; that the same nature which had sinned, might give satisfaction for sin. And further, to make us completely happy, he has not only taken away the legal enmity on God's part, but the natural enmity on our part; for he sanctifies those whom he reconciles initially in this life, but perfectly and completely in the next, where and when they shall be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable, to his heavenly Father.

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister:

Here our apostle declares to the Colossians, how they may know whether they were indeed of the number of those who were actually reconciled to God by the blood of his Son, namely, if they persevered in the faith, and continued grounded fast in their holy religion; "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled; implying, that is, the great duty of christians, who have sat under the preaching of the gospel, to be well settled in the doctrine of faith, which they have heard and received; and that the best way to be settled, is to be well grounded; if we are not settled in religion, we can never grow in religion; an ungrounded christian can never be a growing christian; and if we are not well grounded in the faith, we can never suffer for the faith; for such as are *sceptics* in religion, will never prove martyrs for the sake of religion. Observe, 2. The universality of that tender, which by the preaching of the gospel is made unto all sorts of sinners, of reconciliation with God, and acceptance through Christ; *which gospel was preached to every creature under heaven*; that is to lost mankind, to some of all sorts; not Judea only, but amongst the Gentiles also; to every human creature, no person, no nation being refused or passed by; plainly intimating, that an indefinite and universal tender of reconciliation with God and salvation by Jesus Christ, is made unto all persons, by the preaching of the gospel. Happy they, whose hearts are inclined and disposed to accept of, and comply with them, who in the day of the gospel's visitation, do know the things of their peace.

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind

of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church.

As if the apostle had said, "I am not only contented with, but I greatly rejoice in, my sufferings for you converted Gentiles, and help, as much in me lies, to fill up some part of that which is, by God's decree, behind, unfulfilled of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Note here, 1. That Almighty God has decreed such a measure of sufferings to his church, whereof Christ, as the head, underwent a considerable part and proportion, when he was here upon earth, in his poverty, in his labors, in his sufferings, both in life, and at his death. Note, 2. That there is yet a remainder of sufferings, assigned over by Christ unto his members, which must be filled up by them, whereof St. Paul had a great share, and every believer must have some share; for, as long as Christ has a member upon the earth, there will be something for that member to suffer. Note, 3. That those sufferings which Christ's members suffer, are the sufferings of Christ; the sufferings of the members are the sufferings of the Head, being undergone for the sake of the Head. Christ, in his natural body, considered, can suffer no more; but in his mystical body, in his members, he daily suffers, and will suffer, till the measure of sufferings is filled up which God hath determined. *Quest.* But why are Christ's sufferings in and by his members thus to be prolonged, yea, perpetuated? *Ans.* Not by way of satisfaction for sin, not in order to reconciliation with God, but in order to the conversion of the world, for example to others, for perfecting of their own graces, and for increasing of their glory.

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 *Even* the mystery, which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Our apostle in these words, seems to assign a reason why he underwent the sufferings mentioned in the former verse so cheerfully, as even to rejoice in them; namely, because he was a minister of the church, by the special dispensation of God, to preach the mysteries of the gospel to the Gentile world. Learn thence, That such as are eminent in the church, and, as ministers of the gospel, do lay out themselves more abundantly in the church's service, they must expect to meet with a measure, and a full measure of sufferings beyond others. There are no such enemies to the devil's kingdom, as the zealous and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; therefore he will be sure to revenge the ruins of his own kingdom. Observe, farther, What it was that St Paul was appointed by God to preach to the Gentiles, namely, that great mystery of their vocation and calling; this he

calls here a mystery, a rich mystery, a glorious mystery, a mystery hid from ages but now made manifest. Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, as a Redeemer, was long hid from the knowledge of the Gentiles; and that at last they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, and the participation of gospel privileges was a great mystery awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy with all thankfulness to be acknowledged, "to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles—which is Christ, in you, the hope of glory," which gospel, preached amongst you, and received and entertained by you, is an earnest and ground of your hope of glory. Note here, 1. That Christ is in, and among believers; he is among them by the preaching of the gospel, he is in them by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit. Note, 2. That all true believers, whilst here on earth, have an hope of glory. Note, 3. That Christ's indwelling presence in the souls of believers by his Holy Spirit, is an earnest of that glory, and an evident demonstration of their hope of it: believers have in them a glorious hope, they have before them a glory hoped for; Christ is the ground of both, by him we obtain the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls.

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;

29 Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Observe here, 1. What was the principal subject of the apostle's preaching, it was Christ; *whom we preach*; Christ was the matter of his preaching, and the great end of his preaching. Observe, 2. The manner of St. Paul's preaching; it was by informing the understanding and judgment, by directing the practice, *warning* men of the evil of sin, and of the danger of continuing in it. Observe, 3. The end of his preaching, it was to present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus; that is, to render them complete both in knowledge and obedience. Observe, 4. The indefatigable pains and diligence used by the apostle in that work of preaching, intimated in the words *laboring and striving*, "whereunto I also labor, striving." Observe, 5. The gracious help and blessed success which he had in his preaching, humbly and thankfully acknowledged, and ascribed unto God, "according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." From the whole learn, 1. What was the sum of St. Paul's preaching, and ought to be of ours also, to bring men to repentance and faith in Christ, to advance them towards a perfection in knowledge and obedience, by informing their judgments, and directing their practice. Learn, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do judge no labor and pains too great; no strivings or sufferings too much, no contending with the errors and sins of men sufficient, in order to the bringing of them unto God by conversion and repentance. Learn, 3. That such ministers as thus indefatigably labor and strive for the good of souls, shall not labor and strive alone, they shall be accompanied with divine assistance: Christ will strive with them, and work with them: "Striving according to his working." 4. That when ministers have met

with success in their striving, by Christ's working with them, they must ascribe nothing of praise to themselves, to their own piety, pains, or pains, but ascribe all to him that striveth by them, "and worketh in them mightily."

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle having in the former chapter, declared that the doctrine he preached to the Colossians by Epaphras, was according to truth, and exhorted them to continue grounded and settled in the same; in this chapter he cautions and warns them against all such corrupt doctrines, as any sort of false teachers might be ready to obtrude upon them; whether they were the Gentile philosophers, who attempted to draw them to the worshipping of angels; or the judaizing doctors, whose endeavour it was to bring them under the yoke of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, long since abolished by the death of Christ: to fortify the Colossians against both, is the design of this chapter, in which our apostle thus bespeaks them:

FOR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Observe here, 1. The holy agony which our apostle was in, and the mighty conflict he had with himself, upon the account of the Colossians; "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you; namely, by prayer, care, study, and endeavour to do you good: here we see how passionately good men long for the good of those whom they never saw; as members of the catholic church, they wish well to the whole, and to every part. Observe, 2. What was the ground and occasion of St. Paul's inexpressible agony and concern of spirit, for and on behalf of these Colossians; namely this, there was a number of men risen up who began very early to corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel and the christian religion: a sort they were, partly of judaizing, and partly paganizing christians; the former joined the Jewish ceremonies, the latter the Gentiles' impurities, even in worship with the christian religion. Now the urgency of this case put the solicitous and concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words here intimate; "I would ye knew what a conflict I have for you and your neighbours of Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." The men of the world little understand, and less consider, what burden of solicitous care lies upon ministers of Christ, for and on behalf of the whole church of Christ in general, which is continually in danger of being corrupted by false teachers who every where lie in wait to deceive.

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ:

Our apostle having discovered, in the former verse, that inward anxiety of mind which he labored under, on the behalf of these Colossians, doth, in these words, propose an expedient how the threatening danger might be averted, namely, by mutual love one to another, and by a clear and efficacious faith of the gospel; by these he reckons they would be so closely compacted together, as that no subtlety nor violence could endanger them: if, by faith, they did cleave close to God and Christ, and by love keep close to one another, he firmly believed they would give no enemies an opportunity, either to be the successful authors, or the delighted spectators of their ruin. Learn hence, That the maintaining of sincere love amongst christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of certainty and efficacy, in reference to the substantial of christianity, are the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against the fatal danger of a ruinous apostacy; "That their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, &c."

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

That is, in Jesus Christ, and in his gospel, "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," laid up as a store-house, and from thence only are they to be expected and derived. The knowledge of Christ and his gospel is an extensive and comprehensive knowledge, a rich and enriching knowledge; the chiefest gain is loss, and the richest treasure is dung, when Christ's riches are displayed; and after all that we have or can attain unto, of the knowledge of Christ, his work is unsearchable, no finite understanding can reach the depth thereof; for in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in Spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Note here, How exceedingly desirous the apostle was, that the Colossians might continue sound in the christian faith, and be preserved out of the hands of the false teachers, who by false arguments, and ensnaring persuasions sought to beguile them, in matters of religion: we are in greater danger from the subtle seducer, than we are from the fiery persecutor; sophistical arguments, and insinuating persuasions, captivate those persons whom violence could never have brought over to their party; therefore is our apostle so earnest with the Colossians, that none should "beguile them with enticing words." Note farther, How our apostle gives another reason of this his solicitous care for them, namely, his fervent affection towards them, notwithstanding his great distance from them, for though not in body, yet in mind he was present with them, and having received from Epaphras an account of the good order and government of their church, and of the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, the notices thereof were matter of exceeding joy and rejoicing to him; "Though absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying, &c." Learn, hence, That a church's steadfastness

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in the faith of Christ, and unity amongst themselves in gospel order, doth render a church a joyful object to all beholders, and particularly to the ministers and ambassadors of Christ, who greatly rejoice therein.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;

7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

That is, "As you have received the doctrine of Christ Jesus the Lord, by the preaching of Epaphras, and therein have embraced Christ by faith, so do you constantly adhere to that doctrine, conforming your lives thereunto; and seeing you are thus implanted into Christ, be like trees, well and deeply rooted in him, or like a house, firmly built upon him as the only sure and abiding foundation." Learn, That such as have received the grace of God in truth, ought to labor after stability in grace, and establishment in the true religion, that they may stand like a rock, immoveable in assaults, and unshaken amidst all the batteries that may be made upon their faith by heretics and seducers.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;

Our apostle comes now in a particular and special manner to warn the Colossians, that they beware of all the enemies of christianity, whether pagan or Jewish, for christianity was opposed by both; the heathen philosophers and wise men did amuse the christians with their vain speculations; the Jewish teachers were for imposing upon them the Levitical rites, which he calls *rudiments* or elements fitted for the infancy of the church; but these things were not now after Christ, that is, not according to the doctrine and mind of Christ. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, &c. Where note, That it is not philosophy, as such, which St. Paul warns them against; for true and sound philosophy is the improver of our reason, the guide of our faculties, and teaches us the true knowledge of God, and ourselves, and is no hindrance, but a great help to religion; but it was the philosophy of the Greeks at that day which is here condemned, because it was vain and empty, fallacious and deceitful. It was vain because it conducted nothing to true piety, and making them better; it was deceitful, because it hazarded their souls, and robbed them of happiness. Note farther, that the Mosaic rites and legal ceremonies, as they were prescribed by God, and adapted to the infant state of the Jewish church, had a goodness, yea, an excellency in them; but the observation of them, since the coming of Christ, is sinful, being an implicit denial, that he is come in the flesh; accordingly, he warns them to beware of the philosophy of the Greeks, and the ceremonial rites of the Jews; neither of which, he tells them, were after Christ, that is, not according to the institution or injunction of Christ, but did draw away the heart from him, therefore, they were both unwarrantable and unsafe.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Here St. Paul gives a reason of the foregoing caution against philosophy; for in him, that is, in Christ, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" as if he had said, "Let no man impose upon you by a lame and imperfect philosophy, there is no need of that, for now there is introduced an absolute and complete doctrine, namely, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has the fulness of all divine wisdom in it, and the 'fulness of the Godhead,' dwelling bodily in himself, that is, personally and substantially." Where note, That the apostle says not, that the Godhead is assistant to Christ, but, that he resideth or dwelleth in him; as the Deity dwelt in the ark symbolically, so it dwelt in Christ bodily. Note farther, That Christ is not here said to be filled with the fulness of God, as the church is said to be, Eph. i. 23. in regard of the gifts and graces which she had received from him: but the whole fulness of the Godhead is here said to reside in him, which can argue him to be no less than really and truly God, his complete essence dwelleth in him. Well might the apostle therefore add, ver. 10. "Ye are complete in him," wanting no requisite to salvation; ye need not go to the philosophers for knowledge, for in Christ you have complete wisdom; he is above all pagan philosophers and Jewish rabbies; nay, he is the 'Head of all principalities and powers,' that is, above the highest angel in heaven. Here observe, That it was the opinion of the paganish, as it is now of the popish part of mankind, That Almighty God was too high to be immediately approached, and therefore, they applied themselves to angels as mediators betwixt God and them; but the apostle acquaints them, that the angel-mediatorship is vain, since Christ is also their Head and Lord.

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

The apostle had asserted before, that we are complete in Christ; He proves it now thus; we want not circumcision; Why? Because we have in Christ the thing signified by circumcision, namely, the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which consists in putting off, by the power of Christ's Spirit, the body of natural corruption; which done, there was no need of the outward circumcision made with hands, or the cutting off the flesh of the foreskin. Observe, Original corruption is a body, or, as a body to us, it cleaves as close to the soul as the flesh to the bones. This body, with all its members, we must be cutting daily by spiritual circumcision, or a real mortification; and, where that is done, God is well pleased: he regards not that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, which is made with hands, but that which is inward, the circumcision of the heart, and of the spirit, whose praise is not of man, but of God.

12 Buried with him in baptism, where-

in also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Our apostle here compares christian baptism with the Jewish circumcision, and shows, that the signification and spiritual intention of both was one and the same, obliging all persons who took the outward sign upon them to put off the old man, and put on the new; to die unto sin, and live unto God. Accordingly, the ancients made use of divers ceremonies in baptizing adult and grown persons, thereby to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; immersion, or putting the person three times under water, either as our Saviour was under the earth three days, or in allusion to the three persons in the Trinity, in whose name we are baptized; and likewise emersion, their coming up out of the water, resembling our Lord's arising out of his grave. Note here, 1. That baptism under the New Testament, succeeds circumcision under the Old, and is a rite of initiation to christians; as circumcision was to the Jews; for the apostle here proves, that by virtue of our spiritual circumcision in baptism, we have no need of the outward circumcision of the flesh. Note, 2. That baptism is undoubtedly Christ's ordinance for infants of believing christians, as circumcision was of old for the infants of believing Jews: for if under the gospel, infants be not received, by some federal rite, into covenant with God, they are in a worse condition than children under the law; and the apostle could not truly have said, we "are complete in Christ," that is, as complete without circumcision, as ever the Jewish church was with it, if we had not an ordinance, to wit, baptism, as good as their abrogated ordinance of circumcision. And the Jews would certainly have objected it to the reproach of christianity, had not the christians had a rite of initiation for their children, as they had of circumcision, which sealed the covenant to themselves, and their little ones, and was the door, by which all persons entered into the Jewish church. Note, 3. The spiritual fruits and effects of baptism, namely, mortification in sin, vivification in grace, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, apprehended by such a faith as is of the operation of God, that is, produced by the energy of the gospel, and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Learn hence, That neither sacraments, nor the death or the resurrection of Christ, in themselves, will avail to the mortification of sin, and the quickening of grace, if Christ himself be not applied to by such a faith, as is of the special operation of God, the faith of his working, and of his approving: this alone will effectually enable us to die unto sin and live unto God.

13 And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

14 Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross:

15 And having spoiled principalities,

and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Still our apostle proceeds in proving, that we are complete in Christ, and that the Colossians had no need of circumcision in the flesh, having all in Christ that was necessary for justification as well as sanctification. To satisfy them herein, observe, 1. He acquaints them with their deplorable condition by nature, "you being dead in your sins," without any hope of spiritual life, and by reason of "uncircumcision of your flesh," aliens from the church of God (and strangers to all the promises made unto it) hath he quickened and pardoned; having freely forgiven you "all your trespasses." O blessed privilege of justification, to have sin forgiven, trespasses universally forgiven, all trespasses freely forgiven! Observe, 2. What it cost Christ, to purchase pardon for us, to discharge us from our obligation to wrath, and our obnoxiousness to the curse and condemnation of the law; no less than his precious life laid down upon the cross, "blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances against us, and contrary to us, &c." An allusion to a practice amongst men who cancel bills and bonds, and all obligations wherein they stood bound, when once the debt is satisfied. Now says the apostle, your debt of sin is paid to the justice of God, by the death of Christ; and seeing the obligation is cancelled, it would be madness and impiety to renew it again, as those do, who plead for circumcision, and practise the legal ceremonies. Note here, There was an obligation upon every man to undergo the curse of the law; for violating the commands of the law, there was "an hand-writing against us." The obligation must be cancelled, before the condemning power of the law can be abolished, and sin pardoned: none but Christ could cancel this obligation; and not be either without paying the full sum payable from us: Christ when hanging on the cross, did "nail this hand-writing" to his cross, which shall never be produced in judgment against the penitent believer; but this obligation remains upon the file uncanceled, with respect to all sinners who live and die in their sins, and they shall always lie in prison, ever satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy this obligation. Observe, 3. That Christ hath not only by his death cancelled this hand writing, and nailed it to his cross, but has vanquished and triumphed over all our spiritual enemies; satan, and all the powers of hell, are led as so many pinioned captives before the triumphant chariot of his cross, making them a spectacle of scorn and shame in the eyes of God, angels and men; ¶ having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, &c." Note here, 1. Christ's bloody cross was a chariot of triumph unto him. Lord! whilst thou wert bleeding and racking upon the gibbet for us, thou wert then rejoicing and triumphing for the benefits redounding to us. Note, 2. That satan, that great conqueror, was conquered by Christ, and led in triumph before the chariot of the cross. O satan, thou wert never thus baffled, befooled, and disappointed before! When thou and thy agents wert spoiling Christ, even then was he spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them, when they were insulting over him: the serpent now bruised our Lord's heel, but had his own head and power for ever broken; "triumphing over them in it," that is, in and by his cross.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in

meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbath-days.

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Here we have an inference or conclusion drawn by our apostle from the foregoing argument, that seeing the ceremonial law was now abolished, therefore none should take upon them to judge or condemn another for not observing any of the legal ceremonies, either those that related to meats, that is, the difference to be observed in meats, or the other relating to the difference to be observed in days. Here note, That the days observed amongst the Jews, were of three sorts: *Anniversary*, which returned every year, called here an *holy-day*; *Lunary*, which returned every month, the first day of every new moon; *Weekly*, which returned every week, and on the seventh day of every week: all which are abrogated, even the Jewish seventh day sabbath; and the *Lord's day*, or the christian's first-day sabbath, substituted in its place, 1. Cor. xvi. 2. Observe here, 1. That there is both a sinful and a lawful abstinence from meats; that abstinence is sinful, when men abstain from some meats, upon pretence of holiness and conscience, as if some meats were unclean, or less holy in their own natures than others, 1. Tim. iv. 4 or as if simple abstinence at any time were a thing acceptable to God in itself, without respect had to the end for which it is sometimes required. But there is a three-fold abstinence from meats, which is lawful; *Political*, enjoined by the magistrate for civil ends; *Medicinal*, prescribed by the physician for health's preservation; *Ecclesiastical*, when God by his providence, and the voice of his church calls his people to fasting. Observe, 2. The reason alledged by the apostle, why christians should not judge one another, with respect to meats and drinks, times and seasons, namely, because those legal ceremonies were but dark shadows of things to come; but the body and substance, represented by those shadows, is *Christ come in the flesh*: and consequently, to observe the ceremonies, and regard these shadows under the gospel, is in effect to say, that Christ the body is not yet come. Here note, 1. The title given to the ceremonial worship, it is styled a *shadow*, because it was a dark and imperfect representation of the truth: what is a shadow, but the coming of a thick body between us and the sun? The legal ceremonies were interposed between Christ the true light and us, and so cast a shadow of him. Note, 2. The title given to Christ with respect to the shadows of the ceremonial law, he is the body and the substance of them; now as the shadow vanishes when the substance is come, so these ceremonial ordinances were to cease upon the coming of Christ; and to observe them now, under the gospel, is in effect to say, that Christ is not yet come in the flesh. Note, 3. That the Jewish sabbath was a ceremonial ordinance, and part of that hand-writing of ordinances which was to be blotted out by Christ; and consequently the christian is not obliged to observe it. As the distinctions of meats and drinks, and the observation of the new moons, were confessedly ceremonial; so was also the Jewish sabbath, which with the rest was equally cancelled by Christ, as a part of the hand-writing of ordinances; so that to observe the Jewish sabbath, or to condemn the christian for not observing it, is as much a denial

that Christ is come in the flesh, as to observe circumcision, or any other part of the ceremonial law.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind:

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Our apostle having warned the Colossians against the errors of the Judaizing teachers, comes next to warn them against the practice of the paganizing christians, who were directed by their guides to worship the angels, covering their error with a plausible show of humility, pretending it was presumptuous to go to God immediately, without the mediation of those excellent creatures; but this the apostle tells them was a bold *intruding into things* they knew nothing of, God having neither revealed nor taught any such thing; and urged, that they were *vainly puffed up* with the foolish imaginations of their own *fleshly minds*. Next he shows, that these angel-worshippers do not acknowledge Christ for the head of the church, while they apply themselves to angels as mediators; whereas he alone discharges the office of the Head, completely giving life and growth to his whole church, and to every member thereof; which members being furnished with spiritual life from him, and knit to him, and one another by the joints and bands of charity and other graces, they grow and increase with such an increase of holiness as is from God, and tends to his glory. Note here, 1. That the nature of man is prone, extremely prone, to idolatry and false worship. 2. That it is as really idolatry to worship an angel, as it is to worship a worm; for divine worship is only due to a divine person. Note, 3. That it is a renouncing of Christ, to make use of angels, or any other Mediators, besides Christ, unto the Father, *not holding the Head*. It was a notion, that early and indeed universally possessed the minds of mankind. God was not to be immediately approached to by sinful men; but that their prayers were to be presented by certain mediators and intercessors, who were to procure for them the favor of God, and the acceptance of their prayers. Hence they worshipped angels and the souls departed of their heroes, whom they canonized, and translated into the number of their inferior gods, by whom they addressed their supplications to their superior gods. With this notion almighty God was pleased to comply so far, as under the Jewish institution to appoint Moses a Mediator betwixt him and them; and now under the christian dispensation to appoint Jesus Christ to be the only Mediator betwixt God and man. Note, 4. That it is usual for idolaters and false worshippers, to cover themselves with a more than ordinary show of humility; *let none beguile you in a voluntary humility*. True it is, that all duties of worship ought to be *voluntary*, as voluntary is opposed to constrained;

but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to instituted or appointed: God doth no more approve of that worship we give him according to our will, than he doth approve of our neglect of that which is according to his own will. But man, vain man, likes any way of worshipping God which is of his own framing, much better than that which is of God's own appointing.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances;

21 Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men;

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

Our apostle being now in the close of this chapter, returns to expostulate, and argues the case with those who were willing to subject themselves to the observation of the old Jewish rites and ceremonies. He argues thus: "If, says he, you profess yourselves in your baptism to be spiritually dead with Christ, and to be freed by his death from the Levitical ordinances, why are ye subject to those ordinances? Such are *touch not, taste not, handle not*; touch not any unclean thing, taste not any forbidden meat, handle not any consecrated vessel; all which observances were to perish necessarily with the very using; and whereas they were set off with a specious show of wisdom, as if they were voluntary services and free-will offerings to God, he acknowledges, that they had indeed a show of wisdom, a show of humility, and a show of mortification and austerity to the body, and not seeming to give any honor to the satisfying of the flesh; but all this had nothing of spiritual devotion and piety in it." Learn hence, 1. That such as do by baptism profess themselves to be *dead with Christ* in the ceremonial law, may certainly conclude that the Jewish ceremonies have no more any power over them, or that they ought to yield themselves to the observation of them: "If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances?" Learn, 2. That though God approve and accepteth willing worship, yet not will-worship; what fair show soever it may seem to have, either of wisdom, humility, or mortification; whatever is the product of our fancies, is a very fornication in religion, and an abomination in the sight of God, how pleasing soever it may be in the sight of men; and yet men are the most forward to that service of God which is of man's finding out and setting up; man likes it better to worship a god of his own making, than to worship the God that made him; and likes any way of worshipping God which is of his own framing, more than that which is of God's appointing. Ah! Wretched heart of man, which, whilst it seems very zealous to worship and honor God, hath not zeal to do it in any other way than in that which reflects the highest dishonor upon him.

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle in this epistle (as his manner is in all the rest) having laid the doctrine of the gospel for a foundation, and rectified some errors, both in doctrine and practice, amongst the Colossians; he comes now to the practical part of this epistle, exhorting them to a conversation in all things answerable to the doctrine of Christ; and the first duty he excites them to the practice of, is that of an heavenly conversation, expressed by seeking of, and setting their affections upon things above, and not on things below.

IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty to which we are exhorted; this is expressed both affirmatively and negatively; affirmatively, seek the things above, and set your affections on them; negatively, not on the things here on earth; it being impossible to seek and set our affections upon both in an intense degree. *Quest.* But what is it to seek those things that are above, and to set our affections upon them? *Ans.* In these two words, four things are comprehended; 1. An act of our understanding, that we know the worth of these things. 2. An act of the will, to choose these things, and with the ardor and vehemency of our affections to love them. 3. An act of industry and endeavour in the pursuit of these things, if by any means we may attain them. Our affections are so many springs of motion to set our endeavours on work for the obtaining of what we love and desire. 4. It implies a clear preference of the things above to things below, when they come in competition; set your affections more on things above than on the things below, and show it by your readiness to part with these things. Observe, 2. What is the object of this act, or what is it that we are to seek and set our affections upon, namely, the "things which are above;" God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with the blessed state and condition of heaven, and the happiness above; as also those dispositions and qualifications which are requisite for the obtaining of this happiness, and bringing us to the fruition of it; all these are comprehended in the latitude of the object, "the things which are above." Observe, 3. The arguments which our apostle uses to excite us to this duty: 1. "If ye be risen with Christ," that is, if ye believe that Christ is risen, and if ye will bear a conformity and resemblance to him in his resurrection, and be made partakers of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is not only a pattern, but a principle; it has a power and efficacy in it to raise us up to a spiritual life; "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." 2. A second argument is drawn from Christ's exaltation in heaven: he "sitteth on the right hand of God;" which words declare the exaltation of his human nature, and his being advanced to be the supreme King and Governor of his church. Now the force of this argument lies in the relation that is between the Head and the members, between Christ and christians; as the Head has an influence upon the mem-

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bers, so the members have an affection for the Head, which makes them aspire heavenwards, where the Head is; because their glorified Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God, by the power of his Spirit, draws out their affections towards him: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things above." As if St. Paul had said, "Is Christ our Head risen, and ascended into heaven? Let us in our hearts and affections follow him thither, and patiently wait till he receive our souls, and raise our bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be for ever with the Lord."

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Here we have a fresh argument to enforce the foregoing exhortation, seek the things above, *for ye are dead*, that is, dead to sin, dead to the world, therefore be not over eager in the pursuit of the things below. How affrighting a sight would it be, to see a dead man rise out of his grave, and converse with the world, and follow the things here below! As affecting is it to see christians, who by baptismal profession do own themselves to be dead to the world, yet buried in the world; and instead of setting their affections on things above, pursuing with the full bent of their desires, the things below. *Ye are dead*, it follows, *your life is hid with Christ in God: Your life*, that is, your spiritual life of grace, and your eternal life of glory, they are both hid with Christ, now with God in heaven. Hid in Christ, 1. As the effect is in the cause, as the life of the branches is hid in the root, so is the life of a christian hid in Christ; he is our root. Again, *hid in Christ*, that is, 2. Deposited and laid up with Christ, committed to his care and custody, securely put into his hands. 3. *Hid with Christ*, that is, dispensed by him, and derived from him at his pleasure; of his fulness we receive, when and in what measure he pleaseth. Note here, 1. Our life of grace only deserves the name of life; our natural life, short and uncertain in itself, and common to us with the brutes, deserves not comparatively, the name of life. Note, 2. That Christ is the believer's life, he is both the author and efficient cause of it, the meritorious cause of it, and the exemplary cause and pattern of it. Note, 3. That the christian's life is *hid with Christ*. This phrase imports, 1. Security and safety: what is hidden in Christ, and with him, must be safe, and out of the reach of danger; grace is incorruptible seed, that shall never die: the world, satan and sin, may assault, but shall not overcome; neither lust within, nor the devil, nor the world, shall be able to vanquish that life which is hid in Christ. 2. It imports obscurity; what is hidden, is concealed: the life of grace is totally hidden from the wicked, and hid, in some sort, from the believer himself, under spiritual desertion, under the winnowings of temptation, under the prevalency of corruption; much more is the life of glory hidden, it doth not yet appear; we can no more conceive of it by all we have heard, than we can conceive what the sun is by seeing of a glow-worm. 3. Our life being *hid with Christ*, it imports plenty and abundance: "I am come, that ye may have life more abundantly," John x. 10.

4 When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

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That is, "When Christ, who is the author, and purchaser, and preserver of our life, shall appear to judge the world at the great day, then shall all believers, who have received spiritual life from him, be sharers in glory with him. Here note, 1. That Jesus Christ, by whom believers live a life of grace, and from whom they expect a life of glory, shall certainly appear, yea, and have a very glorious appearing; he shall be glorious in his person, glorious in his attendants, glorious in his authority, &c. Note, 2. That when Christ appears in glory to judge the world, then it is that all believers shall enjoy a full glorification with him. Note, 3. That the faith of approaching glory, at Christ's second appearance, is a strong argument to take off our "affections from things below, and place them on things above." St. Paul's argument is, to press the Colossians to set their affections on things above," because Christ is above, and, when he appears, they shall "appear with him in glory."

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Note here, 1. That although the apostle told them in the third verse, that they were dead to sin, yet here, in the fifth verse, he bids them mortify sin; intimating, that the work of mortification, at the best, is but imperfect, and must be carried on daily and progressively; they were mortified but in part; the old man has a strong heart, and is a long time a dying, after it has received its deadly wound: sin lives a dying life, and dies a lingering death; "Mortify therefore, &c." Note, 2. What it is they are called upon to mortify, "their members upon earth;" Where, by *members* we are to understand all the lusts and corruptions of our hearts and natures, all the relics and remains of sin unsubdued and unpurged out of the soul; he instances in "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections and desires, and covetousness," which loveth the world above God, and is therefore no better than idolatry." But why are these called members, and members upon earth? *Ans.* They are called members, in allusion to what St. Paul had called sin before, chap. ii. ver. 11. namely, *a body of sin*, therefore he calls particular lusts members of that body; and also because they require and call for the members of the body, as instruments to bring them into act; likewise, because these lusts are naturally as dear to men as their bodily members, they can as soon part with a right hand or a right eye, as with a bosom and beloved lust; they are also called members upon the earth, because they are conversant about earthly things, because they will cleave to us as long as we live upon earth; and to intimate, that none of these must be carried to heaven with us, but be mortified on the earth. But what is it to mortify these members? *Ans.* To mortify sin, is to deny our consent to the solicitations of sin, to suppress the first motions of sin, to enervate the power and activity of sin. Learn hence, 1. That in the holiest and best of God's children and servants, there are relics and remains of sin, to be daily mortified, and gradually subdued. Learn, 2. That after God has brought a person into a state of grace, it is his duty, and ought to be his endeavour, daily to mortify sin, and all the remains of unsubdued corruption. A

caution, take heed of concluding sin is mortified, because it is restrained, because the acts of sin are intermitted, because some particular sins are subdued: is all sin hated of thee, loathed and left by thee? It is more to loath a sin, than it is to leave a sin? sin may be left, and yet be loved; but no man can loath a sin, and love it at the same time. Learn, 3. That covetousness is a sin, which, above others, a christian should set himself against, and endeavour to mortify and subdue, it having a sort of idolatry in it, drawing our love, our trust, our fear, our joy, from God, and placing the supremacy of our affections in and upon the creatures. True the covetous man does not believe his money to be God; but by his inordinate loving of it, and fiducial trusting in it, he is as truly guilty of idolatry, as if he bowed his knee unto it: for God more regards the internal acts of the mind, than he doth the external acts of the body. In like manner, the papists do not believe their saints and angels to be gods; but by praying to them, and trusting in them for relief and help, they give them the inward worship of the soul, and consequently they are as guilty of idolatry as if they did believe them to be God.

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Here our apostle backs his exhortation to mortify sin, with strong arguments and motives; the first is taken from the wrath of God which, in its dismal effects, falls upon those who continue in, and under the power of those sins: "For which things' sake, that is, for the committing of which things, and for continuing impenitent of the commission of them. the wrath of God cometh upon them." Here note, 1. God's wrath is the due desert of man's sin; yet it is not so much sin as obduration, and impenitency in sin, that draws down wrath. Note, 2. That believers themselves do stand in need of arguments drawn from the wrath of God, to make them afraid of sin, and to excite them to mortify and subdue it; for here the apostle propounded the terrors of divine wrath to these believing Colossians. The second argument is taken from their former continuance, yea, long continuance in these sins; "in which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them;" that is, in the forementioned sins ye yourselves also walked before your conversion, *when ye lived in them*, and took delight in the practice of them. Learn hence, That no argument will prevail more with a christian to follow on the work of mortification closely for time to come, than the remembrance of his long continuance in sin in time past; "in which sins ye walked some time, when ye lived in them; Now "mortify therefore, &c."

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.

In the foregoing verses, St. Paul exhorted the Colossians to mortify external and outward sins, as fornication and uncleanness; here he presses them to mortify internal and spiritual sins, such as anger, wrath, and malice, sins of the heart. The axe of mortification must be laid to the root of inward corruption, spiritual sins, heart sins: though they are *minoris infamie*, of less infamy and reproach before men, yet they are *majoris reatus*, of greater guilt in the sight of God; therefore a sincere christian has a special respect to these in the works of mortification; put off all these, *anger, wrath, malice*: *anger*, or the sudden motions and risings of passion: *wrath* is anger advanced to an height; and *malice* is anger accompanied with desire of revenge, a rooted displeasure: as jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of the devil; it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. No sin renders a man so like to satan as *wrath and malice*. A malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a christian, that it is the baseness of a man, yea, the spawn of a devil. This sin indulged, destroys the soul, as sure as murder, yea it is no less than murder in the account of God, 1. John iii. 15. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." Observe next, The apostle exhorts the Colossians to guard against the sins of the heart: "Put off blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying;" that is, evil speaking, filthy speaking, and false speaking. Sins of the tongue are to be guarded and watched against, as well as sins of the heart; they are most scandalous, they dishonor God, and discredit religion, and wrong our own souls. The sins of the tongue are little considered, their great guilt not apprehended, but men must account for their open reproaches, secret backbitings, scoffings, derisions, whereby they endeavour to fix an ignominy upon their neighbour: and particularly, the sin of lying is here cautioned against, "Lie not one to another." All lying is here condemned; the officious lie, tending to our own or our neighbour's profit; the pernicious lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice; the jocular or jocose lie, tending to recreation and sport. The scripture condemneth all, without restriction, Rev. xxi. 8. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxii. 15. Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Lying makes a man like the devil, who was a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning. Observe, lastly, The argument to enforce the exhortation to mortify all sin, the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, the sins of the life, and that is drawn from the consideration of their present state; they had in their baptism made a profession to "put off the old man with his deeds," that is, their old sinful nature, and put on the new man" in baptism, which being renewed by illumination and divine knowledge, and so conformed to the image of God, rendered them now the objects of his special love. Note here, That there were many ceremonies in baptism used in the primitive church, to which St. Paul alludes in several places in his epistles; as drenching in water, so as to seem buried in and under it, Col. ii. 12. "Buried with him in baptism;" likewise putting off their old clothes at going in, and putting on new at their coming out of the water, to which St. Paul alludes here, when he tells them they had, namely, in their baptism, put off the old man, and put on the new. Whence

learn, That there is no argument more moving and effectually exciting unto holiness of life, than that which is taken from our baptismal vow and profession; the obligation of this is very strong, if duly considered. The apostle makes use of it here as a potent argument, to quicken them to the mortification of all sin, seeing they had in baptism "put off the old man, that is, professed and solemnly engaged so to do, and "had put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Where that is, in which state of renovation, or under the present gospel-dispensation, there is found with God no respect to any man's person or nation, as before there was under the legal dispensation; now Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, every one that "feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of God, through Christ, who is all, in all things, to all believers;" but how is Christ all in all unto his people? Thus, his teaching is all in all in the work of illumination; his Spirit is all in all in the work of conversion; his death is all in all in the work of satisfaction, his righteousness is all in all in the matter of our justification, his grace is all in all in our satisfaction, his intercession is all in all in our acceptance, his peace is all in all in our consolation, his power is all in all in our resurrection, his presence is all in all in our glorification. O blessed Jesus! art thou thus all to me? I will labor to be all to thee; I will give thee all that I am, my soul with all its faculties, my understanding, my heart, and my affections, particularly my love and my hatred, my joy and my sorrow, my hope and my fear, my body with all its members: for thou hast created, redeemed, and wilt glorify the body as well as the soul; and therefore I will glorify thee with my body and with my spirit, which is thine: I will also give thee all that I have, by consecrating it all to the service of Christ, and resigning up all to the will of Christ, and will entitle thee to all that I do, by making thy word my rule, and thy glory my end, in all my actions and undertakings.

12 Put on, therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Our apostle having now finished his exhortation in the practice of that great duty of mortification of sin, called here, a "putting off the old man," comes next to mention several graces and virtues, which he exhorts them to be found in the practice of; and this he styles, a "putting on the new man;" teaching us hereby, that a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation; it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well; a man may go to hell for not

doing good, as well as for doing wickedly. Observe, farther, The particular graces and virtues which they are exhorted to put on. 1. "Bowels of mercy and kindness;" that is, a tender pity towards, and an inward sympathy with, those that are in misery; and this expressed in outward acts of succour and relief, according to our ability. There is a natural pity which man can hardly put off, it is seated in the very nature of man; and accordingly, unmercifulness is a sin against the light of nature, as well as against the law of God: but there is, besides this, a spiritual pity, which flows from pure love, and that a divine love; now, this is more an act of grace than of nature; this the apostle here exhorts the Colossians to, "Put on bowels of mercy; they who have put on, and are clothed with garments of holiness, will also put on bowels of mercy as a garment. 2. "Humbleness of mind;" whereby a man, sensible of God's goodness, and his own infirmities, hath an humble apprehension, and a modest estimation of himself: the more holiness any person has, the more humility he has; humility is a certain evidence of our holiness, because it is a great part of our holiness. 3. "Meekness and long-suffering," which moderate anger, and enable us to put up affronts and injuries. This is a spirit and temper divine, and truly Christ-like; none so abused and affronted as he; but, being reviled, he blessed, and committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When another hurts thee by unjust provocation, why shouldst thou hurt thyself by sinful passion? Christ was a Lamb for meekness; it doth not become any of his followers to be like lions for fierceness. 4. Forbearance, and mutual forgiveness; "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another." No christians are so perfect but they are liable to offend one another; he must have no friends, that will have a friend with no faults, and consequently they stand in need of forgiveness from each other. Learn hence, 1. That christians are obliged, by the laws of their holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another. 2. They are obliged to imitate Christ in this duty of forgiveness; Christ forgives us universally, freely, sincerely, so as never more to upbraid us with the fault he has forgiven us; such a forgiveness are we to exercise towards our brother. "As Christ forgave you; so also do ye." Observe lastly, The argument which St. Paul makes use of to press the Colossians to the practice of the forementioned duties, and that is drawn from their election and vocation; "Put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy." You that had the favor to be chosen of God out of the heathen world, to be his church and people, and are now *holy* and *beloved* of God, let the sense of this divine favor oblige you to humility and meekness, to longsuffering and mutual forgiveness, yea, to the love and practice of universal holiness.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Still our apostle makes use of the former metaphor, comparing the graces of the Holy Spirit to garments, which he exhorts christians to put on; he had mentioned the putting on of mercy, meekness, humility, &c. before; now he advises, to *put on* charity, or the grace of love, as the upper garment over and above all the rest, comparing it to a bond or ligament, which ties and knits all the members of the church together. *Quest.* But what is this grace of charity? *Ans.* It is a brotherly affection, which every true christian

chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for grace sake; or a gracious propensity of heart towards our neighbour, whereby we will, and do to our power procure all good for him. *Quest.* But why does St. Paul compare charity to an upper garment? "Above all, put on charity." Because, 1. The upper garment is larger and broader than the rest, so ought charity to extend itself to all persons, and upon all occasions. 2. The upper garment is usually fairer than the rest, so doth charity shine brightest amongst all the graces. 3. The upper garment distinguishes the several orders and degrees of men; thus christians are known by love as by a livery; it is the bond that Christ's sincere disciples wear. *Quest.* But how is charity "the bond of perfectness?" The meaning is, that it is the most perfect bond of union among christians, it knitteth together all the scattered members of the church, and makes their graces and gifts subservient to the good of one another, so that the church is hereby made a complete entire body, which was lame without it; in this sense, charity is called "the bond of perfectness."

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

As if the apostle had said, "Let that peace which God has given you within, and calleth you to exercise without, govern your lives, and direct you in all your actions towards men, and live in continual thankfulness to God!" Here note, That the original word to *rule* in the heart, signifies to umpire, or to act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife. Now, this peace, 1. Inwardly hushes and stills all in the soul, when tumultuous affections are up, and in an hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this calms and composes all. 2. Outwardly, peace of conscience produces peaceableness of conversation; where the peace of God rules in the heart, it disposes to peaceableness in the life. Now, this consists in these things, namely, in an unwillingness to provoke others, in an unaptness to be provoked by others, in a readiness to be reconciled when provoked, and in a forwardness to reconcile others that are at variance.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;—

These words come in by way of direction and advice, to help the Colossians in the exercise of the foregoing graces; seeing it is the word of Christ, or the holy scriptures, which teach the forementioned duties, he advises that the word of God may dwell in, and take up its abode with them, richly and plentifully, that they may be furnished thereby with all true and sound wisdom. Note here, 1. The title given to the holy scriptures, they are "the word of Christ because they have Christ for their author, Christ for their object, and Christ for their end. Note, 2. The advice given with respect to the word of Christ, "Let it dwell;" Not come for an hour, but to tarry; not to tarry for a night, but to take up its fixed residence and abode. Note, 3. Where it should dwell not in the ear, not in the head only, not in the memory barely, nor in the affections, but in the heart and soul, Psal. cxix. 11. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide," Psal. xxxvii. 31. Note, 4. How the word should dwell in us, richly, copiously, and plen-

tifully, in its commands, in its promises, in its threatenings; let the word, the whole word dwell in you, being diligently searched, heartily received, and carefully observed. Note, 6. The persons to whom this advice is given by the apostle, all the saints at Colosse, the whole body of the people are enjoined an holy familiarity with the Bible, it is to be in their houses, in their hands, and in their hearts, that it may dwell richly in them. Why then, and with what face dare the church of Rome forbid the common people to read the Bible, calling it an heretical book? For a reason they very well know, namely, Because it is the most dangerous book against popery, that ever was written in the world.

— Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Here our apostle declares one special benefit which the Colossians would receive, by having "the word of Christ dwell richly in them;" it would enable them to teach and admonish one another, and also to excite and stir up the affections of each other, by singing those "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" therein contained, or such others as were composed by the inspiration and direction of the holy Spirit of God; always remembering, not to sing gracefully only, but with grace; that is, with attention and devotion in our hearts to the Lord. Learn hence, The singing psalms, both in public assemblies, and private families, and therein praising and blessing of God for mercies received, is a great and necessary duty, to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it. Learn, 2. That in singing, a special regard must be had, that there be an inward harmony, and gracious melody in the soul, by the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motion of the affections; if the heart and affections be not stirred up in this duty, the outward grace, though never so graceful, availeth nothing.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Here our apostle lays down a general rule for the right management of all our words and actions, in the whole course of life; "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus," giving thanks to God for all the mercies you receive by Jesus Christ. Learn hence, 1. That all our thoughts, words and actions, must and ought to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to do all by the authority and command of Christ, to do all in the power and strength of Christ, to do all for the honor and glory of Christ, to do all after the pattern and example of Christ. Learn, 2. That all prayers and thanksgivings, as they are only due to God, so they must be performed by us through Jesus Christ, that so they may find acceptance with God; "Giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

(No. 59.)

Observe here, 1. That St. Paul, in the former part of this chapter having laid down general exhortations, to live suitably to the gospel which the Colossians had received, comes now, in the close of this chapter, to exhort them to the practice of particular duties in their respective places and relations, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. Learn hence, That the doctrine of the gospel lays the highest and strictest obligations upon all those to whom it is revealed, to perform every personal and relative duty in an holy and acceptable manner, both to God and man. Observe, 2. The wives' duty of subjection here required; "Submit yourselves to your own husbands." This implies and comprehends in it, a reverend esteem of them, an affectionate love unto them, speaking respectfully of them, and to them, and yielding obedience to their commands. Observe, also, the qualification and manner of this subjection, "as it is fit in the Lord," that is, in all lawful things, and in obedience to the Lord's commands, and not in any thing contrary to his will. Thus obeying, the woman's subjection is service done to Christ; which may comfort her, in case of any unkind returns from her husband to her.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

Observe, 1. The general duty of the husband declared to love his wife with a special, peculiar, conjugal affection, and to discover this love by a tender care over her, an affectionate regard to her, cohabitation with her, contentment and satisfaction in her, a patient bearing with her weaknesses, or prudential hiding of her infirmities, a cheerful supplying of her wants, a readiness to instruct and direct her, a willingness to pray for her, and with her; where true love is found these duties will be performed. Observe, 2. A particular sin, which all husbands are to avoid in their conversation with their wives, and that is being "bitter against them;" not bitter in affection toward them, that is, cold and indifferent in their love to them; not bitter in expression towards them, speaking reproachfully to them; not bitter in their actions towards them, giving them bitter blows, which is contrary to the law of God and nature. Learn hence, That it is the will and command of God, that husbands should not behave themselves churlishly, sourly, or imperiously towards their wives; not ruling with rigor, or being morose and rough, stern and severe in their carriage towards them, but to treat them with that endearing familiarity that is due to them, as part of ourselves.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

Observe here, The duty bound upon all children, and that is, obedience to their parents; this implies inward reverence, outward observance, a pious regard to their instructions, a following their good examples. Observe, 2. The object of this duty; "Obey your parents," that is, both parents; as obedience is due from all children, so it is payable to all parents, to mothers as well as fathers; nay, Lev. xix. 3, the mother is named first, because in regard of the weakness of her sex, she is most liable to contempt. Ob-

serve, 3. The extent of the duty, in all things, that is, in all lawful things, and in all indifferent things, in every thing that is not sinful; though to the child it may seem unnecessary or unreasonable, yet the parents' command is to be obeyed. Observe, 4. The argument and motive to excite and quicken to this duty, "It is well pleasing unto the Lord;" hereby they do acceptable service unto the Lord, who will reward it with long life on earth, and eternal life in heaven. God takes a mighty pleasure in the performance of relative duties; they are not only pleasing, but well-pleasing to him; we are no more really, than what we are relatively in the account of God: that which we call the power of godliness, consists in a conscientious performance of relative duties.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Here the parents' duty, that is the duty of both parents is laid down, "provoke not your children to wrath;" that is, abuse not your power and authority over them, by being too severe unto them; embitter not their spirits against you, by denying them what is convenient for them, by inveighing with bitter words against them, by unjust, unseasonable, or immoderate correcting of them; give them no just occasion to be angry. The reason is added, "lest they be discouraged; either dispirited and heartless, or desperate and hardened; lest by dejection of spirit, they become stupid. A parent's conduct must be moderated with prudence, shunning the extremes of too much indulgence on the one hand, and too great rigor and severity on the other.

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance. For ye serve the Lord Christ.

Observe here, 1. The general duty incumbent upon all servants, and that is obedience to such as are their masters according to the flesh, to execute all their lawful commands; such as are God's freemen, may be servants to men, though not the servants of men. Observe, 2. The qualifications and properties of this obedience which is due and payable from servants to masters, it must be in "singleness of heart," in great simplicity and sincerity of spirit, and with an eye to their great Master in heaven; with an eye to the command of their great Master, with an eye to the presence of their great Master, to the assistance and acceptance of their great Master, and to the honor and glory of him also; and it must be done heartily, and with good will, as to the Lord, and not to men. Learn hence, That the meanest and basest services in the place and station in which God sets us, being done with right qualifications, and from sincere motives, and for sincere ends, is service done to Christ, and as such, shall be accepted and rewarded by him. Observe, 3. The

mighty reward which the Spirit of God propounds as encouragement to the poor servants in their obedience to their masters, "Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance. No service so mean but shall be rewarded, if conscientiously performed; no distinction in heaven between servants and sons, all shall receive the inheritance there, who have done faithful service here; and as the meanest service done with right qualifications, is service done to Christ, so shall it be accepted of him, and rewarded by him; "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ."

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.

That is such servants as have wronged their masters, or such masters as have oppressed their servants, God, who respects no man's person, and regardeth the rich no more than the poor, will take his time to revenge the injuries and wrong, done by either to each other." Note here, The severity and impartiality of divine justice: God, the righteous judge, will revenge the wrong, every wrong, whensoever, and by whomsoever it is done; he will revenge it impartially, he will revenge it proportionably: a just retribution, according to the wrong done, shall be rendered to every one by the righteous and just God: "He that hath done wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

CHAPTER IV.

MASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Our apostle concluded the foregoing chapter with an exhortation to servants, to discharge their duty with all fidelity to their masters, remembering, that whatever wrong is done by them, shall, sooner or later, be revenged by God; he begins this chapter with advice to masters, to give unto their servants "that which is just and equal; that which is just, or that which is according to compact and agreement, either explicitly or implicitly made; as work, wages, food, clothing, and all fitting accommodations; also that which is equal in reason and charity, as to oblige them to serve God faithfully, to serve their masters cheerfully, not exercising a magisterial, much less a tyrannical power over them; and the argument to enforce it is strong, "knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven;" remembering they have one above them, from whom they must expect the like. Learn hence, That justice is to be observed towards poor servants, and that there are several offices of humility and charity which are due unto them by the command of God: such are these, 1. That we look upon them not barely as servants, but as brethren, partakers of the same common nature, and capable of the same grace with ourselves, consequently not to treat them as vile persons. 2. That we wink at some of their mis-carriages which are not apparently sinful, and do not punish every transgression committed by them: he must keep no servant that will have a servant with no faults. 3. That

we do not rule with rigor, without giving some reason for what commands seem hard and difficult, and that we permit them to plead their cause, and to defend their right, provided they do it with humility, not contradicting or refusing to execute the command of their master. 4. That to well-deserving servants we give something above their wages, allowing them all fitting encouragement whilst they are with us; and when they go away not suffering them to go empty from us. Thus doing, masters will "give unto their servants that which is just and equal: but how ordinary it is for them that are a little above others, to forget there is one above them?"

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, and that is prayer; a transcendent privilege, as well as an important duty. Observe, 2. The manner of the duty, and how it must be performed, with constancy and perseverance. 1. *Continue in prayer*, that is, continue instant in prayer; not that every other duty is to be neglected, that we may always perform this, but we are always to keep our heart in a praying frame, and be found in the practice of the duty at all fitting seasons; we are then said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably; what a man does out of conscience, he will do with perseverance. Nature will have her good moods, but grace is steady. 2. *Watchfulness in prayer* is here directed to. *Watch in the same*; particularly, we ought to watch for the duty, in the duty, and after the duty: to watch for the fittest praying season, to watch our hearts in the season of prayer, that our thoughts do not wander, nor our affections flag to watch after the duty, that our hearts be not lifted up by any assistances received in the duty; nor be too much dejected, upon the score of those infirmities that mingle themselves with our prayers; but direct the eye of our faith to Christ as our intercessor, who pleads for the gracious acceptance both of our person and services, notwithstanding the imperfections of them both. Observe, lastly, What must always accompany prayer for mercies we want, namely, thanksgiving for mercies received: *Watch in the same with thanksgiving*. There is no such effectual way of begging as thanksgiving; God is offended, when we are loud and clamorous in asking favors, but dumb and tongue-tied in returning thanks: need will make us beggars, but grace only thankgivers.

3 Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds;

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak;

Our apostle having directed the Colossians to the duty of prayer in general, here he requests an interest in their prayers for himself, and all the ministers of Christ in particular. Whence observe, 1. That the ministers of Jesus Christ are and ought in a special manner to be remembered in the saints' prayers. Observe, 2. The mercies he desires may be prayed for, on his behalf, namely, utterance and boldness: ministers depend upon God, as for other ministerial gifts, so particularly for the gift of utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest and instant with God for the same; and

as for utterance in delivering their message, so for boldness in suffering for it, when called to it. No prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts of the ministers of Christ unto an holy boldness, who suffer persecution for what they preach; therefore is St. Paul so earnest here with the Colossians, as he was before with the Ephesians, chap. vi. 18. and with the Romans, chap. xv. 30. desiring them to strive together in their prayers for him; where, by the way, remark, That the apostle thus passionately desiring the living saints to pray for him, but never desiring once the prayers and intercessions of the saints departed, nor of the Virgin Mary, is an evidence that he approved not of their prayers, nor looked upon them as mediators and intercessors with God then, as the church of Rome does now.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without,—

By *them without*, are meant the heathen, who are yet without the pale of the visible church; to *walk in wisdom toward them*, is a duty of great latitude, but imports particularly here, an endeavour to the uttermost to promote their conversion and salvation, by begetting in them a due veneration for the gospel, and a love and liking to the christian religion. Learn hence, That private christians, by walking wisely before them that are yet unconverted effectually to christianity, may be exceedingly helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel amongst them. They may pray, and pray in faith for their conversion, and the further spreading of the gospel, in order to that end. The ardent devotions and the holy conversations of private christians are excellent means to recommend the gospel and the christian religion, and to represent them as most amiable and desirable.

—Redeeming the time.

Having in the former part of the verse, directed the Colossians to walk wisely before the unconverted Gentiles that were among them, in this latter part of the verse, he advises them to redeem every opportunity, for gaining over those infidels to the christian religion. A christian that knows the worth of time, will redeem it, will improve it for the soul, for the benefit of his own soul, and for the advantage of others: how this is done, see the note on Eph. v. 16.

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Direction is here given to all christians for the right government of the tongue, and well ordering of the speech, that it be not corrupt and rotten, filthy or frothy, vain and unprofitable, but mild and courteous, savory and gracious, wise and discreet. Note here, 1. That we are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to let our tongue run riot and talk what we please, without any regard to the edification of others. Note 2. That there ought to be both a gracefulness and grace in our speech, some savor of piety, something that may testify there is grace wrought in ourselves, and tends to the working of grace in others. Note, 3. That our speech may be thus savory at all times, it must be *seasoned with salt*. 1. With the salt of truth: there

must be an agreement betwixt the thing and our words without falsehood; and an agreement betwixt our tongue and our hearts, without dissimulation. 2. With the salt of wisdom and prudence; this will teach us the time when, the manner how, and the measure how much to speak; those words must needs be unsavory, that have neither truth nor prudence in them. The people wondered of old at the gracious words which came out of Christ's mouth; and we may justly wonder at the graceless words which come out of the mouth of many that are called christians.

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you: they shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

Observe here, 1. That although St. Paul had now with him but a few friends at Rome to comfort him in his bonds, yet he spares two of them to visit and comfort these Colossians. See the public spirit of our apostle, who preferred the common good of the church at Colosse, before his own comfort at Rome. Observe, 2. The persons whom St. Paul sent to them, Tychicus and Onesimus, whom he styles brethren, *faithful brethren, beloved brethren*, nothing endears persons so much to one another, as religion and the grace of God. These ties are stronger than those of nature: no such love as likeness occasions, especially likeness to God. Observe, 3. The design and end of St. Paul's sending these two persons to them, namely, 1. "To make known unto them all things done at Rome:" Mark, All things, without exception, both his doings and sufferings, both in public and private, the apostle was ashamed of neither. Happy it is, when the conversation of Christ's ministers is such, both in public and private, that they need not be ashamed to have it known, or that the church may understand it. 2. That he might comfort their hearts: but how could Tychicus and Onesimus do this? 1. By making known to them the true cause of his sufferings, that it was for the gospel's sake. 2. To keep them from discouragement at the report of his sufferings, that they might not be offended at his chain, nor sink under the burden of immoderate sorrow upon his account. 3. To comfort their hearts with the report of that holy joy and cheerfulness which the apostle had in his own spirit, under the present burden of his sufferings. See the note on Eph. vi. 22.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner saluteh you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments. If he come unto you, receive him).

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my fellow-workers* unto the kingdom of God, which have been of comfort unto me.

Our apostle coming now to the conclusion of his excellent letter, sendeth (as his manner was) particular salutations to those he wrote to. These salutations were both from others and himself. Here we have three of St. Paul's companions sending salutations to the church at Colosse, namely, Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner; Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, who though he did desert St. Paul and Barnabas, and went not with them to the work, yet returning to his duty, he is recommended to the church's reception; and Jesus, who was called Justus, possibly from his just conversation. Jesus is the same with Joshua, signifying a Saviour: however, we do not find that any christians, since their Lord's resurrection, did ever give their children the name of Jesus, out of a due reverence to their Lord and Master, who is God-man, blessed for evermore. Now we learn, That neither distance of place, nor length of time ought to cool that love and good-will, that hearty and sincere affection, which christians should bear to one another. Note farther, That, as in the large catalogue of salutations which St. Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, Rom. xvi. in which particular persons are mentioned, St. Peter's name is not once named: so here, in this catalogue of salutations sent from Rome, no mention is made of St. Peter's name either; doubtless had he been now at Rome, he had sent salutations as well as the rest; here are salutations from Aristarchus, Mark, and others, none from Peter. Behold here the weak ground which the Pope builds his pretended supremacy and headship upon, namely, that he is St. Peter's successor, who was bishop of Rome; now though it can never be proved that St. Peter exercised any supremacy over the rest of the apostles, it can less be proved that he was ever bishop of Rome; nor is there any word in scripture to prove that he ever was at Rome, but rather the contrary; it is certain he was not at Rome when St. Paul wrote this epistle, there being only these, he says, whom he mentions, who are his fellow-laborers unto the kingdom of God.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

Our apostle next mentions the particular salutation sent from Rome to the church at Colosse by Epaphras, who is described from his country; he is *one of you*, that is, a citizen of Colosse; by his office, *a servant of Christ*, that is, a minister of the gospel; by his fervor of affection towards these Colossians, evidenced by his prayers for them, *he la-*

bors fervently for you in his prayers. The word signifies to strive as in an agony, pointing out our ministerial duty to us, not only to preach unto, and to pray with, but fervently to pray for our people. God forgives our forgetfulness of, our backwardness to, our remissness in, this part of our duty. Too seldom do we bear our people upon our hearts, when we go in and out before the Lord: Oh! how far are we from praying ourselves into an agony for them, when our petitions freeze within our lips, which we put up for our own souls! One thing might here be noted further concerning Epaphras, he was minister of (some think bishop of) Colosse; yet he was born there, he is one of you, that is, of your city. Now, Christ tells us, a minister is in hazard to meet with disrespect in his own country, he is usually of no honor there: however, Epaphras being called to the work of God in the place where he was born, embraces it, and God gives him reputation with the people for his faithfulness in his place. Observe, lastly, What was the subject matter of Epaphras' prayer for his people at Colosse, namely, "That they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God:" it is the desire and prayer, the care and endeavour of every faithful minister of Christ, that his people may stand fast in their obedience, in universal obedience, in perfect and complete obedience to the will, the whole will of God in all things; yet one thing more is observable in Epaphras, he had not only a great zeal for his own people at Colosse, but for them at Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were neighbouring churches. Learn thence, That the ministers of Christ are to look upon themselves, as ministers of the whole church; and although they take care of a particular congregation, yet it is their duty to desire and endeavour that all christians within the reach of their ministerial labors, may find some special benefit and advantage by them. Epaphras had a fervent zeal for the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis, as well as at Colosse, and it was his commendation that he had so.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Still the apostle is sending salutations from Rome to the Colossians. 1. From St. Luke, who, of a physician for the body, becomes a physician for the soul, as Matthew of a publican became a preacher. Luke well deserved the title here given him of *beloved*, in that he undertook the ministry at the time when civil authority did allow no maintenance for ministers, and when his employment as a physician would probably have advantaged him much more. "Luke, the beloved physician, greets you." 2. Demas also, who when persecution grew hot, his affections grew cold; yet now he sends salutations with the rest to the church at Colosse. St. Paul complains of his forsaking of him, 2 Tim. iv. 10. for the sake of the present world. Let no professor judge of himself by his external profession, by his performance of outward duties, by his associating himself with the people of God, nay, by his suffering with the servants of God; (Demas did all this) but by their sincere love to Christ, and persevering faithfulness in the trying hour of temptation; we know not what we are, till sufferings appear.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

(No. 60.)

Our apostle had sent the salutations of others to them before, he sends his own now. 1. Generally to all the christian brethren which were in Laodicea, to whom he directs this epistle to be read in the next verse. Now, to prepare them to hear it with greater attention, he sends salutations particularly to them. *Salute the brethren in Laodicea.* No particular people must desire or expect to monopolize and engross the whole of a minister's affections to themselves; but as he is the minister of the catholic church, so it is both his duty and desire, that all particular churches, yea, individual christians, should share in his affectionate love towards them, in his care and concern for them. He salutes Nymphas in particular, a person perhaps very eminent for piety and charity, as may be gathered from the following words, *And the church which is in his house.* By which, 1. Understand his family and household, who were so piously instructed, so religiously governed, so devoutly disposed, as if they had been a church, Learn thence, That masters of families should train up their household in religion and godliness, instructing, reproving, exhorting, all that are under their care, that their house may deserve the name of a church; *The church which is in his house.* 2. Some by the church in his house, understand a material house, or some particular room in his house, which he had given to a certain number of christians for a place of public worship. Although the church, in the apostle's time, had not the countenance of civil authority, to provide either places for worship, or maintenance for ministers; yet such fervor of zeal was found in the breasts of christians, that then, such as were of ability, wanted not for inclination to contribute largely and freely unto both; charity moved to give more then, than force of law can compel and constrain now; Nymphas gives his house to be a place of public worship to the church. See the learned Mr. Mede on Cor. xi. 22.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans:

Here St. Paul directs to the reading of this epistle themselves, which the Spirit of God had directed him to write unto them. *Let this epistle be read amongst you.* All holy scripture is to be read and perused by every private christian; the same Spirit that did indite the scriptures, requires the reading and understanding of them. And further, St. Paul desires this epistle, being read amongst the Colossians, should next be read in the church at Laodicea; who being their neighbours, received the same poison or errors from the false teachers, crept in amongst them, and consequently stood in need of the same antidote. That doctrine which is directed to some particular church or person, recorded in scripture, was of universal use then, and may be now, to all particular persons and societies.

—And that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea:

Much controversy has arisen in the church about this epistle from Laodicea; some have affirmed that it was written by St. Paul to the Laodiceans, but lost; from whence they would infer, that the canon of the scripture is not entire; but supposing it were so, yet it follows not but that we have all things necessary to, salvation in the holy scriptures.

It is very probable that St. Paul himself, and several other apostles wrote more epistles than are in the bible; what then? We have what the wisdom of God thought fit to hand down to us, and what is sufficient to make the serious reader of it, wise unto salvation. Surely Almighty God was not bound to bring down all that they wrote to us, but only what his own wisdom saw fit and necessary for us. Others understand it of an epistle from Laodicea to St. Paul, and that he answered it fully in this epistle to the Colossians, and sending it back, desired the Colossians might read it, for better clearing of some passages in this epistle to them. Lastly, Some understand it of the epistle to the Ephesians, Ephesus being the metropolis, or the chief city of Laodicea; and accordingly some called the epistle to the Ephesians, the epistle to the Laodiceans: the truth is, there is a very great affinity betwixt the epistle to the Ephesians, and this to the Colossians; the doctrines, exhortations, and many expressions are the very same; so that it is no wonder if he desired they should be both read at Colosse, to let them see that he wrote the same doctrine to other churches which he had done to them.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

This Archippus is, with good reason, supposed to be the minister at Colosse, in the room of Epaphras, now with St. Paul at Rome. Some think, that in the absence of Epaphras, he was grown somewhat remiss and slack in his ministerial duty; he directs therefore the Colossians to admonish him to the exercise of greater diligence in discharging all the parts of his trust committed by Christ unto him, *Say unto Archippus, Take heed, &c.* Observe here, A double charge, 1. A charge of message, *Say unto Archippus*; The Colossians must say it. St. Paul could have wrote a private letter to him; but they must excite him, yea, say to him to his face, not to him behind his back: it is the people's duty to stir up their ministers to the faithful performance of their duty; the fire of our ministerial zeal doth not burn so bright, but we may need our people's bellows to inflame it; but this must be done with prudence by the people, in a way of exhortation, not by the way of exprobration; to stir up your minister to his duty, that you forget not your own. Observe, 2. The charge of an office, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Here, 1. A duty enjoined, to fulfil the ministry: but what is that? Negatively, not to secure the success of our ministry, we may deliver our own souls, though our people's be not delivered; the nurse is not charged with the life of the child, but with the care of the child; she shall be paid whether it live or die: nor is it absolutely to perform every part of our ministerial duty without the least deficiency; no, we rejoice in the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have done our duty: positively, to fulfil the

ministry, is to perform all the parts of our duty with care and faithfulness, persevere in diligence, particularly, public preaching and private inspection. A non-preaching minister is no minister, a breathless nurse, a murderer of souls, a bell without a clapper, a cryer without a voice; yet doth not his work lie all in a pulpit, but the greatest part out of it: he is styled a watchman; for what? because he is to watch one hour with his people in a week? No, surely, but because he is to watch over them, and converse with them all the week, upon occasion. Is not the physician to visit his patient, as well as to prescribe his physic? Doth the husbandman cast his seed into the ground, and never come into his fields to see whether it comes up, and how it grows? Verily, our people are great gainers by our profitable converse with them, and we shall be gainers by them too. We may gain more experimental knowledge by an afternoon's visiting our people, than by a week's study. Note, 2. The means here directed to, for the fulfilling of the ministry, *Take heed to the ministry*; What doth that import? 1. Take heed to thy study; ministerial abilities are not rained down like manna upon us. The apostles did not study indeed, but one reason was, they had no time to study, they were itinerary preachers. 2. Take heed to thy doctrine, that it be the pure word of God, and delivered purely; not only in opposition to error, but in opposition to levity. 3. *Take heed*, that is to thy life and practice, that we may tread out the steps before our people, which they are to take towards heaven. Note, 3. The motive to stir us all up to the fulfilling our ministerial trust: we have received it: there is the importance of a special favor, and also the importance of a strict account; what we have received, we must give an account for. 2. We have received it of, or from the Lord; this implies assistance, that God has called us to it, will assist us in it: "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world;" with you to assist, with you to succeed, with you to reward. Let Archippus then, every one in the work of Christ, *take heed to the ministry* which he has received of the Lord, that he fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here our apostle closes his epistle with a general salutation under his own hand, intimating thereby, that he had wrote the whole with his own hands. He begs them to remember his bonds; that is, 1. To sympathize with him in his bonds. 2. To pray for him in his bonds. 3. To receive the word of God, which he had written, to them in his bonds. 4. To prepare for sufferings themselves, his bonds being but the forerunners of their bonds. Thus it is the people's duty to remember the pious ministers in their bonds. He adds, *Grace be with you*, wishing them an abiding interest in the special favor of God, with a multiplied increase of all spiritual blessings flowing from thence; increase of all grace to enable them to glorify God on earth, and to prepare them for glory with God in heaven. Amen.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

This epistle to the Thessalonians, though placed last, yet is supposed to have been written first by St. Paul to this particular church; and not without probability, because the gospel was more early preached at Thessalonica, than either at Rome or Corinth as appears by the Acts of the Apostles.

Thessalonica was the chief city in Macedonia, whither St. Paul, in a vision, was directed to go and preach the gospel; accordingly he went, Acts. xvi. and xvii. and laid very early the foundation of a christian church in this city, which consisting partly of Jews, and partly of Gentiles, they were severely persecuted by both. Now the apostle, hearing what hard things the Thessalonians suffered, he writes this epistle to confirm them in the faith, and to prevent their being shaken by those persecutions.

To encourage them to perseverance in the faith, and patience under their present persecutions, he first informs them, that it was nothing strange that they should thus suffer from those Jews and Romans, who had killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and were contrary to all men; and then puts them in mind of the transcendent reward laid up for them, and the severe punishments that were prepared for their persecutors. And, lastly, He animates and encourages them, by the example of his own constancy, to perseverance in their holy profession; and concludes his epistle to them, with particular exhortations to holiness of life, and unblameableness in conversation.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus,
unto the church of the Thessalo-
nians, *which is* in God the Father, and *in*
the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto
you, and peace, from God our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul begins this epistle, as he does the rest, with a very kind and gracious salutation; in which we have observable, the persons saluting, the parties saluted, and the salutation itself. Note, 1. The persons saluting, Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus: Paul only was the inspired writer of this epistle, the other two were his associates and assistants, instruments with him in converting the Thessalonians to christianity, and whom they had a deservedly great affection for; he joins them therefore with himself, as asserters and approvers of the truth contained in this his epistle, that so he might procure the greater respect to the doctrines it contained; he therefore names them with himself, Paul, Silvanus, or Silas, as he is called, Acts xvii. and Timotheus;

But why not "Paul an apostle, or Paul a servant of Jesus Christ," as in other epistles, but bare Paul only? *Answer.* Because his apostleship was not at all questioned by them; the Thessalonians had a seal of it in their hearts; and there were no false apostles among them to deny his apostleship, as the Galatians and other churches had. The prudent and faithful ministers of Christ know, both how and when to use those titles of honor and respect which God hath given them, and also when it is convenient to forbear the assuming of them. Note, 2. The persons saluted, *The church of the Thessalonians*: Thessalonica was the metropolis, or mother city of Macedonia, where a christian church was planted by the ministry of St. Paul and Silas, but with great opposition from the Jews, who forced Paul to fly to Beroea for his own safety, Acts xvii. and Jason, with others that entertained him had like to have been sacrificed in their own houses; yet there, in despite of the devil's rage, and persecutors' malice, doth God erect a glorious church, a christian church, in honor of his Son, who purchased it with his blood. Learn hence, That when and where God will gather to himself a church, no opposition, either of men or devils, shall be sufficient to hinder it; at Rome itself, nay in the court of Nero, under the very nose of that bloody tyrant, was a church collected, Phil. iv. 22. No wonder the devil struggles, when his kingdom totters; it follows, which (church) is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, established in the knowledge, faith, worship, and obedience of God the Father; they were Gentiles, called off from their dumb idols, to serve the living and true God, and were distinguished from all other societies and communions whatsoever; they were in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, they enjoyed a blessed union with Jesus Christ by faith, and a sweet communion and fellowship both with Father and Son, by the bond of the Spirit. Behold the high dignity and glorious privilege of the christian church, to be thus knit and united, both to the Father and the Son, by the agency of the Holy Spirit! "To the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Note, 3. The salutation itself, "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Where observe. 1. The option or blessings wished, *grace and peace*: *grace*, in scripture, signifies, first, the gracious favor of God towards us; and next, all the gifts of grace, all benefits and blessings issuing forth and flowing from thence: *peace*, usually signifies in the scripture language, all manner of prosperity and happiness. 2. The author and fountain from whence those blessings flow: 1. From God the Father: 2. From the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ; intimating, That whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessing we now receive from God, is from him, not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours out the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kinds of blessings unto us.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus

Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:

Note here, 1. The holy wisdom of our apostle, who being about to magnify and extol the graces of the Spirit wrought in the Thessalonians, particularly their faith, their love, their patience and hope, instead of commending them for these graces, he breaks forth into thanksgivings unto God for them; "We give thanks to God always for your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope:" his business was not to celebrate and commend them, but to admire the special grace of God conferred upon them, and conspicuous in them. Learn hence, That it is our duty, and will be our great wisdom, so to speak of the grace of God, which we see and observe in others, as that they may not be puffed up with any conceit of their own excellencies, but see matter of praise and thanksgiving due unto God only, and nothing to themselves. Note, 2. The special and particular graces which St. Paul observed in the Thessalonians, their *faith*, their *love*, their *hope*, together with the evidence of the sincerity of those graces, their faith was a working faith, that is, fruitful in good works; their love was a laborious love, promoting the good of all the saints; and their hope in the Lord Jesus, rendered them patient in and under all tribulations for his sake. There is no such way to judge of the truth of the inward habits of grace in the heart, as by observing the effects and fruits of that grace in the life; the apostle concluded they had true faith, because a fruitful faith; true love, because a laborious love; a good hope in Christ, because accompanied with patience under the cross of Christ. Note, 3. St. Paul's offices and acts of love performed on the Thessalonians' behalf, namely, thanksgiving and prayer. 1. Thanksgiving, *We give thanks unto God always for you all.* But why, O blessed apostle, art thou so thankful for the graces of God's holy Spirit wrought in these Thessalonians? For thy own sake, no doubt, as well as theirs; he saw in them an eminent seal of his apostleship, the happy fruit and blessed effect of his ministry among them. This, O! This it was, that drew forth his very soul in thanksgivings to God. Learn, that the faithful ministers of Christ rejoice greatly at the sight and appearance of the grace of God in any person; but when they see it in their own people, as the seal of their ministry, and the blessed fruit of their own painful endeavours amongst them, this carries them out into transports of thankfulness; verily, the joy of their hearts is too big to come out at their mouths, they give thanks for such a mercy without ceasing. Yet, 2. He subjoins *prayers* with his praises, adds supplications to his thanksgivings, *making mention of you always in my prayers*; to let them know that there was still much grace wanting in them to keep them humble, as well as great grace in them to make him thankful: our prayers for grace, must be thankful prayers, or accompanied with thanksgiving; when we pray to God for more grace, we must ever be thankful for what we have received; and when we return thanks for grace received, we must be earnest and instant with God for further and fresh supplies of grace wanted. Note, 4. The frequency, yea, constancy of our apostle, in performing these duties of prayer and thanksgiving on the behalf of these Thessalonians. "We give thanks to God always for you, remembering you without ceasing in the sight of God, and our Father:" that is, as often as we appear before God our Father, we incessantly pray for you, and constantly bless God on your behalf. Where observe,

The comfortable relation in which the saints of God do approach and draw near unto God in prayer, they come to him as a Father, yea, "as their Father; in the sight of God our Father." The Holy Spirit of God vouchsafed to believers under the gospel, enables them to come before him in prayer, with a full assurance of his fatherly affection towards them, as being the sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and it enables them to cry, *Abba, Father*; and they are very careful to improve this their relation to God, and interest in him as a Father, in prayer in behalf of themselves, and all their fellow brethren and members in Christ. Thus St. Paul here, "We give thanks for you, and remember you without ceasing, in the sight of God and our Father."

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God:

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Observe here, 1. One special ground and reason assigned, why the apostle's heart was thus extraordinary carried out in praise and thanksgivings unto God, on the Thessalonians' behalf, and that was the knowledge of their election, "knowing your election of God," that is, knowing certainly and infallibly, by your proficiency in the forementioned christian graces of faith, love, and hope, that God had certainly chosen you out of the Gentile world, to be a church and people to himself, and that it was the good pleasure of God to gather a christian church at Thessalonica; and also he did know and believe, with a judgment of charity, that Almighty God had chosen them to eternal life also, to be a part of his church triumphant in heaven, as well as of his church militant upon earth; the preaching of the gospel having met with such visible success amongst them. It is our unquestionable duty, and we learn it from St. Paul's example, in charity to number them amongst God's chosen, in whom we see, as much as man may see, the fruits and signs of God's election. Observe, 2. The ground which St. Paul had to build his confidence upon, that the Thessalonians were a people chosen of God, and that was rational evidence, "knowing your election of God; for our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power." Where note, The piety and prudence of St. Paul's charity, it was not weakly grounded or credulous, but guided by reasonable evidence; "Charity hopeth all things," that is, all things that it hath good ground to hope, but nothing more than what probable evidence may induce it to hope. St. Paul, when he saw the apostasy of Hymenæas and Alexander into error and vice, without censoriousness and uncharitableness, pronounces that they had "made shipwreck of the faith." 1 Tim. 1. 20. For he had sufficient reason to believe, there could be no faith where there was no holiness. There are a generation of men amongst us, who brand the ministers of God with censoriousness, and rash judging the present state of men, though they judge by their lives and actions; they would have us hope well concerning them, against hope, and judge quite contrary to rational evidence; we must believe them to have faith, when they have no knowledge; that they are right penitents, and sorrowful for their sins, when they make a sport of sin; that

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their hearts are chaste, when their mouths foam out nothing but filthiness; but let them know, we dare not bring a curse upon ourselves by calling good evil, and evil good: our charity though not causelessly suspicious, yet neither is it foolishly blind. Observe, 3. The particular and special evidence which the apostle had of the Thessalonians' election, and that was the great and gracious success of his ministry amongst them. *Our gospel came*—But how our gospel? Not as if he were the author of it, but the dispenser only; not our gospel by original revelation, but by ministerial dispensation only. But how did the gospel come amongst the Thessalonians? "Not in word only" sounding in the ear, or reaching and resting in the understanding only, as a light to gaze upon; but in power, that is, accompanied then with the power of miracles, now with a convincing, terrifying, humbling, renewing, and reforming power. It follows, "and in the Holy Ghost;" that is, the preaching of the word was at that time attended, as with a mighty power of miracles, so with an extraordinary effusion and pouring out the Holy Ghost upon them that heard it, prevailing upon them to embrace it, and to submit themselves unto it. With this miraculous power of the Holy Ghost was the preaching of the word accompanied then, with an enlightening, quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying power now; the ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit, for the conversion of sinners, for the edification of saints, and for the salvation of both. Again, the apostle's ministration came unto them *in much assurance*, that is, with a full conviction both to them and him; to them, with an evident conviction of the truth of his doctrine; and to him, it was a full persuasion, yea, a firm assurance, that God had chosen them to be a church and special people to himself. And lastly, As to his own conduct and conversation amongst them, he appeals to them, and to their own knowledge, whether it was not answerable to the doctrine delivered by him; "Ye know what manner of men we were amongst you for your sake." Happy is it when the pious and prudent conversation of a minister amongst his people, is, and has been such, that upon a fit occasion, he can and dare appeal to God and them as witnesses and observers of it; "Ye know what we were among you; ye are witnesses and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you," chap. ii. 10. An heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell; there is a preaching life, as well as a preaching doctrine; if religion be taught by the first, and irreligion by the latter, we sadly disappoint the end of what is spoken; though like a cracked bell, we may be instrumental to ring others to heaven, yet for ourselves there is no remedy, but to the fire we must go, either for our refining, or for our condemnation. The throne and the pulpit, above all places, call for holiness; the prince and the preacher, above all persons, are most accountable to God for their example; "Ye know what manner of men we were among you."

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost;

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia;

11 H

In these words our apostle gives us another probable evidence, that the Thessalonians were undoubtedly chosen of God, namely, because they were very active and operative christians; they did in their life and practice conform themselves to that excellent pattern and example held forth unto them by their preachers. "Ye became followers of us." Where note, That there ought to be something worthy of imitation in the lives of ministers, something which their people may safely follow; and it is the people's duty, not only to lend an ear to their doctrine, but an eye to their pious conversation. It is added, "Followers of us and the Lord:" followers of Christ absolutely as an unerring pattern; of his ministers conditionally, so far as they followed Christ; but "followers of the Lord" here, seems to import their following of him in his sufferings and afflictions, as appears by the next words, "Having received the word with much affliction." Such as are sincere and serious christians, are followers of Christ in his sufferings, as well as in his example: they follow him in the sharp and thorny path of affliction, in which he went before them; they are willing to bear his cross, as well as to wear his crown; to suffer for him as well as to be glorified with him. Observe next, The particular instance wherein the Thessalonians became followers of the apostles; it was this, that they preached the word to them with great desire, and delight, and joy, though at the same time they endured a great "fight of afflictions," contending with the opposition both of men and devils, in preaching the word unto them: in like manner did they "receive the word with much affliction," and adhere to it in the midst of persecution; and all this accompanied with such inward joy, as none but the Holy Ghost could be the author of in them: "Ye received the word with much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Learn hence, That upon the preaching of the word, to have an heart open to "receive it, to receive it with affliction, with much affliction," and yet with joy and rejoicing, with a cheerful spirit, and such a joy as the Holy Spirit of God is the author and producer of, is a good evidence, that a person is chosen of God, and has a title to the everlasting inheritance. Observe farther, Our apostle, in a just and deserved commendation of these Thessalonians, tells them to their great and singular honor, that as they were followers of them (the apostles) in sufferings, in patience, and cheerfulness; so they were themselves living patterns, and lively ensamples of courage and constancy under their sufferings, to all the neighbouring churches in Macedonia and Achaia. Then is the grace of God received by us, a mark and evidence of our election of God, when we have advanced to such a considerable proficiency and growth in it, as to become patterns and examples of piety to all that are round about us. Thus the Thessalonians here, "Ye are become ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves show of us, what manner of entering in we had unto

you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God;

Still our apostle proceeds in a copious commendation of these Thessalonians, or rather in a thankful admiration of the grace of God shining in them; he tells them, and that without flattery, that the fame and report of their graces was spread abroad far and near, insomuch that the foreign churches amongst whom he conversed, were able to give him a perfect account how the apostles' entrance amongst them at Thessalonica was; though not pompous, yet very prosperous, strangely succeeded and singularly blessed; to the turning of them from dead idols to serve the living and true God. Learn, That where true grace is rooted in the heart, though it be not immediately seen, yet it cannot long be hid, but it will discover itself in the genuine fruits and vital effects of it, to the deserved admiration, and wished for imitation of all beholders whatsoever: "From you sounded forth the word of the Lord, &c." And how you turned from idols, that is, how readily and speedily, how sincerely and heartily you turned from idolatry, your former idolatry, in which you had been educated and brought up; yet upon the preaching of our gospel, ye left it, and turned with indignation from it, to serve God, the living God, so called in opposition to their dead and dumb idols; and the true God, in opposition to their false gods. These words of the apostle teach us how to expound those words of our Saviour, John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God." Teaching us that the Father is called the *only true God*, not in opposition to Jesus Christ, as the Socinians would insinuate, but in opposition to idols and false gods only. Now from this effect, which the gospel had upon the Thessalonians, to turn them from idols to serve the living God, we learn, That as every man naturally bears an idol in his heart, that is, sets up something there in God's stead, which attracts and draws off the chief of his affections from God; so wherever the gospel is heartily received and entertained, there will be an abandoning of, and turning from whatsoever did usurp God's throne in the soul, and the person hereafter will only love and serve the living and true God: "Ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God."

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Here the apostle produces a farther evidence of these Thessalonians' conversion, namely, that they did not only turn from idols to serve God the Father, but did also believe in Jesus Christ his only son: this act of faith is expressed by waiting, they "waited for his Son from heaven," that is, by faith they expected that Christ, whom the apostle had preached to them, and was gone to heaven, would certainly come again from thence, to deliver his redeemed ones "from the wrath to come," that is, from the punishment and vengeance eternally due unto them for sin. And the ground of this their expectation was, Christ's resurrection from the dead; "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead" Note here, 1. A description, an heart-affecting, yea, a soul-

affecting description of that wrath which doth await every wicked and impenitent sinner; it is a wrath to come; after thousands, yea, millions of years, that sinners have lain under it; still it is a wrath to come; and they are as far from being delivered from it, as the first hour they fell under it. Note, 2. That Jesus Christ delivered up himself to death, that he might be a Saviour and deliverer of his people from this wrath; let it break forth when it will, not a drop of it shall ever fall upon any one of them. Note, 3. That believers may warrantably expect deliverance by Christ from this wrath, seeing God has raised him from the dead. Note, 4. Therefore, may and ought they to wait and wish, to look, and long for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

CHAPTER II.

The design and scope of the apostle, in the chapter now before us, is, to acquaint the Thessalonians with the sincerity and success of his ministry amongst them; as also to put them in remembrance of his meek deportment toward them, even as a nurse among her children: and from the gracious success which God had given him in his ministerial services for them, he concludes that these his converts to christianity, the Thessalonians, would certainly be his joy and crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

FOR yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain;

Observe here, How our apostle did and durst appeal to the Thessalonians themselves as touching the sincerity and success of his public ministry among them: "Ye yourselves know." It is not sufficient to a minister's comfort, that he be well reported of amongst strangers, for his zeal and diligence, for his sincerity and faithfulness, unless he can and dare appeal to the consciences of his own people, and call them to vouch and bear witness to his integrity: "Ye yourselves know that our entrance in unto you, was not in vain. Our entrance in unto you;" that is, our first preaching amongst you "was not in vain," that is, say some, it was not in vain in the matter, we did not preach about vain, useless and unprofitable niceties and speculations; but our preaching was substantial, sound and solid; it was not vain in the manner, say others; it was not undertaken rashly, and without a call, nor managed in a slight and vain manner; but the word in vain here, seems to point at these two things; 1. That it did not want power and energy, but had the demonstration of divine assistance to confirm them in the faith that heard it, and also those that preached it, in expectation of success. 2. "It was not in vain" that is, it did not want fruit, it was not without a great and gracious success: for the word vain, when it is applied to the message which the ministers of God bring, signifies the not accomplishing the great ends for which it was designed. Isa. lv 11. "The word that goeth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me in vain," but prosper, &c. Hence learn, That where a minister is regularly called to, and faithfully discharges his duty amongst a people, both by public preaching and private instruction, his labors seldom, if ever, want fruit, in some degree or measure, either sooner or later, either manifest or secret, either for conversion or

edification. We have the promise of Christ's presence with us, Matt. xxviii. 20. And if the fault be not ours, we shall certainly experience it; both the presence of his power to strengthen us, and the presence of his gracious Spirit to succeed us. Possibly we do not see any visible success at present; but this may comfort us, there is more good done by the ministry of the word than we are aware of; and if we reap not the fruit of the seed we sow, they who come after us may; but if neither they nor we reap fruit, our ministry shall not be in vain, with reference to ourselves; yet shall we be glorious, though Israel be not gathered. But oh! that our people might share in that glory with us, and also shine as the stars, for ever and ever! God grant we may never be called forth by Christ to give a judicial testimony against any of them at the bar of God, for not "believing our report."

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

Here St. Paul discovers to the Thessalonians the great difficulties and dangers which he broke through at his first entrance amongst them to preach the gospel: he acquaints them with the reproach and disgrace he underwent at their neighbouring city, Philippi, and the sufferings there endured for the gospel, which are recorded, Acts xxi. 23. But nothing of that nature could discourage him, but that he rather waxed more bold in spirit, resolving to preach the gospel of God, though with much contention and opposition from the unbelieving Jews. Where mark, That the apostle calls his boldness, a boldness in God, because a boldness for God, and from God; it was not barely the fruit of a natural courage, but it was a zealous boldness in the cause of God, and proved a convincing, as well as a courageous boldness; it is one necessary requisite and qualification in the ministers of God, in order to the rendering their ministry fruitful and successful; that a wise, humble, zealous and convincing boldness be found with them in their delivering the truths of God unto their people: "We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God."

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Here our apostle assigns a subordinate reason why his preaching was so successful amongst the Thessalonians; namely, because it was very sincere: there was both sincerity in the doctrine preached, and also in the preacher of that doctrine. Where note, 1. St. Paul calls his preaching an exhortation; doubtless because a great part of his preaching was, as ours ought to be, applicatory and exhortatory, earnestly and affectionately exciting the hearers to cleave unto the truths, whether doctrinal or practical, delivered to them. Note, 2. How St. Paul removes from himself the

opposites of sincerity, some of which point at the sincerity of the doctrine preached by him; *it was not of deceit*, or of ensnaring and seducing error, not suited to the corrupt opinions and wicked inclinations of men; *nor of uncleanness*, nothing that he either preached or practised did countenance and encourage men in their filthy lusts, as did the false preaching of the false apostles, and the Gnostics: *Nor in guile*; this points at the sincerity of his own heart in preaching, his exhortation was not in guile; that is, he did not seek himself, under a pretence of acting for God and his glory, nor propound his own worldly advantage as his ultimate end. Learn hence, It is the duty of Christ's ministers, not only to preach the pure word of God, but to preach it purely, in simplicity of heart, and with a single eye at God's glory, without looking at, or having any regard unto base, sinister ends, or bye respects. Note, 3. That St. Paul having vindicated his ministry from all suspicion of insincerity, next assures them of his great uprightness in all his ministerial performances, making it his chief design to approve himself unto God, and to be approved of him, not in the least regarding to please men, but only in subordination to God. Note, 4. The arguments or motives inclining him thus, in much sincerity, to approve himself to God in all his ministerial services; namely, 1. The consideration of that high favor and honorable trust which he had received from God: "We were allowed of God, to be put in trust with the gospel;" God did fit him for this trust, and then entrusted him with it, and he looked upon both as a favor and honor from God. 2. The consideration of God's omniscieny and all-seeing eye, *who trieth our hearts*. The apostle well knew that Almighty God was both a witness of his doctrine and conversation, and also privy to his intentions and purposes, his aim and end, as being a God that searcheth the heart; therefore he so preached, *not as pleasing men but God*. Learn from both, That nothing doth more effectually constrain the ministers of Christ to the faithful discharge of their whole duty, than the consideration of the honor and weight of that trust which God hath conferred on them, and the remembrance that the eye of an all-seeing and heart-searching God is both upon and within them also; *We so speak*, being put in trust with the gospel by God, *who trieth our hearts*.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Still our apostle sees fit to proceed in avouching his own sincerity in preaching the gospel, and disowning all flattery, covetousness, and vain-glory, to have any influence upon him in the discharge of his ministerial trust. First, He *used not flattering words*, that is, speeches fitted to gratify the lusts and honors of men, or for gaining their favor, or courting their good opinion. Flattery in any is odious, in a minister it is monstrous; both because spiritual men ought to be most plain hearted, and also because flattery about spiritual things is most fatal and pernicious, both

to the giver and receiver. Secondly, He used not a *cloke of covetousness*, that is, he had no covetous design in his ministry; his great end, in that administration, was not worldly, or outward advantage to himself; and because a covetous design is secret, and man cannot judge of it, he appeals solemnly to God, that searcheth the heart, as a witness of his freedom from that design; "I used no flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness: God is witness;" as if he had said, "Had I used flattering words, you might witness it, but I could have worn a cloke of covetousness so closely, that you could not have seen it, but God could; he can judge through the darkest cloud, and see through the thickest cloke or covering; but I appeal to him, whether I have put on such a cloke, or no." An oath then is lawful to a christian; he may solemnly appeal to God, and call him to witness the truth of what he speaks, in and upon a just and great occasion; thus St. Paul here by oath, purges himself from covetousness of spirit. Thirdly, He purges himself from all ostentation and vain-glory; he tells them plainly, he did not hunt after applause from others, nor sought so much as due respect in a fitting maintenance from themselves, though herein he assures them he did remit of his right; seeing as an apostle of Christ, he might have been burdensome, that is, chargeable to them, by exacting maintenance from them. Learn, 1. Though every man may (much more a minister) have a due respect to his own honor and just reputation, yet to hunt after respect and esteem, and to seek it with the full bent of our desires, doth savor of vanity and vain-glory. Learn, 2. Though the ministers of the gospel have an undoubted right to an honorable maintenance, yet it may be a pious prudence in them, at a particular time, to remit their right; and when they do so, with an eye at the glory of God, and the advantage of the gospel, God will recompense it to them.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

St. Paul having cleared himself, and his ministry, in the foregoing verses, from the charge and imputation of those foul vices of flattery, fraud, and covetousness, which the false teachers were guilty of; he next gives an account of his holy and humble, meek and gentle, courteous and affable behaviour amongst them, performing all duties towards them from a principle of tender love, even such as is found in a nurse to her babe, which makes her stoop to the meanest offices for it; "We are gentle among you as a nurse," not an hired nurse, but a mother-nurse, who takes nothing for nursing, who bestows all her time and pains in nursing, who draws forth her breasts, and gives down her milk with pleasure to her nursery, lodging it in her bosom, carrying it in her arms, with all possible demonstrations of a tender affection towards it, especially bearing with it, in its frowardness and manifold infirmities: intimating to us, with what tenderness of affection a minister should be devoted to his people.

ple, bearing with them, and forbearing of them, and exercising all that indulgence towards them, which may mutually endear them to each other. Observe farther, Our apostle having resembled himself in general, to a nurse cherishing her children, next instances, in particular, wherein he stood ready to express, like a nurse, his indulgent care over them. Thus, 1. As the nursing mother, if she be but a short-time absent from her children, doth most vehemently long to see them, and draws forth her breast towards them with the utmost desire and delight: in like manner, was our now absent apostle most affectionately desirous of seeing and enjoying his beloved Thessalonians. 2. As the nursing mother, when she gets to the child, with unspeakable delight, feeds it with her own blood, concocted and turned into milk; so was the apostle desirous to impart, not the gospel only, but his own soul, that is, his life; implying how ready he was to seal the gospel with his blood, and to confirm the Thessalonians in the faith of Christ. 3. As the moving, impelling, and impulsive cause of the nurse's indulgent care and indefatigable pains, is pure love, motherly affection, and no hope of gain; so was likewise the case of St. Paul here towards these Thessalonians; "We were willing to impart unto you our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, nor more endeared affection between any relations upon earth, than between those ministers of Christ and their beloved people whom they have been instrumental to convert to God.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Notwithstanding our apostle was free, wholly free, from all shadow and appearance of covetousness in the whole course of his ministry, yet it may seem as if some persons (probably the false apostles) did, though with the highest injustice charge him with it; accordingly to clear himself from that imputation, here he tells the Thessalonians, he labored night and day in the business of his calling; making tents to maintain himself, that so he might not be chargeable or burdensome to any of them; or any ways retard or hinder the success of the gospel amongst them; "laboring night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God freely." Yet observe, This was only a case of necessity; for at other times, and in other places, we find our apostle asserting his own right, and God's appointment, that every one that preacheth the gospel, should live of the gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 14. Next our apostle calls upon them to remember his *labor and travail*, that is, his pains and diligence in preaching the gospel; the words signify labor unto weariness, and labor after weariness, his painfulness, both in his preaching, and in his secular calling; and from his calling upon the Thessalonians to remember this, he learns us this lesson of instruc-

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tion, namely, that it is the standing duty of a people to keep in their constant remembrance of the great labor and pains which the faithful ministers of Christ do take amongst them, that so they may be duly thankful, both to God, and them, and put a just value upon that spiritual good, which, at any time, they have experienced and received from them; *Remember, brethren, our labor, and travail.* Observe again, Having asserted his laboriousness in preaching to them, he next puts them in remembrance of his exemplariness in conversation amongst them, how *holily, justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves amongst you*; that is, performing his duty with great integrity and uprightness towards God and man, so that none justly could blame him for neglect amongst them; and for the truth of this, he appeals to God as a judge, and themselves as witnesses; *Ye are witnesses, and God also.* Learn hence, That it is a great happiness and unspeakable consolation, both to ministers and people, when the duties of religion relating to both tables, are performed with such exactness that they can and dare appeal to one another, as to their holy and unblameable conversation, and to God himself, as to the purity of their aim, and sincerity of intention.

11 As ye know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Observe, That still our apostle appeals to their own consciences for his good behaviour amongst them: *Ye know*: happy minister, that has a throne in the consciences of his people, unto which he can and dare, at all times, appeal, for the clearing of his innocency and integrity, in and before the face of the whole world! Observe next, That having compared himself to a nurse before, he resembles himself to a father now, *we exhort you as a father doth his children*; as it is the office of a father to direct and instruct, to counsel and exhort his children, so the apostle did exhort, comfort, and charge the Thessalonians, that they be strictly conscientious in the faithful discharge of their whole duty, both to God and man, and patient under all, and all manner of trials and afflictions whatsoever, which they did, or might meet with, in the way of well doing. Where note, That a mixture of meekness and gentleness, accompanied with authority and gravity, is an excellent composition in the ministers of the gospel: St. Paul having shown, that, for gentleness, he was a nursing mother, declareth here, that for authority and gravity, he was an instructing father. Observe lastly, The great duty which he did direct them in, and exhort them to, namely, to *walk worthy of God, who had called them unto his kingdom and glory.* Note here, 1. The duty exhorted unto, namely, to *walk worthy of God*: How so? Not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meekness, to walk as becomes them who profess the name of God, who bear the image of God, answerable to the high and holy privileges received from God. Note, 2. The reason or argument enforcing the duty, *he hath called you to his kingdom and glory*, that is, to grace; and by grace here to glory hereafter; such as are called to the one, are called to both; grace is a certain pledge and earnest of glo-

ry, a low degree of glory, and glory the highest degree of grace; such as walk worthy of God now, shall live with him, ere long, to eternal ages.

13 For this cause also, thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as* the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe:*

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

Our apostle's great design, in this chapter, being to set forth the wonderful success which the preaching of the gospel had among the Thessalonians, and also to assign the causes of that success, he having, in the former verses, given the reason of this success on his own part, namely, his sincerity in preaching it, and his pious conversation in all things suitable to it; now he comes to show the reason on their part, with all thankfulness to Almighty God for the same: first, they heard it; secondly, they received it: thirdly, they examined it, and found it no fable, but the word of God, and, as such, entertained it, with a divine faith; fourthly, the word thus received did work with a mighty power and efficacy in them that believed, that is, was accompanied with miracles, and miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit, then to confirm them in the faith of what they did believe; and the word has also now an efficacious energy and divine efficacy accompanying it in the hearts of believers, working upon the will, not in a way of compulsion, but in a way congruous to the nature and liberty of the will, by a divine influx, *Tollendo resistentiam, non voluntatis libertatem*, (as the great St. Austin speaks.) Observe next, St. Paul farther proves the efficacious success which the word had amongst the Thessalonians, from their constancy and patience under the sharpest sufferings for the word's sake; "Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen:" as if he had said, "You of the christian church in Thessalonica, have shown yourselves like to the christian churches in Judea, in patient suffering persecution from your friends and kinsfolks, from your countrymen and fellow-citizens, as they did from the unbelieving Jews." Note, thence, That where the word is efficaciously received, it makes the embracer of it endure the hardest trials and sufferings rather than renounce it. Note, 2. That there neither is, nor can be, any better evidence that the word of God is effectually received, than when it enables christians to bear afflictions, and undergo persecutions with christian courage and holy resolution; *Ye have suffered like things*: but of whom? *Of your own countrymen* at Thessalonica, as the churches in Judea did of the Jews. Learn thence, That such is the fury of a persecuting spirit, that when men are judicially given up of God unto it, they will break all bonds, both natural, civil, and religious, and turn barbarous and savage,

like wolves and tigers, towards those of their own flesh, who dare not deny the truth, which they persecute and oppose. Here the churches in Judea and Thessalonica were persecuted alike by their own countrymen, "Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews."

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Our apostle's design being to encourage the Thessalonians to patience and constancy under their persecutions for christianity, he acquaints them, that they did not walk alone in this thorny path, but that Jesus Christ, the prophets and apostles, went before them, and every step they took in it, was up to the knees in blood; *They killed the Lord Jesus, &c.* Where observe, The bitter and bloody persecution which the Jews were guilty of, *they killed the Lord Jesus*, and before him their own prophets, called their own because of their own nation, and sent with a peculiar message to them; and now they persecuted, banished and drove away St. Paul, and the rest of the apostles: *they pleased not God*; that is, they highly displeased him, dreadfully provoked him, they were haters of God, hateful to him, now hated of him, and lastly rejected by him; *contrary to all men*, that is, to the common interest of all men, by endeavouring to obstruct the preaching of the gospel, which bringeth salvation to all men; *forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles*, that is, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and consequently obstructing what in them lay, the salvation almost of all the world; *filling up the measure of their sins*, till at last, the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost, in their judicial obduration, and the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; after which the Jews have been no more a people, but scattered abroad through the face of the earth. From the whole, learn, 1. That it is a singular support to suffering saints, to consider, that Christ and his apostles suffered before them; and by his sufferings, has sanctified a state of affliction and persecution to them. Learn, 2. That a spirit of persecution seems oftentimes to run in the blood, and passes from parent to child, through many generations. Persecution became, as it were hereditary, and, in a sort, transient from one generation to another among the Jews; they killed Christ, stoned the prophets, and persecuted the apostles. Note, 3. How St. Paul ranks and reckons them that are enemies to the preaching of the gospel, with the obstinate shedders of Christ's blood; they are enrolled amongst the capital enemies of mankind; *They killed the Lord of life, forbidding us to preach to the Gentiles*; such as are enemies to preaching, are enemies to the souls of men. Object. But what need so much preaching amongst us, who are converted from heathenism to christianity? Ans. It is one thing to be converted from heathenism to christianity, and another thing to be converted from sin to God. Object. But we have the bible for that end, and can make use of that. Ans. Observe,

it, and you will find, that such as are no friends to the pulpit, are usually none of the best friends to the Bible; follow them to their families, how doth the Bible lie by as a neglected book amongst them; and it must be a large charity, that can judge it is conscientiously used in the closet, when it is carelessly neglected in the family.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again; but satan hindered us.

Observe here, That St. Paul having all along, in the chapter before us, compared himself to a tender father, and a nursing mother, for his affectionate love unto, and his solicitous concern for, these christian converts; he doth in the words before us, declare, that this constrained absence from them, occasioned him no less grief than that of a tender father, when bereft of his beloved children; or that of an indulgent mother, when the child she loves as her own soul, is taken violently from her. *We, brethren, being taken from you*; the words intimate such a separation as death makes between a father and a child, which rends the parent's heart in sunder, and is like cutting off a limb or member from his body, exquisitely painful; intimating, that the enforced absence of a pastor from his beloved people though but for a short season, is very afflictive. Ah! How heart rending then is a total and final separation from each other, occasioned either by natural or civil death! Observe, 2. St. Paul tells them, that though persecutors had deprived them of his bodily presence, yet not of his heart, for though not in body, yet in mind he was present with them; minister and people, like true lovers, are present with each other in soul, when separated in body. It is a singular comfort to christians under persecution, that their enemies can neither deprive them of the presence of God, nor the prayers of their faithful ministers; their prayers may meet, when their persons are distant, and they may be present in spirit, in heart and affection, when at the ends of the earth. Observe, 3. How he expresses his desire and endeavour, his fervent purpose, and fixed resolution to come unto them, to see their face, to refresh them, and be refreshed by them: "I endeavoured abundantly to see your face, but satan hindered;" that is, his instruments, persecutors, lay in wait for him, on the one hand, and caused some dissensions in other churches, which detained him from coming to them; on the other hand, *satan hindered*. Learn thence, that such as obstruct the preaching and propagating of the gospel, and persecute the promoters of it, are satan's instruments and ministers. 2. That such as do satan's work, it is fit they should bear his name. Thus Rev. ii. 13. "The devil shall cast some of you into prison," that is, his servants: it is fit that master and servant should have both one name.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *are* not even ye in

the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

Here, in the close of the chapter, St. Paul acquaints the Thessalonians with the true reason why he had such an endearing affection for them, and such a fervent desire to be present with them, they were his *hope*, his *joy*, his *crown of rejoicing*; that is, they were then the cause of his hope, not the ground and foundation of his hope; that Christ alone was; but their conversion by his ministry was, in concurrence with other things, a good ground of hope concerning his own salvation; ye are now my *hope*, my *joy*, and *crown of rejoicing*. Where note, A very remarkable gradation in the words; he calls them his *hope*, his *joy*, and his *crown of rejoicing*. His hope, that is, the matter of his hope, that they shall be saved; his joy, that is the occasion of his joy, in their conversion by his ministry; and his crown of rejoicing in Christ's presence at his coming, that is, the fruit and success of his ministry amongst them, would add to his crown, and redound to his glory in the day of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That there are degrees of glory in heaven, probably according to the measures and degrees of service we have done for God on earth; there is, no doubt, an equality of glory there, as to the essentials, but not with respect to the accidentals; besides the joy and satisfaction which the ministers of Christ are partakers of in heaven, in common with other glorified saints, they have an additional joy and glory from the success of their pious and painful labors, which God has crowned with the conversion and edification of many souls. Lord! Who would not study, spend and be spent in the service of such a master? Is it not worth all our labor and sufferings, to appear in the presence of Christ, accompanied with all those souls whom we have instrumentally either brought home, or built up in the most holy faith, either converted, comforted, or confirmed in the way to heaven? To hear one spiritual child say, "Lord, this is the instrument by whom I believed;" another, "This is the minister by whom I was established;" a third, "This is he that quickened me by his example, and provoked me to love, and to good works: O blessed be God that I ever saw his face, and heard his voice!" But, Lord, what will it be to hear thy blessed voice saying to us, "*Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of me your Lord*:" I have kept an exact account of all your fervent prayers for your people, of all your instructive and persuasive sermons, of all your sighs and groans poured forth before me, on behalf of those whom ye would have persuaded to be happy but could not! Every tear from your eye, and drop of sweat from your face, shall now meet with an eternal recompence: you shall now find me, according to my promise, not *unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love*." O what a master do the ministers of Christ serve! Who would not sacrifice all that is dear for him, who has 'the assurance of such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory from him? Learn, 2. That the saints of God in heaven will know one another there: why else doth St. Paul here comfort himself, that these Thessalonians, whom he converted to Christ, would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ? Surely, this must needs suppose and imply his distinct knowledge of them in that day; if he did not know them, how could he rejoice in them? Doubtless we may

allow in that state all that knowledge which is accumulative and perfective, whatever may heighten our felicity, and increase our satisfaction, as this must needs be allowed to do. Lord, make us faithful to the death, faithful to thee, faithful to our own souls, faithful to our people; and then, as they are now our hope and joy, so will they be our crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

The design of our apostle in this, is the same with that of the foregoing chapter, namely, to give the Thessalonians the highest assurance, possible of his affectionate regard unto them, of his solicitous care and concern for them, and of his utmost endeavours to confirm and settle them in the faith of Christ, what afflictions and persecutions soever it might expose them to; and accordingly, he thus bespeaks them:

WHEREFORE, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone,

2 And sent Timotheus our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith;

At the latter end of the foregoing chapter, St. Paul acquainted the Thessalonians with his desires and intentions to come once and again unto them, but was always providentially hindered. Now here he gives them to understand, that such was the fervor of his affection towards them, that although he could not come, yet he could not forbear to send to them, though he left himself alone, preferring their necessity before his own convenience: *When we could no longer forbear*; that is, "When I could no longer satisfy myself without knowing your state and condition, I chose, though with much inconvenience to myself, rather to be left at Athens alone, in the midst of my afflictions and tribulations, than that you should be longer destitute of one to supply my absence, in order to your confirmation and comfort." See here a special instance of ministerial love and affection in St. Paul, preferring the church's good before his own comfort, and postponing his own convenience to their necessity; though Timothy's company was very desirable, very necessary and useful for him, yet he denies himself to serve them; *We thought it good to be left at Athens alone.* Observe, 2. The person sent by him Timothy, with his deserved character, and commendation, a brother, that is, a christian, a believer, a brother in Christ: a minister of God, that is, a preacher of the gospel; his fellow-laborer, or one that joined heart and hand with him in the preaching of the gospel from place to place. See here, a special instance of St. Paul's apostolical care for the churches of Christ, when he could not visit them in person, he sends to them, not any one he could come at, but the fittest he could get, one who was most likely, through God's assistance and blessing, to carry on the work he was sent about: *I sent you Timotheus*

my brother. Observe, 3. The great end for which he was sent unto them; it was to confirm them, and to comfort them; to confirm them in the faith of Christ, and to comfort them under all their sufferings for the sake of Christ. The strongest faith needs confirmation and establishment; and it is the minister's duty, in trying times especially, to guard his people's faith upon the stability whereof their strength and safety doth depend.

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

As if the apostle had said, one great end why I have sent Timothy among you, is this, lest either upon the account of your own afflictions, or my sufferings, you should be moved from your steadfastness, either drawn away by fraud and flattery, or driven away by force and terror?" *that no man be moved by these afflictions.* Observe also, The argument to confirm them in the faith, amidst all their sufferings and afflictions, and that is drawn from the pleasure and purpose, the ordination and appointment of God, concerning their afflictions; *Ye yourselves know, that we are thereunto appointed.* Learn hence, 1. That the best of saints are subject to be moved by their afflictions. 2. That it is the high commendation of a christian, not to stir or be moved from his steadfastness by the heaviest shock of affliction that may fall upon him? *That no man be moved by these afflictions.* Some render the word *appointed*, set as a mark to be shot at; some saints, with holy Job, are set on purpose as a mark for the arrow of affliction to be levelled at, yet then are they to keep their ground, and stand immovable; we honor God abundantly, when we are immoveable in our active obedience; and we glorify him eminently, when we are immoveable in our passive obedience; when we stand to it in the midst of sufferings, and are no more moved either by cowardice or impatience, than a post that is shot at. This is the glory of a christian, and his great duty, and it is the glory of God, and his certain due. Learn, 3. That believers are under a divine appointment from God himself, to undergo trouble and affliction. The ultimate destination of believers is to rest. God hath not appointed them unto wrath, but to obtain salvation: but the intermediate destination of them is to trouble and affliction, in order unto rest, and to prepare them for that rest. Seeing then that afflictions are appointed to us, and we appointed to them, seeing there is a decree of God concerning them, a decree as to the matter of them, as to the manner of them, as to the measure of them, as to the time of them, when they shall commence, how far they shall advance, how long they shall continue, seeing every thing in affliction is under an appointment; how meek and humble, how patient and submissive ought the christian's spirit to be under them? And with what steadiness of expectation may and ought he to look up to heaven for a sanctified use and improvement of them? Let no man be moved by afflictions, knowing we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Our apostle informed the Thessalonians in the foregoing verse, with the purpose and decree of God concerning the afflictions which were before them; in this verse he appeals to themselves, as to his own sincerity, in acquainting them, at their first conversion, that they must, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of God, and it came to pass accordingly; *when we were with you*, says the apostle, *we told you before it came to pass, that we should suffer tribulation*, and it shortly after came to pass as we told you. Learn hence, That it is the duty of the ministers of Christ to give timely warning of, and to acquaint young converts early with, the pleasure of God, to exercise all that belong to him with the cross, with variety of afflictions, trials, and sufferings, before they come, that so they may not stumble, nor be offended at them when they come. The sincerity of our apostle is here very remarkable; when he came first to preach the gospel at Thessalonica, he did not flatter them with the expectation of an earthly paradise of pleasure, but told them plainly, that christianity had a cross attending it, that a suffering hour would come, and they must expect it; *when we were with you, we told you that we should suffer tribulation*. Learn, 2. That when christians have had timely notice from the ministers of God, and from the word of God, of approaching trials and troubles, before they come, they ought to fore-arm themselves, and not to faint or sink under them when they come, much less to forsake religion because of them, but to continue steadfast, knowing that the heavier the cross is, the weightier will their crown be; for affliction, there is glory; for light affliction, a weight of glory, and for *light affliction, which is but for a moment, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

6 But now, when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

Observe here, 1. One special end why St. Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica, it was to know their faith, that is, their constancy in the faith; for he had a fear upon him lest satan the tempter had taken occasion; from the present persecution they were under to turn them from christianity; and that by their yielding to his temptation, and apostatizing from the faith, his labor, in the gospel had been in vain amongst them. Here note, That the saints' persecutions are called temptations, and ascribed to satan the tempter, who, by his ministers and instruments, endeavours to hinder the progress of the gospel, and by persecutions, to terrify and turn men from the profession of it. Note farther, That there is an holy jealousy in the minds of the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they hope the best, yet are apt to fear the worst, with reference to

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the poor people, lest they should run in vain, and labor in vain amongst them; for though their labor shall not be in vain, with respect to themselves, their reward is with the Lord; (the careful nurse shall be paid, though the child dies at the breast;) yet with respect to their people, they may be in vain, yea worse, for a testimony against them, St. Mark vi. 11. Observe, 2. How happily the apostle's fear was prevented, touching these Thessalonians, by the return of Timothy, and the good tidings which he carried along with him, of the steadfastness of their faith, of the fervency of their charity, of their particular respect to himself, having always remembrance of him in their prayers, and making a respective mention of his ministerial labors and diligence, and this always when they had occasion to speak of him. And lastly, By their passionate and impatient desire to see him, (so much the original word signifies) to which he adds, that his desire was no less ardent to see them, though the providence of God had hitherto hindered him. Learn hence, That the best tidings which can be brought to the ear of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, is this, That his people are sound and steadfast in the faith, maintainers of charity, and promoters of good works, and do account highly of, and honorably esteem the ministers and ambassadors of Jesus Christ; *Timothy brought us good tidings of your faith, charity, and kind remembrance of us*. Learn farther, From the Thessalonians' fervent desire to see St. Paul, and he to see them, that christian love doth earnestly long to evidence itself in christian fellowship, and passionately desires the communion of saints, for the mutual comfort and spiritual advantage of each other; the sweetest privilege, next to communion with God, is communion with his saints. O! What a pleasure is it, to behold the beautiful and blessed graces of the holy Spirit of God, sparkling and shining in each other, exciting and quickening one another, acquainting each other with their griefs, their doubts and fears. No wonder then that the Thessalonians desired so passionately to see St. Paul, and he as earnestly to see them.

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you; for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?

In these words our apostle declares the transcendent joy and overflowing comfort, which was found in his soul, upon the knowledge he had received of the constancy and steadfastness of the faith of these Thessalonians; *we were comforted in our afflictions by your faith*: of all comforts which the people of God can afford to the ministers of the gospel, there is none comparable with that which results from their unfainting perseverance in the faith, and the unblameable holiness of their life. No comfort can be greater than our people's gracious demeanour; this put a kind of new life into St. Paul, in the midst of all the sorrows and sufferings

the afflictions and persecutions he underwent. *Now we live, says he, if ye stand fast in the Lord*, that is, a life of joy and comfort; or, *we live*, that is, it will be a mean to prolong our life, as well as add to the comfort of it; and the contrary tends to the shortening of our days. Those that do impair the cheerfulness of their ministers' lives, such as deaden their spirits, and break their hearts, by their obstinate non-compliance with the rules of the gospel, are no better than murderers in the account of God. If ministers may, as all other persons do, value their lives by the joy and comfort of them, then may they say, with the great apostle, "*We live*, as we see any of our people *stand fast in the Lord*; and we die, as we see others *slack fast in their sins*." Observe farther, How highly thankful the apostle was to God, and what unspeakable praise he renders to him, for administering to him this occasion of joy by the constancy and perseverance of the christians' faith at Thessalonica; *What thanks can we render to God for you, and for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes?* The faithful ministers of Christ think that their hearts can never sufficiently be carried forth in thankfulness to God, for the success of their labors in the lives of their people; *What thanks can we render?* As if he had said, "I can never be sufficiently thankful, or I can never fully express my thankfulness to God for this honor, this favor, this benefit, that any one soul should be brought home to God by my ministry, much more that a christian church should be planted by my endeavours at Thessalonica; and that God should keep them steady and steadfast in shaking times, and support them under such persecutions and trials as would shock an ordinary patience and constancy of mind: O! *What thanks can I render God for this joy?*"

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Observe here, How abounding St. Paul was in the duty of prayer for the Thessalonians; his prayer was assiduous and constant, *night and day*; it imports frequency and constancy in performance of the duty, Luke iii. 37. His prayer was also very fervent and affectionate, *praying exceedingly*, excessively, as the word will bear. Spiritual affections are strong and vehement. Note here, The admirable pattern which St. Paul sets before all the bishops and pastors of the church to the end of the world, namely, to be much, very much in prayer, to abound in this duty. Observe, farther, The subject matter of St. Paul's prayer, *That he might see their face, and perfect what was yet lacking in their faith*. Here note, That St. Paul's short stay among the Thessalonians when he first planted the gospel, did not permit so full and complete an explication of the matters and mysteries of christianity, as the apostle did desire; he therefore prays that God would bring him again amongst them, that he might supply what was wanting in their faith, that he might increase their knowledge, confirm their faith, inflame their love, excite their desires, quicken their endeavours, and carry on that good work to perfection in them, of which God had laid the foundation by him. Learn hence, 1. That even in the faith of the most renowned, as well as of the new converted christians, there is some deficiency and defect. 2. That one great end of the ministry of the

word is, to help faith forward towards perfection; that which was the instrument to beget faith, is also the mean of increasing and confirming it, namely, the ordinances of God in general, and the ministry of the word in particular. As faith cometh by hearing, so is it confirmed by hearing also; *longing to see your face, that we might perfect what is lacking in your faith*.

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you;

Observe here, 1. An implicit acknowledgement that our journeys intended, and visits designed to be given to our friends, are not in our power, but under the direction of God; we cannot visit a friend when we please, but when God will give us leave: we are not in our own dispose, but God's. Accordingly here, St. Paul begs of God to direct his way unto them, that all obstacles and impediments being removed, the providence of God might direct him, as in a right line, unto them, as the original word imports. Observe, 2. The persons whom he directs his prayers to, for this mercy, to God and Christ. Where note, That Christ is invoked as well as the Father, he is therefore God as well as the Father; because this invocation of him by all persons, proves him omniscient, searching the hearts of men, and also omnipresent, being with his people in all places; and consequently proves our Lord Jesus Christ to be truly and undeniably God.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted. Where note, The true property of christian love; it is, 1. A brotherly affection, which every true christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for grace sake; and, 2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures all good for them.

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Here a particular and special reason is assigned, why he prayed so fervently for their *abounding in love*, namely, in order to their establishment in *faith and holiness*; teaching us, that as true love evidences the co-existence of all graces, so it gives stability and establishment to all graces. Learn hence, 1. That growth in grace is accompanied

with stability both in faith and holiness. 1. That a general and abounding charity, being that by which we become most like unto God, tends exceedingly to our establishment in all grace, and renders us *unblameable before God*, at the appearance of Christ. Learn, 3. That there will be no possibility of appearing *unblameable before Christ* at his coming, without the love and practice of universal holiness in our christian course. Learn, 4. That the perfecting of a saint's graces, and rendering him altogether unblameable, without spot or imperfection in grace and holiness, is reserved till Christ's coming: then, and not till then, shall our holiness be perfected, our love improved to a seraphim's likeness, all burning; then shall we obey with vigor, praise with cheerfulness, delight in God above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.

*Come then, Lord, down to me,
Or take me up to thee.*

CHAPTER IV.

Our apostle having, in the three foregoing chapters, exhorted the Thessalonians earnestly to contend for, and courageously to persevere in that holy doctrine of faith, which he had preached to them, and planted amongst them, notwithstanding all the storms of persecution raised against them by the unbelieving Jews and opposing Gentiles; he comes now, in the remaining parts of this epistle, to recommend to them several duties and graces, with which, as with so many jewels of invaluable price, they were to adorn their christian conversation; and accordingly he thus bespeaks them, in the chapter now before us, ver. 1.

FURTHERMORE, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

In these words, we have a general exhortation given to the Thessalonians, That according to the doctrine and injunctions formerly given them for an holy conversation suitable to the gospel, they would make it their care and endeavour to abound more and more in the exercise of piety, and onestrip themselves in doing their duty toward God and one another; *We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, &c.* Where note, 1. With what great condescension and earnestness St. Paul applies himself to them; he styles them his brethren, and exhorts and beseeches them. The ministers of Christ must not only be teachers, but beseechers also, meekly and affectionately intreating persons to be kind to themselves, and comply with their present duty. Yet observe. 2. With what authority he backs his intreaty; he beseeches and exhorts by the Lord Jesus, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by his authority, and for his

sake: so that he that despiseth the gentle exhortations of Christ's ministers, despiseth not men, but God; as the authority of a prince is despised, when his messages by his ambassadors are rejected. Note, 3. The general and comprehensive duty which they are exhorted to, namely, to walk so as to please God in their daily conversation, to be found in the practice of all the duties and virtues of a good life. Where note, That St. Paul, in the course of his ministry, did not only explain and unfold gospel mysteries, but urge and enforce moral duties: *Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk.* This must be a minister's care, to acquaint his people, that as the privileges of christianity are very great, so the duties it requires are strict and exact; and those which we call moral duties, are an integral part of our religion; he that is not a moral man, is no christian; let us preach and press second-table duties, with arguments drawn from the first, namely, that they be performed in humble obedience to the command of God, and with a single eye at the glory of God, and from an inward principle of love to God, and then we can never preach up morality too much, nor our people practise it too much. Observe, lastly, The apostle exhorts them to abound more and more, that is, in grace and holiness; christians are to be thankful for, but not satisfied with, their present measures of grace received; God allows us liberty to enlarge our desires after an abundance of his grace; and happy is it where there is found an holy covetousness going along with the grace of God, as there is an insatiable covetousness going along with the gold and treasure of this world: this, says the apostle here, will please God, when ye abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Here our apostle subjoins a reason to enforce, his foregoing exhortation; what he now required of them, was nothing but what at their first conversion to christianity he had commanded them, and that in the name, and by the authority of Jesus Christ, to be performed by them; so that they were not his commands, but Christ's by him, and, as such to be esteemed of them. Learn hence, That the instructions and rules for an holy life, laid down by the apostles before the churches, are to be looked upon as the commandments of Christ, as being dictated by his Spirit, and delivered by his authority, and as such to be received of them, and obeyed by them.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor:

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

This is the will of God, even your sanctification; that is, this is the will of God, eminently and emphatically revealed in his word, that christians should be holy and pure, chaste

and clean: not indulging themselves in those impure and filthy lusts of the flesh, fornication and all manner of uncleanness, which the Gentiles, who knew not the true God savingly, were addicted to, and, in a most beastly manner guilty of; but that every one should know how to possess and make use of his body, and all its members, as the vessel and instrument of the soul, in holiness and honor. Observe here, 1. How the apostle descends from general to particular duties: he exhorted the Thessalonians, ver. 1. in the general, to walk so as to please God: here he exhorteth them in particular, to purity and chastity, both of heart and life, and to watch against all the violent eruptions of concupiscence in their earthly members; teaching us, that the ministers of God must not satisfy themselves with giving general exhortations to a good life, but must treat of particular sins and duties, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim from the other; thus doth our apostle here. Observe, 2. The particular duty exhorted to, sanctification; a comprehensive word, and of a large extent; in the general, it consists in a conformity of our natures to the nature of God, and in a conformity of our lives to the will of God. In particular, sanctification here stands in opposition to all bodily uncleanness, as the next words do plainly show, *that ye should abstain from fornication*, that is, all filthiness and uncleanness contrary to chastity; intimating to us, that as there are no sins that human nature is more inclined to than the lusts of the flesh; so there are no sins that a christian should more guard against, and strive to mortify and subdue, as being contrary to that purity of nature and life which the gospel directs, and the Holy Spirit assists, unto. Observe, 3. The argument which our apostle here uses to enforce his exhortation to purity and holiness, *This is the will of God*; it is both the command of God that we should be holy, and the will of God to make us holy; now the signification of God's will ought to be a sufficient inducement to us to desire it, and endeavour after it. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication*. Observe, 4. The remedy prescribed against all bodily uncleanness, and that is, a careful preserving the vessel of the body free from all fleshly pollution, and in that measure of purity and chastity which is suitable to the honor put upon it by God, in being made a temple for the Holy Ghost, *That every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor*. Where note, the title given to our body, it is called a vessel; it is, first, the Spirit's vessel, he resides in it as in his temple; and accordingly, it seems to be an allusion to the consecrated vessels of the temple, in which a, more than ordinary cleanness and purity was found: secondly, It is the soul's vessel, it is its vessel or receptacle, in which, for a time, it is preserved, and it is the instrument of the soul, by which it acts and performs its office and function. Now it is every person's, every man and woman's duty, to possess their body, and to be master of it, not to be possessed by it, or enslaved to it, but to keep it in subjection to, and as the instrument of the soul; the body is God's curious workmanship, it is Christ's precious purchase, it is the soul's receptacle, it is the Holy Ghost's temple; therefore, to be kept holy, pure and clean, like the consecrated vessels of the temple. Observe, 5. our apostle exhorts the Thessalonians, not only to abstain from the outward act of uncleanness, but to mortify and subdue the inward *lusts of concupiscence*, ver. 5. or, as the

word signifies, the feverish fit, or violent passion of burning desire which boileth within, through all the members of the body without. There is a divine art in the exercise of chastity, and no small skill required to keep a man's soul and body free from fleshly uncleanness; in order to which, inordinate desires must be resisted, the outward senses guarded, enticing and ensnaring objects avoided, wanton company declined, meat, drink, and sleep, soberly used, our lawful callings diligently followed, the first motions to uncleanness suppressed, prayer to God renewed; and, if these prevail not, marriage, God's special remedy, holily made use of. Thus may christians possess their vessels in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence.

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you, and testified:

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

Here we have another positive duty pressed upon the Thessalonians, in which a great part of their sanctification or holiness would discover itself, namely, justice and equity in all their dealings, man with man. Thessalonica was a city of great trade and merchandise; therefore, the apostle directs them, in their traffic and commerce, neither by fraud nor force to overreach and go beyond one another: and the apostle, saying, *Let none go beyond and defraud his brother*, that is, his fellow christian, doth not suppose it lawful to defraud such as were not their brethren, but only lets them see that for christians to defraud and cheat, to overreach and go beyond one another, would be a very great aggravation of their crime, seeing the laws of their religion, as well as the light of nature, condemn all such injustice and dishonesty: and accordingly, the apostle adds a reason to enforce his exhortation, drawn from the dreadful effect of all such sins; namely, that it exposes and lays open the guilty person to the dreadful vengeance of God: *The Lord is the avenger of all such*. Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God has variously dispensed the gifts of providence to mankind; to some more, to others less; to some in one kind, to others in another: so that men cannot live without mutual commerce one with another. Learn, 2. That there is such a covetous and insatiable desire of wealth in the heart of man, that little regarding the measure of worldly things, which God has dispensed unto him, he lies at catch to take all advantages of his neighbour in matters of commerce, and, by defrauding and over-reaching him, seeks to increase his own worldly estate, with impairing of others; *Let no man go beyond his brother*: the apostle by forbidding this evil, plainly supposes man to be very prone and ready to fall into it. Learn, 3. That the sin of injustice in traffic and commerce, is so very heinous in the sight of God, that such men as are guilty of it, without repentance, must never expect to escape the vengeance of God, either here or hereafter; God is the avenger of all such

Observe next, The reasons urged by St. Paul to enforce his foregoing exhortations to purity and justice. The first is taken from the design of God in their vocation; when called out of their heathenish state to christianity, they were called not to uncleanness, but out of uncleanness unto holiness. The second is taken from the heinousness of their sin, who shall despise or reject the commands here given for holiness and sanctification; *he that despiseth, despiseth not man but God*; to despise the minister of God in a command which he delivers from God, is to despise God himself; the apostle gave these commands by the direction of the Holy Spirit, which was given him for that end; *Who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit: Therefore, says he, he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.* Where note, That although the reason here given, why such as despised the apostle, despised God himself, be peculiar to St. Paul, who had the Holy Spirit to guide him infallibly: yet so far as the ordinary ministers of Christ do follow the apostle's steps, and deliver nothing but what is agreeable to the word of God, the contempt of their message is a despising of God himself: *He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.*

9 But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And, indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

Our apostle proceeds from an exhortation to chastity and justice, to press that of love, called here *brotherly love*, because it has all christians, all our fellow members in Christ for its object; and he persuades to the practice of it by a winning insinuation, that he need not say much upon this argument, because they were taught of God, that is, by the gospel of God, and influenced by the Spirit of God, to love one another. And observe we farther, The extensiveness of their love, it was not confined to a party, only to them in Thessalonica, but throughout all Macedonia; however he desires them to extend it still farther, *to abound more and more*: that is, first in the extent of it, let it reach not only the saints throughout all Macedonia, but even to them at the ends of the earth: secondly, in the measure of it, to excel even themselves in the degrees of their love. Learn hence, That neither brotherly love, nor any other christian grace, doth advance to such an height in any saint here, but it is still capable of further augmentation and increase, both intensively, by advancing to further measures and higher degrees of perfection, and extensively reaching to more objects, who ought to be sharers in our love.

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

It is supposed by some, that the charity and bounty of these Thessalonians, mentioned in the foregoing verses, occasioned some persons to be idle, and carry tales from house

to house, seeking by such flatteries and insinuations to maintain themselves without working; the apostle therefore commands every man to work at some calling, that they neither be a burden to the church, nor give a scandal to the heathen. *Study to be quiet*, that is, to be of a peaceable spirit and temper; and the original word imports an ambitious study; it ought to be our ambitious desire to live quietly and peaceably with all men; and to live so with some men will require study and earnest endeavour: *If it be possible, live peaceably with all men*, says St. Paul, Rom. xii. 18. Implying, that there are some men that it is impossible to live peaceably with; and whereas he adds, *doing our own business and working with our own hands*; that apostolical injunction requires, that every person be well employed, and found in the way of an honest and industrious diligence, for no man is sent into the world to be idle; and, as it is every man's duty, so it is also his privilege, to have a calling: the want of which exposes to innumerable temptations, for the devil finds an idle person always ready to run his errand.

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

Our apostle having exhorted the Thessalonians to industry and diligence in the foregoing verse, he presses it with a double argument in this verse. 1. Hereby they should walk honestly towards them that are without, that is in a decent and seemly manner in the eyes of unconverted Pagans, who are said to be without, because without the pale of the visible church: and, 2. Because, by God's blessing upon their industry, they would attain to such a competency of the things of this life, as to lack nothing which the wisdom of God saw fit and convenient for them; so that by industrious diligence we please God, we profit ourselves, are serviceable to the public, we silence and stop the mouths of the enemies of religion, and beautify our profession with a becoming conversation.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Our apostle, from this verse to the end of the chapter, exhorts the Thessalonians to moderate their grief and sorrow for their friends who died in Christ, many of which, no doubt, were martyrs for the truth in those days of persecution: he lays down many consolatory arguments, as so many sovereign antidotes against immoderate sorrow for the death of pious relations; and, first, he acquaints them, that such sorrow as is excessive, would be more like Pagans than christians, who mourn without hope of any life after this, that is, of a resurrection from the grave, and a future state of immortality. Our apostle doth not forbid sorrow for the dead absolutely, which Christ showed for Lazarus, and the church for Stephen, but it is excessive sorrow only that is here condemned. Learn hence, 1. That all sorrow for the death of friends is not unlawful, or forbidden to christians; the christian religion doth not destroy natural affec-

tions, but teaches us to moderate them. Learn, 2. That there is a mighty difference between the christian's sorrow for the dead, and theirs who are strangers to christianity: the sorrow of the heathen was extravagant and excessive in the measure; foolish, cruel, and impious in the manner; they tore their hair, beat their breasts, cut their flesh, and ran howling up and down in the most desperate manner: but the christian's sorrow is sober, moderate, silent, free from ostentation, under the government of reason and religion. Learn, 3. That the belief of a future state, and the hope of a joyful resurrection, is the cause of this great difference; it is ignorance of the happiness of glorified saints in heaven, which is the cause of our immoderate sorrow for their death, here on earth.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

St. Paul having, in the foregoing verse, dissuaded from immoderate grief and sorrow for the death of relations, comes now to lay down several considerations or consolatory arguments in order to it. The first word of comfort is this, That our relations over whom we mourn, are but fallen asleep; the grave is a bed, in which the saint is laid to rest, his body rests in a bed of dust, as in a safe and consecrated dormitory, till the morning of the resurrection: and, if the night be long, the morning will be the more joyous. The second comfort is, they sleep in Jesus, that is, in union with Jesus, as members of his body; in the faith of Jesus, that is, in such a belief of the doctrine of Christ, as is accompanied with an holy obedience to the commands of Christ. The third consolatory word is this, God will come, that is, to judgment, and when he cometh, will bring his sleeping saints with him, that is, he will bring their souls from heaven, their bodies from the grave. Body and soul united he shall take up to himself into the clouds, and then carry all his saints back with him into heaven. A fourth is this, our relations are not alone in death; *Jesus died*; the captain of our salvation marched before us through the black regions of death and the grave, and has perfumed the bed of the grave, by his own lying in it. Note here, The apostle says Jesus died, the saints sleep; a believer's death is called a sleep; I do not find that Christ's death is called a sleep; no, his death was death indeed, death with a curse in it: but the believer's death is turned by Christ into a sweet and silent sleep. Again, Jesus died and *rose again*, that is a comforting consideration, he was laid, but not lost in the grave: he rose by his own power, he rose as our head and representative, and accordingly, all his saints are risen in him, and shall rise after him; *because I live*, says Christ, *you shall live also*.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them, which are asleep.

In this verse St. Paul obviates an objection: some might say, that the saints found alive at the last day might be sooner happy than the dead saints; no, says the apostle,

they that are alive, shall not prevent them that sleep, they shall not prevent their rising, nor shall they get the start of them, or get to heaven before them, or have any advantage above them; the living saint shall not be made happy without them, nor one moment before them. Learn hence, That the resurrection which the saints that sleep in Jesus shall be made partakers of, shall put them into as full a capacity of the glory of Christ's coming, as if they had remained alive in the body, till that blessed hour: nay, the dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, the saints who sleep in the grave at Christ's coming, shall be so far from being made less happy, or later happy, than the saints who shall be found alive, that they shall be first remembered: Christ's first care will be about his dead saints; they that have slept so long in their bed of dust shall be first awakened, before any thing be done about them that never slept; if there be any privilege, any joy, any triumph, greater than others, such as sleep in Jesus, and especially such as have suffered for Jesus, shall be partakers of it at that great day.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

These words give us the assurance of the certainty of Christ's second coming, and of the solemn manner of it, and of the consequence of it. Observe, 1. The certainty of our Lord's coming; *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven*; that is, the Lord Jesus, the Mediator: he will not depute an angel, but descend himself, to finish that last part of his mediatorial office. Christ will come personally, for the judgment will be managed visibly; and for the recompence of his abasement, it is requisite that he that was judged by the world, should come and judge the world. Reason says, he may come and judge the world, for he made it; faith says, he must and shall come to judge the world, for he has promised it. John xiv. 2. Let us then keep up our faith, and our faith will keep up our hearts. Observe, 2. The awful and solemn manner of our Lord's coming, and that is threefold: 1. He shall descend with a shout; the original word signifies such a shout as is heard among seamen when they descry the haven, and with united voices cry out, *A shore, a shore*. 2. With the voice of an archangel; probable it is, that Christ himself shall give the word of command, both to the quick and dead, to appear before him, and that this command shall be proclaimed by an archangel. 3. With the trump of God; the angel's proclamation shall be confirmed by sound of a trumpet, which will be heard far and near, even by those who are in the graves, and in the depth of the sea. Learn hence, That our Lord's second coming at the great day, to judge the quick and the dead, shall be attended with such solemnity, that all the terror, majesty, and dreadful reverence, which has been ever seen upon the earth, shall fall infinitely short of it. Great was the terror on mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, but far greater will the terror be at the day of judgment; when Christ comes to punish the transgressors of that law, and the disobeyers of his gospel. Observe, 3. The blessed consequence of his coming, namely, the resurrection of his saints; *The dead in*

Christ shall rise first; the saints shall rise with the very same bodies which they laid down in the grave; and they shall rise first, that is, before those who are alive shall be changed: though it is very probable that there will be no considerable difference of time between the glorification of the raised saints, and those that are alive at Christ's coming, yet it seems evident, that the dead saints shall be raised, and in their bodies be glorified, before they that are alive shall be changed.

17 Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

Observe here, 1. The triumphant ascension both of the living and sleeping saints, together into the clouds; *We which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.* This ascension shall be effected by the power of Christ, by the ministry of angels, and by the spirituality of the saints' own bodies. Learn hence, That the descent of the saints of God into the grave, is not with so much weakness, ignominy and abasement, as their ascent after the resurrection, to meet their Lord in the air, shall be with power, triumph, and glory: Christ shall draw them, clouds shall carry them, angels shall conduct them. Observe, 2. The blessed meeting of all the saints together in one body, to take their flight together to meet the Lord Jesus, who comes from the third heaven to meet them in the lower region of the air, when Christ will own them in their persons, own them in their services, own them in their sufferings, and they shall receive their full and final benediction from the mouth of Christ, and take an everlasting possession of the heavenly kingdom together with Christ. Observe, 3. The saints' cohabitation and fellowship with Christ, together with its extent and duration, they shall ever be with the Lord; this implies the saints' presence with Christ, their vision and sight of him, their fruition and enjoyment of him, their delectation in him, their conformity to him. Learn hence, that the top and height of the saints' blessedness in heaven consists in this, that they shall for ever be there with Christ.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

That is, draw matter of consolation to yourselves from the foregoing considerations, against the loss of your deceased friends; intimating that the best and choicest of comforts, for supporting the spirits of men under afflictions in general, and the loss of dear relations in particular, are drawn from the holy scriptures; *comfort one another with these words,* that is with such scriptural words as he had now written.

CHAPTER V.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, treated of Christ's second coming to judgment, and foreseeing that some curious persons might take occasion from thence to inquire into the time when the general resurrection and future judgment should be, in this chapter he makes it his business to divert them from all such inquiries, and to put

them upon the practice and performance of such duties as would prepare and fit them for that solemn time. Where note, That it was revealed to St Paul when he wrote this epistle, that there should be a second coming of Christ to judgment, and that it should not be till the departing from the faith, till the revelation and destruction of antichrist. 2 Thes. ii. 3. This it seems was an after revelation, for the Lord did not at once, reveal all his secrets to his servants, but by parcels.

BUT of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

As if our apostle had said, "Although I have told you that there will be a general resurrection, and future judgment, when Christ will certainly come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, yet I suppose you do not expect that I should write to you of the particular time of his coming; for you have been told that his coming will be like the coming of a thief, without warning and without noise, when persons are most secure, least suspecting, and wholly unprovided for it; yea, as the pains of a woman in travail, which are unavoidable: the thief may perhaps not come, but the pains of child-birth must come, and also be painful when they come." Learn hence, 1. That the wisdom of God has thought fit to conceal and keep secret the determinate time of Christ's coming to judgment, and yet there is an itching curiosity in man's nature to search and pry into that profound secret, though the knowledge of it is not only impossible, but would prove unprofitable and hurtful to mankind, making the world secure and careless; whereas, not knowing the hour when our Lord cometh, should oblige us to be upon our watch every hour. Note then, That our Lord will certainly come at one hour or other, but at what hour he will come cannot certainly be known, yet there is no hour when we can promise ourselves that he will not come. Note lastly, That the pain and sorrow, the trouble and horror which the day of the Lord will bring upon such as are barely and unprepared for it, no tongue can utter, no heart can conceive; the greatest of earthly and bodily torments and sorrows, such as the pangs of a woman in travail, being but weak shadows, and slender representations of it, the day of the Lord cometh as *travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.*

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and

the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness,

Note here, The wisdom and holy caution of our apostle in his application to the Thessalonians; he had in the foregoing verses asserted the certainty and suddenness of Christ's coming, namely, to destroy Jerusalem, and to judge the world. Now lest these christians should be terrified in their minds, and shaken with apprehensions of fear from that sudden destruction he had mentioned, he casts in a reasonable word of comfort here in the words before us, assuring them that were sincere christians amongst them, that how sudden soever the coming and appearance of Christ might be, yet it should not find them unready and unprepared for it, because they were not in darkness, but in the light, and were not children of the night, but of the day; that is, they were not now in a state of heathenism, but christianity; they were not any longer in their gross and natural ignorance of God as they were before conversion, but they were the children of the light and of the day; living and walking in the light of the gospel, and in all holiness of conversation. Learn hence, That as sincere christians are freed from the gross darkness of their natural state, from the darkness and ignorance of sin, and do walk in the light of an holy conversation, so their knowledge and practical holiness will be a good security against the terror of surprising afflictions, and particularly against the dread and terror of the day of judgment: "Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

6 Therefore, let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep, sleep in the night: and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night.

8 But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation:

The apostle having acquainted the Thessalonians with the privilege of their converted state, that they were the children of the light, having received a light of knowledge, a light of grace and holiness, and a light of joy and comfort from the gospel, he comes next to infer the duties proper and suitable to persons in such a state; First, Negative, *Let us not sleep, as do others*; sleep is not proper for the day, but the night; the sleep here intended, is the sleep of sin, and of sinful security, whereby all the spiritual senses of a man are bound up, so that he is both unapprehensive of duty, and regardless of his danger. Secondly, Positive, *Let us watch and be sober*; that is, let us be always ready and prepared for Christ's coming; and that we may be so, let us be found in the daily exercise of sobriety, at no time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day overtake us unawares; the exercise of these two graces, watchfulness and sobriety, do best together, and can hardly be separated one from another; he that is not sober, cannot be watchful; and he that is not watchful, can never be ready for Christ's coming: let us therefore (says the apostle)

watch and be sober. Observe next our apostle subjoins a reason to enforce his exhortation to watchfulness and sobriety, because sleep and drunkenness are works of darkness, performed in the night, and are not suitable for the children of the day: "They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunken in the night." The old heathens had their *Bacchanalia*, their drunken feasts in the night; and in the apostle's time, drunkenness was so shameful a vice, that men were ashamed to be seen drunken in the day-time: but, Lord, to what an height of impudence is the intemperance of our age arrived, when christians blush not to do that at mid-day, which heathens were ashamed of at midnight! Observe farther, Another reason suggested why we should be sober and watchful, namely, because our life is a spiritual warfare: it is now a time of fighting, therefore not of sleeping, and intemperate eating and drinking, soldiers must be upon their guard and well armed: accordingly St. Paul directs to the two principal pieces of spiritual armor to guard the most noble and vital parts, namely, the head and the heart; the helmet for the head, and the breastplate for the heart; for these two being the chief fountains of life and sensation, the preserving them safe, is in effect, the preserving of the whole man; and accordingly, the soldiers that were upon their watch, and kept sentinel, never stood without their helmet and breastplate. In allusion to which our apostle here directs us, as christian soldiers, to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation, without which we can never be rightly and duly prepared for our spiritual warfare. Note here, of what admirable use, faith, love, and hope, are to a christian; faith fortifies against destructive temptations, love will preserve from apostasy and revolting, and hope will be of universal use unto us in the exercises of our christian course; it will be a cordial to comfort us, a spur to quicken us, a staff to support us, a bridle to restrain us, an helmet to defend us: "Therefore let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Observe here, 1. A reason enforcing the apostle's exhortation to holiness of life, *For* or because *God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ*. Note here, 1. What a christian is not appointed to; he is not appointed to wrath. 2. What he is appointed to, namely, to obtain salvation. 3. The means by whom a christian doth obtain salvation, and that is by our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That God's ordination and appointment of us to happiness and salvation, doth not discharge us from care and endeavour after the practice of uni-

versal holiness; it is the greatest piece of folly imaginable, from the appointment of the end, to infer the refusal or neglect of the means. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus is the person appointed by God the Father, by whom alone all believers shall obtain salvation. Learn, 3. That nothing short of the death of Christ was sufficient to purchase salvation for us, *we obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us.* Learn, 4. That the great end designed by Christ, in dying for us, was our living to him, in order to our living with him; a life of grace on earth, is our evidence for a life of glory in heaven; *whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.* Observe lastly, The great and important duty which he exhorts the Thessalonians to perform mutually to each other, and that is, to comfort themselves together with this hope, and to edify and build up one another in faith and holiness; *wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, as also ye do;* implying that as it is the duty, so it ought to be the endeavour of christians to edify one another, both in their graces, and in their comforts.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

In these words have we declared both the minister's office, and the people's duty; the minister's office, with respect unto his people, and the people's duty both towards their ministers, and one towards another. The ministerial office and function is here described, and consists of three parts, publicly to labor, privately to admonish, ministerially to rule. To labor in the word and doctrine, the word signifies a labor unto weariness. Our work is the most weighty work, and, blessed be God, the most worthy work too. Admonition consists of two parts, reproving of sins committed, and exhorting to duties neglected; rightly to do both, requires that the minister be a person of knowledge and understanding, of prudence and discretion, of courage and resolution, of integrity, and unblameableness of conversation; to rule not magisterially, much less tyrannically, but in love, and with a spirit of meekness, executing that power which Christ has given for edification, and not for destruction: such a power as the shepherd has over the flock, to guide and conduct it; as the head has over the members, to influence and quicken them; as the father of the family has over the household, to take care of it, and provide for it. Observe, 2. The people's duty to their pastors, or spiritual guides declared; and this is twofold: 1. They are to know them, and this with a knowledge of observation, with a knowledge of approbation, and with a knowledge of imitation. 2. They are highly to esteem them, paying honor to the function, reverence to their persons, and all this in love, and for their work's sake. Observe lastly, The people's duty one towards another, *and be at peace among yourselves;* such a people can never join hearts in duty, that cannot join hands in love: christian love is a nursing mother to all graces, and tends exceedingly to make the work of the ministry successful; but when

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strife and dissension, when discord and division prevail either amongst the people themselves, or betwixt minister and people, farewell all expectations of success from the ablest ministry upon earth.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men.

Here our apostle directs the ministers of Christ how to carry themselves towards their people, namely, that they should admonish those that are unruly, and walk disorderly, that they should *comfort the feeble-minded*, such as are dispirited by, and dejected under their afflictions, that they should bear with the weak in faith, and be patient towards all mankind. Note hence, That the church of Christ here on earth, is like an hospital of sickly and infirm persons, laboring under great variety of spiritual diseases, and consequently fit objects of Christ's ministers, to exercise their patience and pains upon; some unruly, some weak, some feeble-minded; every person, every member of the church is a patient, and every patient has his particular distemper, which calls for indefatigable diligence, and invincible patience, from such as are spiritual physicians.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.—

Our apostle from this verse closes his epistle with a general exhortation to all christians to be found in the practice of several necessary and important duties, the first of which is to abstain from all revenge, *render to no man evil for evil;* a malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a christian, that it is the baseness of a man. Let him that does the wrong look to it, could an heathen say; not only revenge in the action, but in the affection, is greatly sinful before God, and deeply penal also; as jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice and revenge is the rage of the devil, it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature.

—But ever follow that which is good, &c.

By good here, as it stands in opposition to rendering evil, must be understood good-will and beneficence, or doing good to enemies, and this the apostle would have us follow, or, as the word signifies, pursue with eagerness, as the hunter doth his game, and this continually. *Ever follow that which is good* without interruption, notwithstanding a multiplication of injuries; and this not only among themselves, who were christian professors, but even among heathens (with whom they lived) though bitter enemies to christianity. Learn hence, That a christian must not turn vindictive, and impatient, or incline to any desires or motions towards private revenge, notwithstanding the malicious temper of his adversary continues; but instead of being overcome of evil, must labor “to overcome evil with good; render to no man evil for evil, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.”

11 M

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you—

Observe here, 1. Three very extensive and comprehensive duties, which our apostle exhorts unto, all which have a kind of universality annexed unto them; now the more comprehensive any duty is, the greater its obligation is; the first duty is to *rejoice evermore*, that is, to carry ourselves so holily towards God, and so circumspectly and unblameably before men, that we may always have cause for rejoicing, and in the midst of temptations, and in the midst of poverty and affliction, may actually rejoice in the expectation of present advantage by them, and in the hope of the glory of God, as the reward of them. Learn hence, That the children of God ought to make conscience of rejoicing in God at all times, and in all conditions: but is not there a time to mourn, as well as to rejoice? Yes, but it is no where said, mourn evermore; nay, holy mourning has the seed of spiritual joy in it, it directly tends to it, and will certainly end in it; mourning is but a temporary, rejoicing is an eternal duty.

—Pray without ceasing.—

Note from the connection, That he that would rejoice evermore, must pray evermore; seldom praying and constant rejoicing will never stand together; according to our constancy in prayer, such will be the constancy of our joy. Note, 2. That frequent and constant prayer to God, is a duty required of all christians: we are then said to do a thing continually, when we do it seasonably, when we pray at stated times, morning and evening every day, when upon extraordinary occasions we perform the duty in an extraordinary manner, and when we perform it with unfainting perseverance, both frequently and fervently, though we receive no present answer to our prayers; and in a word, when the heart is always kept in a praying frame, this is to pray continually; and the reason for it is, because we stand in continual need of God, we want him continually, we sin against him continually, we are surrounded with temptations continually, we are exposed to troubles and afflictions continually, and we ought to glorify God continually; and if so, we must pray continually; not that a man should do nothing else but pray; for though we may do nothing without prayer, yet we must do many things besides praying.

—In every thing give thanks: For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Observe here, 1. The duty required, and that is, *thanksgiving*. 2. The extent of the duty, *In every thing give thanks*, that is, be thankful in every condition, and for every providential dispensation, both prosperous and adverse. *Quest.* "Should christians be thankful for afflictions?" Yes, Because they are fruits of fatherly love, because they conform us unto Christ, because they prevent sin, and purge out sin,

because they fit us for glory, and will add to our crown of glory at the great day. *Quest.* "But should christians be thankful for sin, or when they fall into sin?" By no means. *Rule.* What we must not pray for, we may not give thanks for: we must pray to be kept from sin, therefore may not give thanks when we fall into sin; sin dishonors God, dishonours ourselves, exposes to God's wrath and curse, is the ground of our just detestation, therefore cannot be the ground of thanksgiving; yet when we obtain pardon of sin; or get any good by sin, we may and ought to rejoice at it. Observe, 3. The grounds and reasons of the duty. 1. It is the *will of God*, his revealed will; this the law of nature directs to, and the light of scripture calls for; and he that performs it spiritually, glorifies God abundantly. 2. It is the will of God in Christ Jesus, that is, this part of God's will is especially revealed to you by the doctrine of Christ Jesus, and by the example of Christ Jesus: Christ was both a great pattern and president of thankfulness all his life long: he thanked God frequently and fervently, and has made thankfulness a considerable part of our gospel service, Heb. xii. 15.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

Still observe, 1. The coherence and connection: he that would *rejoice evermore*, must *pray without ceasing*; and he that would rejoice in every thing, must be thankful in every thing; and he that would rejoice, pray and give thanks continually, must evermore keep the Spirit unquenched; the way to keep one's self warm, is to keep the fire burning; *Quench not the Spirit*; that is, neither the graces of the Spirit nor the motions of the Spirit. Note, 1. That the Holy Spirit of God in man is of the nature of fire, as fire, it enlighteneth, it enliveneth, it warmeth, it consumeth, it purifieth and refineth, it ascendeth upward. Note, 2. That this holy fire of the Spirit may be quenched; the gifts, graces, motions, and comforts of the Holy Spirit are of such a nature, that if they be not cherished, they are quenched: fire will go out as well by neglecting it, as by casting water upon it. Note, 3. That it must be a christian's special care, that the graces of God's Holy Spirit be not quenched in him, nor any of its motions resisted by him. Sin in general quenches the Spirit, as water quenches fire: particularly, sins committed against knowledge and conscience; inordinate love of the world quenches the Spirit, as earth will extinguish fire as well as water. A cold, customary, formal performance of holy duties, without the exercise of lively faith and holy love in the performance of them, will grieve and quench the Spirit, especially sensual lusts indulged, and anger, malice and revenge harboured in the heart: the holy Dove will not rest upon that man, that has the heart of a vulture in his breast and bosom; and let us always remember, if we quench the Spirit in his motions, he is also quenched by us in his offices; he doth us many good offices, in prayer he is our helper, our assistant, he quickens to the duty, and in the duty, and helps our infirmities, and makes intercession for us in our christian course; he guides us, comforts us, and bears witness to our integrity in us: all these good offices will he cease to do for us, if he be quenched in us,

20 Despise not prophesyings.

Note here, 1. How close this duty is coupled with the former, *Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings*: plainly intimating to us, that the Spirit is then dangerously quenched, when prophesying, or the preaching of the word is sinfully neglected. Note, 2. That by prophesying here, is not meant foretelling things to come, but the interpretation and application of the holy scriptures, which we call preaching. Note, 3. That by not despising it, we are to understand, that it is our obliged duty to put an high value and esteem upon it, to attend to it, and have a great regard for it, to honor the public ministry as an ordinance of God for instruction, conversion, and edification. Learn, That it is not sufficient that we do not slight the ordinance of preaching, nor declaim against it as vain and useless, (as the manner of some is), but we are to have an honorable esteem of it, and evidence that esteem by a due attendance upon it: more is intended by the Holy Ghost than is here expressed; for though he only forbids the sin, he intends the duty or grace in strict opposition to the sin, namely, That christians ought to be so far from despising that they ought to be very forward in embracing the ministry and preaching of the word; *despise not prophesyings*.

21 Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom this advice is given, to the church of the Thessalonians, not to the ministers, but to the people, ver. 12 *Know them that labor among you, &c.* Observe, 2. The advice itself, *Prove all things*; examine, try, and approve them, with a judgment of private discretion, not of public division. Learn, 1. That it is the duty of all christians to examine the grounds of their faith and religion, and not to take them upon trust; otherwise their embracing the best religion in the world, is rather the result of chance than of judgment and choice. Learn, 2. That although all doctrines and opinions must be tried: yet only that which is good, must be retained. Learn, 3. That nothing is to be held fast, but what is first tried: suppose we hold that which is good, yet if we have not tried and proved it to be good, it is no better to us than that which is evil? to approve before trial is not good, though the thing approved be never so good. *Inference*, That this is a strong argument for the perspicuity and sufficiency of the holy scriptures, and against the necessity of a living Judge; for he that must try all things, must also try the doctrine of this living Judge; and therefore till he has made this trial, must not admit his doctrine as an article of christian faith; for these words plainly teach, that what we hold fast must be first tried; *Try all things, and hold fast that which is good*.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil:

This advice genuinely follows upon the former; after we have tried all things, we must *hold fast that which is good, and abstain from evils*. Where note, The gradation used by our apostle, we must *abstain from evil, from all evil, from all appearance of evil*. Yet observe, It is not the apostle's meaning that we abstain from all that which appears evil to others; for that would be to destroy our christian liberty in things indifferent, and create in our minds continual perplexities: there is nothing almost we can do, but may appear evil to some. But St. Paul here enjoins us to abstain from every

thing which after trial seems evil to ourselves, and is judged by us so to be; yet it is our duty not to give any just occasion of scandal to any, but to live not only *sine crimine*, but *sine labe*, not only without fault, but, if possible, without flaw, that the world may have nothing to spot us withal.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. That our apostle having exhorted the Thessalonians to labor after the highest measures of sanctification, breathes out his soul in a most affectionate prayer to God, to sanctify them thoroughly and throughout; teaching us that instruction and supplication should go together; after we have been instant with our people we must be earnest and instant with God for them. Observe, 2. The person whom the apostle directs his prayer for sanctification to, *The God of peace*: but why doth he not style him the God of grace? Because peace and unity is one very eminent part of that sanctification the apostle had prayed for, and had exhorted them before unto, ver. 13. *Be at peace among yourselves*. Now this grace being once well rooted, all the other parts of sanctification thrive the better. Observe, 3. How thorough and prevailing a work of sanctification the apostle prays for, namely, that God would sanctify them wholly in spirit, soul, and body. By spirit, understand the superior faculties, the understanding, the will and conscience; by soul, the inferior faculties, the passions, affections, and sensitive appetite; and by body, the outward man, the tabernacle of the soul. Now the apostle prays, that all these may be sanctified, because they are defiled. Blessed be God, regenerating grace is as universal a principle as original sin was; it is in the understanding by illumination, in the will by renovation, in all the affections by sanctification, reducing those rebellious powers under the government and dominion of reason and religion. Observe, 4. Our apostle doth not only pray for their sanctification, but for their preservation also, that they may be *preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, preserved in a state of grace and holiness unto the end; all the sanctified are preserved; instability is an argument of insincerity; within a while, all possibilities of falling will be removed; in the mean while, take heed of falling, by thinking it is impossible to fall; for none are so near falling as those who are most confident of their own strength and standing.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Here our apostle comforts the Thessalonians with the assurance that God, who had called them to the knowledge of christianity, would do what he had prayed for, namely, sanctify them wholly, and preserve them blameless, and this because *God is faithful*, that is, always the same, true to his word. God will certainly do his part in and towards the work of sanctification and preservation; but in a way of concurrence with our care and industry; he will do nothing without us, as we can do nothing without him; God's

faithfulness is a pledge to us of the performance of all his promises, and will most certainly put him upon the performance of them; but his promise to us always supposes, yea, exacts from us, the use of all means, and particularly the exerting of our own endeavours, in order to our preservation in grace, and perseverance in holiness; "Faithful is he that called you who also will do it."

25 Brethren, pray for us,

Observe. Who it is that begs prayer, a great apostle, St. Paul himself; and whom it is he begs prayer from, the brethren, christians, and fellow members of the church at Thessalonica. Those that are most eminent for gifts and graces, are greatly desirous of the saints' prayers; particularly the ministers of the gospel, as they stand most in need of, so are they most importunate for this spiritual alms, which they crave as earnestly as ever beggar did bread at a rich man's gate. See on 2 Thess. iii. 1.

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with salutations to all the brethren and members of the church, without exception, poor and rich, advising them to manifest and testify their affection one to another, by a kiss given to each other, a ceremony of civility much in use in those eastern countries; yet requires, that it should not be a wanton but an holy kiss: intimating to us, that our civil actions should have a relish and savor of holiness. Hence it is, that St. Paul is so careful to give particular directions for the right ordering of our speech and discourse in common conversation, that it be grave and savory, Col. iv. 6. Of our apparel, that it be such as becomes those that profess the gospel; and here, that our courteous salutations of each other should be chaste and holy, *Greet one another with an holy kiss*: their kiss of love and peace, must truly signify, what it makes show of, that neither treachery, nor cruelty, nor hypocrisy, nor lust, may insinuate itself into such a symbol of holy love.

27 I charge you, by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

Our apostle having now finished his epistle, gives a strict charge for the perusal of it. In which, Observe, 1. The

duty enjoined, with the matter of it, namely, the reading of this epistle, and for the same reason all the rest, which had the like stamp of divine authority upon them. Observe, 2. The object or parties to whom this epistle is to be read, to the brethren, *to all the brethren*. Observe, 3. The solemnity of the injunction, *I charge you*, not *I exhort*, beseech, or intreat, but charge and enjoin you; yea, the word signifies, *I adjure you*; it has the force of an oath, and that under a curse: as if he had said, "I oblige you, under the penalty of God's curse, that this epistle be read." Learn thence, 1. That the scriptures ought to be in a known tongue, that they may be read unto, and read by the common people. 2. That to confine the reading of the scriptures to the clergy, and exclude the laity or common people from reading of them, is a very grievous sin, contrary to the intent and design of God in the first penning and composing of them. 3. That it doth in a special manner concern the ministers and spiritual guides to take particular care that the holy scriptures be publicly read to, and privately read by all their people; and in order thereunto, to excite parents to read them daily in their families, Deut. vi. 9. and in their closets, Col. iii. 16. And also it is a great part of the minister's duty, to look after the putting forth the children of poor parents to school, that they may learn to read the scriptures for their instruction and comfort. Lord, what a reproach is it to this christian nation, that in thousands of families the Bible signifies no more than a chip! not a soul amongst them able to read a letter in it! This is a lamentation, the Lord put it into the hearts of ministers and people to use the utmost endeavours to roll away this reproach from us!

28 The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Thus concludes our apostle his excellent epistle, with his usual valediction or farewell wish, desiring, that though the Thessalonians had been large partakers of the grace and Spirit of Christ, that yet they might receive fresh, farther and fuller supplies from himself, the fountain of all grace and goodness. From whence note, That so inexhaustible is the fountain of divine grace, and so copious the streams of spiritual blessings flowing from it, that no such measures can be attained, but, as more is wanting, more is had, more is provided, more is allowed, more is to be thirsted after, and labored for. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, that overflowing, that never-failing fountain of grace and comfort, in whom all fulness dwells, that of his fulness all his members may receive, further receive, grace for grace. Amen.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

The second epistle to the Thessalonians is believed, very probably, to have been written by St. Paul, soon after the first, because the same persons, Silvanus and Timotheus, were still with him when he writ it, as they were at the writing of the first epistle.

Having in his former epistle, expressed his longing desire to visit them, and finding by the intervention of other affairs, that he was from time to time providentially hindered from coming to them, he sends this second epistle to them, to supply the want of his presence amongst them.

In which, he first congratulates their constancy in the profession of the gospel, exhorting them to growth in grace, and perseverance in religion.

Next he rectifies a mistake which they lay under concerning the coming of Christ to Judgment, as if that day were then at hand, when it was very far off, there being a general and grand apostasy to precede it, comforting the Thessalonians against the dread and terror of it.

Lastly, he commends divers christian duties to them, requiring them to admonish and censure such idle persons amongst them who did not work, but lived upon other men's labor; and so concludes his epistle with particular recommendations of them to the special favor and grace of God.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ;
2 Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two verses contain the inscription of this epistle in the very same words with the former, in the foregoing epistle. In which observe, 1. The writer of the epistle, St. Paul, joining himself with his two associates, Silvanus or Silas, and Timotheus or Timothy. 2. To whom it was written, *To the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father*, that is, established in the knowledge of God the Father, and in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The usual salutation, *Grace and peace*, under which are comprehended all spiritual and temporal blessings: and these are (No. 61.)

set forth as flowing to us, first, From their fountain, *God the Father*: Secondly, From their means of conveyance, *Jesus Christ*, as Mediator; intimating, that whatever spiritual grace, or temporal blessing we now receive from God, we have it from him, not barely as a Creator, but as a gracious Father in Christ, in and through whom all kinds of blessings are conveyed to us. Now, 1. From St. Paul's using the very same form of words in this epistle, which he had made use of in the former, we may observe, That the holy Spirit of God, in inditing of the scriptures, did not so much regard variety of words and style, as the purpose intended by those words; and accordingly the ministers of Christ, in the expounding and explaining of the scriptures, should rather study solidity of matter, than variety of expression, or elegance of style. It was none of the apostle's business, (God grant that it may be none of ours) to please the wanton wits, and gratify the luxuriant fancies of men, with a pompous sound of words, but solidly to instruct them in the great and necessary duties of the gospel, and to furnish them with the strongest arguments and mo-

tires to a good life. Plain truths, without any art or varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigor to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue. But though we must come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. Note, 2. From St. Paul's writing this epistle to the Thessalonians, when he was providentially hindered in his purpose of coming to them, and preaching amongst them, we may learn, That as the wisdom of God has appointed several means for the edification of his church, sometimes preaching, at other times writing, so the ministers of Christ are obliged and bound to endeavour the church's edification by all means; when they cannot do it by public preaching, to endeavour it by writing: and when they can by both, their labors from the press and from the pulpit should be jointly employed in the church's service.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Observe here, 1. The holy wisdom and pious prudence of our apostle, who being about to magnify and extol the graces of the Spirit wrought in the Thessalonians, particularly their faith and charity, instead of commending them for these graces, he breaks forth into praises and thanksgivings unto God for them; we thank God that your faith groweth exceedingly, and that the charity of every one of you aboundeth. His business was not to celebrate the praises and commendations of them, but to admire the special grace of God conferred upon them, and conspicuous in them. Learn hence, That as it is our duty, it will be our great wisdom and prudence, so to speak of the graces of God, which we see and observe in others, as that they may not be puffed up with any conceit of their own excellencies, but see matter of praise and thanksgiving due unto God only; and nothing to themselves. Note, 2. The special and particular graces which St. Paul observed in the Thessalonians, their faith, and their charity, together with the evidence of the sincerity of these graces, namely, that their faith was a growing faith, their love an abounding and overflowing love; "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your love aboundeth." Learn hence, That as the saving graces of faith and love do admit of degrees, and do not come to their height and perfection at once; so all other graces do either increase or decrease, grow or fade together with these; the vigor or decay of these cardinal graces have an answerable influence upon all our other graces. But how did St. Paul know that their faith did thus grow? *Ans.* He knew the increase of their faith by their constancy in sufferings. Note, 3. Our apostle doth not barely commend these graces of faith and love, which were found in the Thessalonians, but he makes an holy boast of them, he glories in them, and excites other churches to a praise-worthy imitation of them; *We glory in*

you in the churches of God. But for what? Even for your courage and patience under sufferings, persecutions, and tribulations for the sake of christianity, and for your constancy in the faith of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That persecutions, afflictions, and tribulations, for the sake of christianity, (when maintained especially in the power of it) are the common lot of God's faithful children and servants. Learn, 2. That it is the highest glory of a christian to bear afflictions, and undergo persecutions for the sake of the gospel, with an undaunted courage, and an invincible patience. Learn, 3. That it is not unlawful, but sometimes necessary and expedient, for a minister to glory in his people; not in their multitude, not in their riches, not in their greatness, not in their high estimation of his person and abilities, but in the eminent graces of God's holy spirit in them, and in the great services and sufferings undergone by them: "We glory in you for your patience and faith, in and under all the persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer:

As if he had said, "Which tribulations and persecutions, or, which patience under your present persecutions, is a sign and token, yea, an evidence and manifestation, that God, the righteous judge, will reward you with a part and share in that kingdom for which you suffer, being in his account, worthy of it; not with a worthiness of merit, but with a worthiness of meanness, they being made meet and fit for heaven hereafter by their patience and constancy under sufferings and persecutions here." Learn hence, That as none can enjoy the kingdom of heaven by meriting heaven, but by being made meet for heaven; so patience under sufferings and reproaches, under persecutions and sharp trials, is a special qualification to make us meet for the enjoyment of that glorious kingdom; "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulations to them that trouble you:

7 And to you who are troubled, rest with us—

Our apostle had shown in the foregoing verse, that their patience under persecution was a manifest evidence of God's intending them a portion in that kingdom, for which they suffered persecution: now, in this verse he denounces the persecutors' doom upon them, namely, That the righteous nature of God did oblige him to recompense tribulation, and to repay trouble to all such as did trouble them, and unkindly persecute them for righteousness' sake. Learn thence, That as persecutors generally do continue finally impenitent, so the heaviest stroke of divine vengeance shall fall on such, in the day of God's most righteous judgment: "It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble you."

—And to you who are troubled, rest with us—

That is, "As God will certainly punish your persecutors, so he will, ere long, give rest to you his sufferers, together with us who are companions with you in the same sufferings: you that are troubled shall have rest with us, his persecuted apostles, you shall have rest as well as we, and you shall have rest together with us." Blessed be God, that there is a day undoubtedly coming, when all the troubles of his people shall be ended indeed, and all his suffering saints shall be fully and finally rewarded for all their services and sufferings; and this distribution of rewards and punishments, shall be in the presence of the whole world, at the great day, for the glory of divine justice. Then all those who doubt or complain of God's justice, shall awfully admire and adore it: *to you that are troubled, rest with us.* Where note, 1. That the present time, is a time of trouble to the people of God: their time of rest is hereafter. 2. That Almighty God alloweth his troubled saints a liberty to comfort themselves with the expectation and hope, that their troubles shall shortly end, and their everlasting rest begin. 3. That it addeth much to the excellency of that rest which the troubled saints expect, that it shall be enjoyed, not by a few of the most eminent sufferers, but by all of them: *All you that are troubled shall rest with us; with us apostles, with all the prophets and faithful servants of God.* Hail, happy day! when all the saints shall sing and rejoice together; when there shall not be one wicked person among them to damp their mirth, or diminish their joy. How desirable is the communion of saints here! How happy do they esteem themselves when they can get together by themselves! But how joyful will the time and place be, when they get to heaven, where none shall interrupt their quiet, nothing shall disturb their rest! "God will recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest with us."

—When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

8 In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

In these words we have an awful description of the day of judgment, and of the process of that solemn day. Where observe, 1. The Judge described, *The Lord Jesus*, he shall be *revealed from heaven*; since his ascension the heavens have contained him, and concealed him also from our sight and senses; but he shall then visibly appear, and locally descend from the highest heavens, into the regions of the air, *He shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him.* Observe, 2. His noble attendants, *the mighty angels*, every one stronger than an host of armed men. As the work of Christ comes about, is a great and mighty work, so he will have instruments strong and mighty, sufficient for that work; yet doth Christ make use of the angels, not for necessity, but for majesty; he can do his work without them. Observe, 3. The manner of his coming, *In flaming fire*, by which the heavens and the earth shall be burnt up, and in which the damned shall be eternally tormented. Observe, 4. The end of his coming, To take vengeance on the ignorant, and on the disobedient, on such as *know not God*, and on them that do know, but *obey not the gospel of our Lord*

Jesus. Learn hence, 1. That it greatly tends to the comfort and support of persecuted christians, that Christ their righteous Judge will come: *He shall be revealed*, and nobly attended; he shall come as an exalted king, accompanied with a glorious train of mighty angels. Learn, 2. That the dread and terror of the day of judgment, will be matter of comfort to the godly, no ways terrifying. Those very flames which shall set the heavens and the earth in a blaze, and occasion dreadful consternation and fear to the wicked and impenitent world, shall be a comfortable sight to the godly, and the forethoughts of them may, and should yield comfort to them under their present troubles. Learn, 3. That ignorance whether in pagans or in christians, doth very much, but disobedience to the gospel, doth very much more, expose persons, and lay them open to the vengeance of the great day: if Christ will render vengeance to them that know him not, much more to them that do know, but *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

Observe here, The tremendous dreadfulness of that wrath and vengeance which at the great day will be inflicted on the ignorant and disobedient part of mankind; to denote the greatness of it, it is called *destruction*, not as if it were an abolishing of their nature, and utter extinction of their being, as the destruction of beasts is; but a loss of their happiness and well-being, as the destruction of the fallen angels was; and to set forth the duration of it, it is called *everlasting destruction*, a dying life, and a living death; their debt will never be paid, they shall never come out of prison; they will always be satisfying but never able fully to satisfy divine justice. And observe farther, As their punishment of sense is here described, so we have their punishment of loss declared: they shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, that is for ever excluded from the sight of his blessed face, and the enjoyment of his gracious presence; the presence of his favor they shall never find, the presence of his fury they shall ever feel. Lord! how is thy presence here on earth, life, light, and joy to thine own people! How much more will it be so in heaven! But how terrible and dreadful will thy presence be to the wicked at the great day, even everlasting destruction! Lord, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear, when thou appearest! Thy very presence shall punish and torment them, and thy glorious power drive them away to the place of torment prepared for them: they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; that is, destruction shall come forth immediately from the presence and glorious power of Christ upon them, and that without any measure or mitigation; the sentence denounced will be instantly executed, and the sinner that is banished from Christ's presence shall be everlastingly tormented by his power.

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The former verses represented to us the great end of Christ's appearance to judgment, with respect to the wicked, it was for punishment, "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, &c." Now here we have assigned the gracious design of Christ's coming, with relation to the godly; "He shall come to be glorified in his saints." Where note, 1. The character of Christ's saved ones, they are saints, all such, and only such; not by visible profession barely, but by inward sanctification, and holiness of conversation also: and called also believers, who are endued with the grace of saving faith. Note, 2. The end of Christ's coming, with reference to his own children. 1. To be glorified in his saints; mark, not to be glorified by them, but to be glorified in them; the Head will not only be glorious in himself, but glorified in his members; the glory God gave the Son, he hath given the saints, and will put such a glory upon them in soul and body, as he himself shall be thereby glorified. 2. Admired in all them that believe, that is, he will do such things for believers, as will be to their own and others admiration; things that will not only exceed their unbelief, but their faith too. Plainly thus, the Lord Jesus, at the great day, will put such glory upon believers, as never was expected, either by themselves or others, and consequently, shall be admired, greatly admired, eternally admired by all beholders. But, Lord, if the glory put upon thy saints shall be thus admired, how much more shall thyself be admired, the bestower of that rich and transcendent glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the will be wicked admired, but not comparably with the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. Oh! how will this strike the adoring angels into an ecstasy of holy admiration, and transport thy admiring saints into an eternal rapture, when thou shalt come to "be glorified in thy saints, and admired in all them that believe!"

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

In these words, St. Paul assures the Thessalonians, that although he could not come to them, that yet he prayed fervently for them: *We pray always for you*; the faithful ministers of Christ can as soon forget themselves as their people in their prayers to God. Observe next, What he prayed for, on their behalf. 1. That God would count them worthy, that is, fit and meet for this calling; that is, for the forementioned glory which they were called to the expectation of, for they were already called; and therefore calling, here, must denote that unto which they were called, even the kingdom of glory. 2. That in order to this, God would fulfil, fully perform and accomplish his whole purpose, here called his pleasure, and the pleasure of his goodness, to show that nothing but his own goodness was the cause of his own purpose. 3. He prays that God, by his own power, would strengthen the work of faith in them: *and the work of faith with power*. Where note, That we are not only saved by God's good pleasure, but by faith. 2. That there is no saving faith, but is a working faith. 3. That faith is wrought by a wonderful power, which doth produce wonderful effects.

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our apostle declared, at ver. 10. how Christ should be glorified in his saints hereafter; now he prays that the name of Christ may be glorified in them here. Where note, That sanctifying grace maketh christians a glory to the name of Christ, not by adding any glory to him, which before he had not, but by setting forth that glory which he already hath. Note, also, That as the name of Christ is glorified in the saints now, so they shall be glorified in him then, and glorified with him and by him. The same glory, for kind, shall be put upon the head and members: grace is the only way to glory, and glory will be the certain reward of grace.

CHAPTER II.

The former chapter was spent in a consolation against trouble, this in a caution against errors, or to rectify their judgments concerning the time of Christ's second coming. An error had crept in among the Thessalonians, concerning the speedy and immediate coming of Christ to judgment whilst they were yet alive; which error satan had set on foot to subvert their faith, and expose the whole christian doctrine to contempt: therefore, to guard them against this fabulous error, he thus bespeaks them:

NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

As if the apostle had said, "Brethren, we beseech you as you assuredly expect the coming of Christ, and do love, look, and long for that day when it shall go well with you, and Christ will appear to your glory, that you be not troubled, &c. Learn hence, That the coming of Christ to judgment is a truth well known, firmly believed, and earnestly desired by all true christians; well known, because the apostles, when they went abroad to proselyte the world, usually began with this point: firmly believed, for a day of judgment was never denied by any, but those whose interest it was that there should be none; and earnestly desired, in respect of Christ our Judge and Saviour, and in respect of ourselves, who shall be sharers in the happiness of that day. Observe, 2. The apostle calls the coming of Christ *a gathering together unto him*; intimating, that when Christ shall come, all the saints shall be gathered together unto him; at the day of judgment there shall be both a congregation and a segregation, a congregation of all believers, to make up the number of Christ's train and attendants, and that in one troop they may be brought into the heavenly kingdom: and a segregation, he shall separate the sheep from the goats, and sever the wicked from among the just, Mat. xiii. 44.

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by

word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Note here, 1. The error which the apostle disapproves, namely, that the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment, was then at hand, to come in a few years, which was very true with respect to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but not as to the final judgment. Learn hence, That the time of Christ's coming to judgment must be patiently expected, but not positively determined. Note, 2. The effect which this error might produce, namely, trouble and unsettledness of mind; "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled;" implying, 1. That errors breed trouble and disquietude of mind. 2. That christians should be so established, and have such a constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from the faith. Note, 3. A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the means which these impostors used to entice the Thessalonians to embrace it: and they are three; namely, spirit, word, and letter; *not by spirit*, that is, be not shaken in mind by any pretence of spiritual or divine revelation; *nor by word*, by any pretended message or word from us; *nor by letter*, that is, not by any thing contained in our former epistle, or in any spurious and counterfeit writings, passing under the apostle's name, mentioning as if Christ should come in that age wherein they lived. We need not wonder that St. Paul is so careful to obviate this error of the present coming and appearance of Christ, because, should the Thessalonians have depended upon it, and found themselves deceived in their expectation of it, it might have caused great trouble to them, and even shaken their steadfastness in the faith.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition :

*As if the apostle had said, "Let no man deceive you in this article of your faith, by any pretence whatsoever; for before Christ's coming, there shall come a great falling away from the catholic faith, and by that means the man of sin will be revealed, who is the son of perdition." Note here, 1. Such a proneness there is in the nature and mind of man to embrace and entertain error, when once vented, that there is need of repeated dissuaves from it, and to guard persons against the poison and infatuation of it; "Let no man deceive you by any means." Note, 2. A general apostasy or defection of the visible church from the faith of christianity, must be before Christ's coming to judgment; "Except there come a falling away first;" it is foretold as a thing that would certainly come to pass. Note, 3. The revelation of antichrist declared, "That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition: where, by the man of sin, understand not a particular and individual person, but a society and succession of men, such as is found in and amongst the papacy, where the sodomy, blasphemy, incest, adulteries, sorceries, murders, treasons, which are not only committed, but countenanced, and not only acted, but authorized, do most evidently declare that there never was such an apostasy from christianity since it had a being in the world, as is found amongst them." Note, 4. This man of

(No. 61.)

sin is also styled *the son of perdition*. 1. Actively a destroying son, one that brings others to destruction. 2. Passively a son that shall be destroyed, antichrist and all his adherents shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed by Jesus Christ, and his kingdom shall perish without any hope of recovery; first destroying, and at last destroyed. Where note, That our apostle at the first, the very first mentioning antichrist, doth declare his destiny: at his first rise he declares his fall and ruin.

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Our apostle proceeds in the farther description of this man of sin, by a twofold note of distinction, namely, by his enmity and opposition, and by his dignity and exaltation. Observe, 1. His enmity and opposition; "he opposeth himself," that is against Christ, as his name, antichrist, signifies; opposing him in his doctrine, in his offices, in his members, corrupting his doctrine, debasing his offices, persecuting his members. Observe, 2. His dignity and exaltation, which consists of two parts, 1. "He exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped;" that is, he exalteth himself above all magistrates, emperors, kings and princes, who are called gods, because representing his person, as his vicegerents, usurping a power over all civil authority, enthroning and dethroning princes at his pleasure. 2. His arrogance is set forth in relation to God himself, that "as God he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." By the temple of God, understand the church of God, the external visible church, which professeth the faith of Christ, and bears his name; in this temple of God he sitteth as an officer or bishop; and sits as God, that is, as a god upon earth, whom all must adore; kings kissing his feet, emperors holding his stirrups, and claiming the same power that Christ hath in and over the church, namely, an universal supremacy; an absolute authority, and an unerring infallibility. And the usurped titles given to him, declare that he *showeth himself that he is a God*, he is called *supremum nomen in terris: The chief God upon earth*; and that from him it is affirmed, that no appeals are to be made; no, not to God himself; that he can change the sacraments delivered by Christ, and decree contrary to scripture. Now to accept of these flattering titles, and to pretend to such an unlimited power, is to *show himself that he is God*.

5 Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things?

Observe here, That the doctrine of the rise and ruin of antichrist is necessary to be made known; for though these things were not to come to pass in their days, yet St. Paul taught them before when present, and now repeateth it again when absent, to fasten it upon their mind and memories; it is necessary to deliver this doctrine, both to warn the faithful against delusion, and to fortify the faithful against persecution, and to keep them patient under it; for when antichrist is discovered, christians under his tyranny submit to sufferings more cheerfully; suffering under anti-

christian persecutors is martyrdom, and suffering for Christ, as well as under pagan persecutors.

6 And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle intimated to the Thessalonians, that antichrist was not then revealed, and consequently that they were not then to expect the coming of Christ to judgment. Observe, 2. The impediment that then hindered *his revelation*; "Now ye know what withholdeth;" by which the Roman empire is generally understood; the man of sin could not rise to his greatness, so long as the Roman empire stood in its grandeur; for this seat could not be filled with two imperial powers at once: whilst the Roman emperor possessed Rome, the seat was full, and till it was void it could not be the seat of antichrist. But why did not the apostle name it then? *Ans.* That he might not incense the Roman emperors against the christians, as he must have done had he openly said, "Antichrist shall not come till the Roman empire is destroyed; he therefore covertly says, "Ye know what withholdeth."

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

That is, the beginnings of antichristianity are secretly and mysteriously already working, which will bring antichrist himself forth in time, even antichristian doctrines, and the affecting of antichristian dominion; only the empire that now hindereth must be removed and taken out of the way. Note here, So great an enemy is satan to the salvation of mankind, that no sooner did Christ erect a kingdom in the world for saving sinners, but the devil sets up his esign in opposition thereunto. Antichristianism is almost as old as christianity: the mystery of iniquity soon appeared after the revelation of the mystery of godliness; though truth be error's elder, yet error is not much truth's younger; "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." And from these words, "He that letteth will let, till taken out of the way." Learn, That the greatest empire and monarchies upon earth have their final and fatal periods determined by God, beyond which they shall not stand; the Roman empire that letteth, shall be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

These words contain both the rise and ruin of antichrist, his revelation and destruction. Observe, 1. The title given to him, *ὁ Ἀντισυμμεν*, *The lawless one*; he that boasts himself to be above all law, and assumes to himself a power to dispense with all the laws of God, as we well know who does. Observe, 2. His revelation, *Then shall that Wicked be revealed*. God has revealed antichrist to the world, let none wilfully shut their eyes against him, but let him be shunned, and abhorred; if his adherents will not fall off from him, but be partakers with him in his sins, let them

expect to be partakers also with him in his plagues; to continue his adherents is dangerous, but to turn his disciples is more dangerous; for that is a downright apostasy, and flat revolt from Christ to antichrist. How Almighty God may dispense mercifully with errors imbibed in our education, we know not, but to turn our back on the truth wherein we have been educated and instructed, makes it more dangerous to our salvation. Observe, 3. Antichrist's ruin, "Whom the Lord shall consume and destroy." Here note, That the apostle had no sooner discovered antichrist's rise, but he presently declares his ruin; the Lord shall destroy him; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ shall destroy him gradually, he shall waste away by little and little; as his rise was, such shall his ruin be; destroyed and consumed he shall be, but not presently, because God has an use for him, work to do for him, to scourge his people, to try his people, to unite his people. Observe, 4. How antichrist's ruin is accomplished; 1. *With the spirit of his mouth*, or the breath of his mouth: the expression denotes, 1. The facility and easiness of his destruction: it is done with a breath; the breath of God will leave him breathless: as he hath stood by the flat ering breath of men, so he shall fall by the consuming breath of God. The breath of God here denotes the preaching of the gospel, and intimates, that antichrist's destruction shall be by the ministry of the word, and the victorious evidence of truth; but besides this ministerial word, there will be a providential word, which God will make use of for antichrist's destruction: the former means we are to use, the latter God is to make use of. Again, 2. The destruction of antichrist shall be by the *brightness of Christ's coming*; at Christ's coming to judgment, the final ruin and utter destruction of antichrist shall be accomplished; let not the church then be discouraged, though antichrist remains, after all endeavour used for his ruin, it is sufficient we are assured that antichristians shall be finally destroyed; for the time, leave we that to God; if it be not till the day of judgment, or Christ's final conquest over all his adversaries, why should not we be contented to tarry for it, seeing infinite wisdom determines the time, as well as the thing itself.

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.

An account is here given how antichrist doth acquire and keep up his power in the world: the first and great instrument is satan; after the working of satan, is as much as by the working of satan, denoting not only his pattern but his influence. The devil has a great hand over wicked men in the world, his way of dealing with them is most efficacious and powerful, he is certainly the first founder and main supporter of the antichristian state. Observe, 2. The subordinate instrumental means, by which antichrist gained his power in the world; namely, by pretended miracles; *with all power, and signs, and lying wonders*; miracles are called powers, because the effects of extraordinary powers; signs, for their use, because they sealed the doctrine to which they are applied; wonders, because they breed astonishment in the minds of beholders: now antichrist pretends to all these, but his are lying powers, lying signs, and lying wonders; because the greatest of his pretended miracles are

fables, forgeries, impostures, diabolical delusions. Learn hence, That antichrist doth uphold and support his kingdom by a false show of signs, wonders, and mighty deeds; they are *mira*, but not *miracula*; what we cannot prove by the oracles of God, he endeavours to prove by the miracles of satan.

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Here we have a threefold description given of the subjects of antichrist's kingdom, they are described, 1. By the ways and means how they are drawn into this apostasy and defection, and that is, "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness:" where, by unrighteousness, understand his false doctrine and wicked laws, which tend to the making his disciples and followers injurious to God, unjust to men, and cruel to themselves; and by deceivableness is meant all manner of deceits and wiles, tricks and cunning persuasions, to make the world believe his unrighteous errors to be pure and innocent truths. Learn, That such as are ring-leaders to error, are men of no conscience, but find out all unrighteous ways and means to make their tenets plausible, and pass for truth; they come "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Again, 2. They are described by their doom and misery which doth wait them, they are such as perish; that is, such as are in an actual state of perdition, and without hastening out of it, are undone for ever. Learn hence, That the subjects of antichrist's power and seduction are those that perish. And, 3. They are described by their sin, which is the cause and reason of this doom: "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Where mark, It is not enough to receive the truth in the light of it, but we must also receive it in the love of it, or it will do us no good; to make truth operative, there is required besides knowledge, faith and love; there may be knowledge without faith, and there may be faith without love, that is, without any affection to the truth believed; it was therefore a pious prayer of St. Austin, *Fac me, domine, &c.* "Lord make me taste that by love, which I taste by knowledge." As the certainty of truth calls for faith, so the amiableness of truth calls for love; if truth be not received into the heart as well as the head, it will not secure apostasy, nor prevent perishing.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The sin of those who are seduced by antichrist was mentioned in the foregoing verse; the judgment of such is here declared, in these verses, which is twofold, delusion in this world, and damnation in the next. 1. Delusion in this world. Here note, 1. The author of this judgment, "God shall send them strong delusion;" as it is a sin, God has no hand in it, but as it is a punishment, God has to do in it; there is a judicial tradition or delivering them up to a spirit

of error who do not receive the truth in the love of it, and this without the least shadow of unrighteousness, punishing sin with sin. Note, 2. The degree or nature of the punishment, delusions, *strong delusions*; given up to the efficacy of error, which is discovered by the absurdity of those errors which they cleave unto, and by the obstinacy wherewith they cleave unto them. Learn hence, 1. The strong delusions may be, and sometimes are by God's own sending, 2. That by God's just judgment there is an infatuation upon the followers and abettors of antichrist, that they swallow the grossest errors, and believe the strongest delusions, to their own destruction. Note, 3. The issue and result of this punishment, *that they should believe a lie*; false doctrines are often called a lie in scripture: all the doctrine of the man of sin, with which he hath deceived the world, under the notion of truth, is one great lie; but besides this, he approves and applauds the doctrine of equivocation, and teaches that in many cases it is necessary, and in some very lawful to lie; these they call pious frauds, but they are indeed diabolical forgeries. Note, 4. Their dreadful punishment in the other world, "That they all might be damned, &c." Where mark, The punishment itself, damnation, for filling up the measure of their obduration, together with the justice and equity of it; expressed negatively, *they believed not the truth*, received it not with simplicity of mind, to be instructed and directed by it; positively, *they had pleasure in unrighteousness*, in unrighteous doctrines and practices. Learn hence, 1. That errors in judgment, as well as sins in practice, may bring damnation upon the souls of men. Error is as damnable as vice, for it is as contrary to the law of God as vice is. Learn, 2. That though all errors may bring damnation upon men's souls, yet some may be said more especially than others to be damning errors, such are the errors of antichrist, the man of sin. O! How dangerous then is it to be found amongst his followers? To be sharers with them in their sins, will render us partakers of their plagues.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, set forth a fatal apostasy from the sincerity of the christian faith and worship, here in this verse exempts the Thessalonians from the number of those that were endangered by it, and this he makes mention of, to their great comfort, and with thanksgivings to God; *We are bound to give thanks, &c.* Observe, here 1. The titles given to the Thessalonians by our apostle, *brethren*, and *beloved of the Lord*; not *beloved of the apostle only*, but of the Lord also, both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and with a consequent love, believing in his name, and suffering for his sake. Observe, 2. His obligation to bless God on their behalf, he gave thanks; this showed his esteem of the blessing, he gave thanks *always*, which showed how deeply he was affected with the blessing, and he owns it as a debt which was due unto them; we are bound to give thanks, &c. Observe, 3. The matter of his thanksgiving, or the mercy which he

was thus thankful for, and that was their election to salvation; "We are bound to give thanks, because God hath chosen you." Whence learn, That God's election either of ourselves or others to salvation, is, and ought to be great matter of thanksgiving unto God. Observe, 4. Their election is amplified, 1. By the antiquity of it, from the beginning, that is, from all eternity, John i. 1. "In the beginning was the word," that is, before the beginning, before God began to create any thing, the word was. 2. From the means of its accomplishment; and they are two, one on God's part, the sanctification of the Spirit; the other on their part, the belief of the truth. Where note, That election is to the means as well as to the end; and without the means, can the end never be attained: he that hath chosen us to salvation, hath chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth, in order to salvation. Note, 2. That sanctification and holiness is not the cause of our election, but the effect and fruit of it. Note, 3. That sanctification being the fruit, it is also the evidence of our election: *Sic se aperit decretum*, thus the decree of God is made evident to us, the election of God is a secret in the bosom of God, it is only manifested to us by the effects, which are sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief of the gospel: where mark, a bare belief of the doctrine of the gospel saves none, unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit. Note, 4. The necessary connexion between the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, even as between the cause and the effect, and they do also accompany one another; the gospel was a supernatural doctrine, and it was fit that it should be accompanied with a supernatural operation, how else should it be known to be of God? The gospel and the Spirit are inseparable companions; where the gospel is little known, there is little of the Spirit found; "He hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle comforted the Thessalonians in the former verse from their election, in this from their vocation; *whereunto*, that is, to which salvation, sanctification, and belief of the gospel, *God hath called you*, by our preaching of the word, to the obtaining of the glory purchased, and conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ. Note here, 1. The author of the Thessalonians' vocation, God the Father, he calleth you, that is, God, who from the beginning chose you to salvation. None but God, 1. Hath authority to call; he only is our proper Lord, and rightful Sovereign, our Creator, and our owner; therefore he has a right to call us to duty, and to require a duty from us, Jam. iv. 12. "There is one law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy." None but God, 2. Hath power to call; for to effectual call there is required not only the invitation of the word, but also the effectual operation of the Spirit; it is a word of divine power to give grace to graceless souls. Note, 2. The means, that is, the external and outward means, by which they were called; *by our gospel*, that is, by our preaching of the gospel to you. The ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for a sinner's effectual vocation, and bringing home to God. But why doth our apostle call it our gospel? Doth not that derogate from the authority of it, to appropriate it to any man? No: He calls it not his gospel by

way of revelation, but in regard of dispensation only; and his gospel imported the great pains which he took in preaching of the gospel, and the hazard he ran in dispensing of the gospel to them. It is also a word of esteem, love and affection, what we love we call ours. Note, 3. The end of this calling, which is twofold, 1. Ultimate, to obtain the *glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*: that is, the glory of heaven, and of the whole man, soul and body in heaven, called the glory of Christ, because purchased by him, promised by him, prayed for by him, conferred by him, and enjoyed eternally with him. 2. Subordinate, they are called to faith and holiness, in order to salvation; for there must be a likeness between the person calling, and the persons called, without likeness to him, we can never love him; and without loving of him, must never expect to live with him. From the whole, learn, That such as are elected and chosen of God, are in time effectually called by faith and holiness to obtain eternal glory and happiness.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses from their election and vocation, he closed the chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth: *Therefore, brethren, stand fast*. Observe, 1. The relative particle, *therefore*, that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favor, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence. Observe, 2. The duty inferred, *Stand fast*: it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast. Observe, 3. The means directed to, in order to their steadfastness and perseverance, namely, to hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by epistle. Here note, 1. The act, *Hold* with a strong hand, hold against all assaults, whether of error or persecution. 2. The object. The *traditions taught*, either by word or by epistle. Where mark, that all the apostle's doctrine, whether preached when amongst them, or written to them in his absence from them, he calls *traditions*; so that holding the traditions here, is nothing else but perseverance in apostolical doctrine. From the whole note, 1. That what assurance soever we have of God's preserving us in the truth, yet are we bound to use all possible care and caution, in order to our own preservation. Note, 2. That it is our duty to stand fast in the faith of Christ, and profession of godliness, whatsoever dangers or temptations we may be exposed to. Note, 3. That the doctrine of christianity, taught by the apostles, is a tradition, and that holding this tradition, is the best means for standing fast in the faith of Christ. Note, 4. That whilst the apostles were in being, there were two ways of delivering the truth, namely, by word of mouth and writing: *Whether by word or our epistle*. Note, 5. That now, when they are long since dead, and we cannot receive the doctrine of life from them by word of mouth, we

must stick to the scriptures and written word, against all pretences to unwritten traditions, or pretended revelations, because the scriptures are a perfect rule both for our faith and practice.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted, and affectionately exhorted the Thessalonians in the former verses, now concludes with fervent prayer for them. Where observe, 1. The person prayed to, our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father. Where note, 1. That prayer must be made to God alone, he only knows all our wants, and he alone is capable of hearing and helping us. Note, 2. That Jesus Christ is here invoked together with God the Father; surely his Godhead is hereby proved, for he that is the object both of internal and external worship, is God, *our Lord Jesus Christ himself*, and God even our Father, &c. Observe, 2. The ground of audience and success in prayer, *which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace*. Where note, 1. That God's love to sinners, manifested in their redemption by Jesus Christ, giveth great boldness and encouragement in the duty of prayer. Note, 2. That God hath given all believers solid ground of substantial and perpetual consolation, he hath given us *everlasting consolation*. Note, 3. That God hath given all believers hope, a good or well grounded hope of eternal life, and this hope is a great encouragement to the duty of prayer. Observe, 2. The blessings prayed for; increase of comfort, and perseverance or establishment. 1. The apostle prays for increase of comfort: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father comfort your hearts." Where note, That all true comfort flows from God, and that the heart is the proper seat of spiritual comfort: Ps. iv. 7. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart." 2. For establishment and perseverance; "and stablish you in every good word and work:" by *every good word*, is meant sound doctrine; by *every good work*, holiness of life. Learn hence, That establishment in faith and holiness is a great and necessary blessing, earnestly to be sought of God in prayer; as at all times this blessing is to be sought, so especially in unsettled times, that when we are most in danger of falling by temptation, we may be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle closed the foregoing chapter with a fervent prayer for the Thessalonians: he begins this chapter with requesting their prayers for him. It is a mutual duty which ministers and people owe to each other, to pray one for, as well as one with another: though St. Paul was an apostle, and one that gave himself unto prayer, yet he found need of the help and benefit of the Thessalonians' prayers; and accordingly thus he speaks them.

FINALLY, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* (No. 62.)

course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you;

Observe here, 1. A courteous and loving compellation, *brethren*. There is a threefold brotherhood, which the scripture takes notice of betwixt Christ and believers, betwixt believers themselves, and betwixt the ministers of Christ and their beloved people. Observe, 2. St. Paul's passionate request and supplication, *Brethren pray for us*. Learn hence, That an interest in the prayers of all those that have an interest in God, is the passionate desire and earnest request of all the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; there is nothing that the ministers of Christ do more want or need, nothing that they so much desire and crave, as the spiritual alms of their people's prayers; their work is a work of the greatest weight, of the greatest labor, of the greatest difficulty and opposition; and, alas, their shoulders are no stronger than other men's, to stand under the weight of this burden; wonder not then they cry out so importunately for the help and benefit of their people's prayers. Observe, 3. The subject matter which he desires them to pray for, "that the word of the Lord may have a free course, and be glorified;" in the original, that the word may run and be glorified; a metaphor taken from a water-course, where the current flows freely without interruption, or obstruction. *Quest*. When may the word be said to have free course? *Ans*. When it is freely preached, and successfully preached; when it is preached without external opposition, and accompanied with the Spirit's internal operation. Learn hence, That it is the standing duty of the people of God to wrestle with God at the throne of grace, for the free course of the word in the labors of his ministers; "pray that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." But when may the word be said to be glorified? When God is glorified in and by the word, by the conversion of sinners, by the exemplary conversation of believers: then is God glorified when his word is entertained. Observe, 4. The argument to excite the Thessalonians to pray for the success of the word amongst others, namely, the great and good success which God had given it amongst them that it may be glorified, *as it is with you*. Thence learn, That such as have felt the power of the gospel themselves, to their conversion and salvation, should pray, that others may partake of the same benefits, by it and from it, together with themselves; herein they show their love to God, and charity to the souls of men.

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith.

In the former verse, St. Paul desired the Thessalonians' prayers with reference to the *word*; here he requests it with relation to himself, that his person might be preserved, as well as his preaching prosper; that so long as God had any work for him to do, he might be preserved from the rage and fury of the unbelieving Jews, and persecuting Gentiles, who followed him from place to place, to give him trouble; "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." Where note, The odious character with which the apostle brands the enemies of his ministry, he calls them unreasonable men, whom no reason or argument could convince and satisfy; and wicked men, of vicious lives and debauched practices: they are usually the vilest and worst of men, the very dregs of mankind, who set themselves to persecute the

preachers, and oppose the preaching of the gospel. Next, he subjoins a reason why he did so earnestly desire their prayers for deliverance from dangers, because *all men have not faith*, neither fidelity, nor faithfulness, much less, sincere faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; for then they would not oppose his gospel, nor persecute us from place to place, for the plain and persuasive preaching of it. Where note, That what profession soever a person makes of godliness and religion, and how high soever his pretences are for external devotion, yet if he opposes the gospel, in the power, purity, and progress of it, he is, and may be deservedly styled, *an unreasonable and wicked man*, who wants fidelity, moral honesty, and real virtue, and acts only for his own interest, and to please a party.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.

Our apostle had prayed for the Thessalonians' establishment before, chap. ii. 17. he assures them of it now; *God will establish you, and keep you from evil*; from all evil, and particularly from the evil of apostasy; and the argument for assurance is drawn from the fidelity of God, and his faithfulness in all his promises: *The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you*. Learn hence, That the christian's establishment in grace, his perseverance in holiness, and preservation from sin, depend upon the power and faithfulness of God, in concurrence with their own united endeavours to establish and preserve themselves from falling; *The Lord is faithful, &c.*

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you.

As if the apostle had said, "Although I gave you the assurance of God's faithful readiness, according to his promise, to do every thing that is requisite on his part, in order to your establishment in holiness, and preservation from sin, yet you must not, you cannot expect the assistance of God, except you also add your own endeavours, as I have commanded; and accordingly I have good confidence, that what I command you in the Lord, or by the authority of the Lord, both now and hereafter, at all times, shall be performed by you. Where note, The character of that obedience which the gospel directs; it must be universal and perpetual; ye do all things that I command you, and I have confidence that ye will do."

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

As if he had said, "That we may not be mistaken in this our confidence, we pray, that the *Lord will direct your hearts into the love of God*, which will constrain you to this obedience." Where note, That to direct man's heart right into the love of God, is the work of God: *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God*. Note farther, That these Thessalonians did love God already; for the apostle had before commended their work of faith, their labor of love, and yet here he prays, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, &c. Learn thence, That the hearts of the holiest and best of saints do stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction into the love of

God; as ships that are best rigged need a pilot, so they that love God most, need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory. Observe farther, From the phrase here used (*direct*) that God works upon man as a rational creature; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction, not by violence and compulsion! The Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful; it changes the will, but without offering violence to the freedom and liberty of the will; we are not forced, but directed; *the Lord direct your hearts*.—Again, *the Lord direct your hearts*; it implies, there are many things that would wreath and bend, crook and turn our hearts another way, and divert our love to a contrary object, to the world and the flesh; therefore we had need pray with earnestness, *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God*; it follows—and into the patient waiting for Christ. Note here, 1. The true character of a sincere christian: he waits for the coming of Christ: such as love Christ fervently, long for his coming greatly. Note, 2. How patience qualifies these holy ardors, and longing desires which the saints have to be with Christ; though love sets us upon the wing to be gone, yet patience commands us to wait Christ's own time of going: vehement love needs the allay of patience: most need much patience to die, but some need as much patience to live: therefore says the apostle, "The Lord direct your hearts into a patient waiting for Christ;" intimating that the saints of God have great need of patience, to enable them to endure that state of distance and separation from Christ so long as they must endure it in this world: well then might the apostle pray on behalf of the Thessalonians, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ."

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Our apostle here enters upon a new subject, namely, that of church discipline; not only exhorting, but commanding and requiring them to excommunicate from their society every brother or christian professor walking disorderly, and not after the tradition or doctrine delivered by him against such persons. Note here, 1. That though the apostle did often-times entreat and beseech, yet he had authority to enjoin and command; *We command you, brethren*. Note, 2. That this authority to command he had not of himself, but from Christ; *We command you in the name of the Lord Jesus*. A minister must look that his commands be grounded upon the authority of Christ, or else they will lie with small weight upon the consciences of his people. Note, 3. The special duty he commanded them to the practice and performance of, namely, to excommunicate scandalous and disorderly persons from their communion and familiar society; *that ye withdraw yourselves*. A man that is guilty of a notorious scandalous sin, ought to be suspended from familiar converse and society with the saints, to shame him into repentance, before a public declarative excommunication casts him out of the church; "We command you to withdraw yourselves from every brother." Note, 4. The offender described, *a brother*; that is a professor of christianity, be he who he will, and let his rank and station be what it will,

if he walks disorderly, like a soldier that keeps not rank and file, as the word signifies, if he walks not after the tradition which he has received of us, that is plainly according to the rule and direction of the gospel, let him be avoided. Hence learn, That there is no church-member, whose rank and station, whose quality and condition, doth exempt his disorderly scandalous walking from ecclesiastical censure; "Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly."

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught: but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, to follow us.

In these verses, the apostle plainly intimates, whom he meant by the *disorderly brother* mentioned in the foregoing verse: it is the idle person, called disorderly, for this reason, because almighty God having fitted man for, and ordained him to labor, he that will not do so, deserts the order in which God has placed him, and thus renders himself disorderly. To condemn which practice, St. Paul propounds his own example to their consideration and imitation; declaring, that he did not eat any man's bread before he earned it, but wrought with his own hands in the day-time, and sometimes in the night, at his trade of tent-making, that he might not be chargeable to any of them; not but that he had power to demand maintenance for his ministry, but he chose rather to depart from his right, and to labor in his calling, to excite others to do the like. Note here, 1. That had not St. Paul labored in his calling of tent-making, he had not been a disorderly person; but, lest any should think so he takes away, and cuts off all occasion of suspicion, by working with his hands; his ministerial office would have freed him from the charge and imputation of idleness, and made maintenance from the church his due; but idleness the apostle observed, was a growing sin, which needed an example as well as doctrine to subdue it; and accordingly the apostle sets one; "I have behaved myself not disorderly or idle amongst you, but wrought with labor and travail night and day." Note, 2. It is commendable to follow good examples, but much more to set a good example: as ministers ought to be patterns, so people ought to be followers; and their sin will be much the greater, and their punishment much the sorer, who do not follow their ministers' doctrine, when they have seen it exemplified in their conversation. Note, 3. There have all along been some persons in the world who have looked upon the work of the ministry as a very easy calling, yea, as an idle calling, that a little time, a little pains and labor is enough for it, whereas the labor of the ministry, in the exercise of the mind, may justly be esteemed the greatest of labors; yet we see people all along have not judged it so, but the ministers of Christ find it so, Note, 4. From the poverty of St. Paul's condition, that he had nothing before-hand, but was forced to earn his bread be-

fore he eat it. Learn, That it pleases God sometimes to measure out a very hard lot to his own children, and to give but little of earth to those who glorify him most upon earth; and those upon whom he intends to bestow extraordinary measures of glory in heaven, are cut short, very short of these outward comforts. Here behold, St. Paul, a chosen vessel, one of the holiest men, and the most serviceable men that lived in the world in his time, yet without a penny in his purse, but what he wrought for with his hands, nay, working night and day for bread! Lord! how endearing are thy children's obligations to thy goodness, for their easy and plentiful circumstances in the world! What a favor it is to have fulness upon earth whilst we live, and the assurance of thy everlasting fruition when we die?

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.

12 Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Observe here, 1. The solemn charge given by the apostle for every man to follow some lawful calling, and to be found, in the way of an industrious diligence; if any (being able) will not work, let him not eat (any part of the church's charity) so that the sin of idleness was directed contrary to the apostle's command, and to the apostle's example. Mark, It is not those that cannot work, but those that will not, whom the apostle excludes from the church's charity; poor men that will not work when they can, do forfeit the bread of charity from men: the rich men that live idly, do by that sin forfeit their food to God, yea, even their lives and their souls too; "If any man would not work, neither should he eat." Observe, 2. The apostle exhorts every man to eat his own bread; implying that the bread of idleness is stolen bread; idle persons shall be judged as thieves, though they eat that which was freely given them: drones deserve no honey, what they eat is stolen from the industrious bee; that is truly our bread which we labor for ourselves, or recompense those who get it for us by their labor: God has sent no man into the world to be idle; but as the providence of God disposes of every man, though he has never so much worldly wealth, yet he must be some way useful and serviceable in his generation. Observe, 3. One of the bad effects of idleness pointed at by our apostle; namely, an intermeddling (as busy-bodies) in other men's matters; an idle person that doth nothing to any good purpose, yet has a deal of business to answer for, done to very bad purpose; not for laboring, but busy trifling; the busy-body's business is very unprofitable business; the mind of man cannot be wholly idle, but must be employed in something, if not in doing good, of necessity in contriving evil; usually none are so busy in other men's matters, as they that neglect their own; those disorderly persons, who did not work at all, yet were busy-bodies, and, as such, censured by our

apostle; "I hear there are some among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies."

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Observe here, 1. How far St. Paul was from the censoriousness and uncharitableness of those men, who condemn a whole society, a communion, a church in general, for the misdoings of some particular persons in it, *I hear*, says he, *there are some that walk disorderly*; but ye, brethren, are free from these misdemeanors; you are painful in your employments, diligent in your callings, charitable in your distributions, be not weary in these instances, of your duty, but persevere in well-doing; when the ministers of Christ reprove the stubborn and disobedient for the neglect of their duty, they forget not to encourage and exhort the faithful and obedient to a persevering diligence in their known duty. Observe, 2. He directs them how to manage refractory persons, such as remained contumacious and disobedient to the admonitions given by this epistle: continuing disorderly, and refusing to labor; his advice is two-fold; he tells them what he would have them not do, and what he would have them do to such. 1. Negatively, What they should not do; namely, not to cut them off from the church by excommunication, despairing of their repentance and reformation; extreme rigor is offensive to God, and injurious to the church, as well as too much lenity and forbearance. 2. Positively, He exhorts that they consider them as lapsed brethren, and treat them accordingly, as those that desire and endeavour to reduce and reform them; in order to which he directs, first, to note or mark the disorderly persons; that is set a note of shame upon them. Next, To avoid all intimacy and familiarity with them. Lastly, To admonish them of their duty, that they may be brought, if possible, to repentance.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means.

Our apostle being now to take his leave of the Thessalonians, closes his epistle with prayer. Where note, 1. The mercy prayed for, *Peace*; peace with God, peace with conscience, peace and unity among themselves as christians, peace with the men of the world, strangers, yea, enemies to christianity. Note, 2 The person prayed to, *the Lord of peace*; understand Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, the purchaser of peace, the procurer of peace, the preserver of peace. Note, 3. The perpetuity of the mercy prayed for, *The Lord give you peace*, not for a short time, but for continuance always, that is, at all times, and in all places, and with all persons. Note, The way and manner of obtaining this and all other blessings, it must be in the use of means; *the Lord give you peace by all means*, that is, in the use of all lawful and laudable means. Learn hence, 1, That the Lord himself is the author, procurer, and preserver of all that peace which his people enjoy; and therefore

his people may boldly trust him for peace and safety, who is and will be styled, *The Lord of Peace*. Learn, 2. That such as will obtain this blessing of peace, must pray for it, and endeavour after it in a diligent use of all lawful means, which is the usual way and method in which God dispenses it. Learn, 3. That it is a lasting peace, a peace always amongst all persons and at all times, that a christian should pray for and endeavour after, that it may be enjoyed without cessation, and without interruption; "The Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means."

—The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle; so I write:

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen*.

Observe here, 1. That in the former part of the verse he had prayed for peace on behalf of these Thessalonians, and this prayer was put up to Jesus Christ; *The Lord of peace give you peace*, which by the way is, a strong argument for the divinity of Christ; for none but God is to be prayed to, none but God can give peace, Isa. lviii. 19. "I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace." Our apostle now having prayed for peace, next prays for the presence of God; "The Lord give you peace, the Lord be with you all." Learn thence, That God's gracious presence with his people in any plentiful measure, is annexed to their peaceable frame of spirit, and to their serious endeavours after peace and love, after unity and concord amongst themselves; and the contrary spirit and temper grieves the good Spirit of God, and provokes him to withdraw his quickening and comforting presence from his people; for these two petitions seem to have mutual dependency upon each other, "The Lord give you peace, and the Lord be with you all." Observe, 2. That the salutation written with his own hand respects his own writing, which did serve as a token or certain mark whereby his own epistles were distinguished from all counterfeits. The sending of salutations, either by word or writing, that we may thereby testify our sincere affection to absent friends, is not a matter of decency only, but of duty; not of compliment barely, but of conscience. "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand." Observe, 3. His usual valediction and farewell wish, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*. As if he had said, "May the gracious and undeserved favor of God in Christ, with all the fruits and effects, the benefits and advantages of it be conveyed to you all without exception, and be the portion and privilege of every soul of you; and in testimony both of my affectionate desire and assured confidence, I say, *Amen*, so be it, so let it be." Learn hence, That there is an inexhaustible fountain of rich grace in Christ, and so copious are the streams of spiritual blessings which flow from it, that wish we never so much to others, yet there still remaineth enough for ourselves. St. Paul, who wisheth all grace to the Thessalonians, knew very well there was enough both for himself and them; and that how large a measure soever was bestowed upon them, there would not be the less remaining for himself; therefore doth he thus close and conclude his epistle, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." *Amen*.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO
TIMOTHY.

Timotheus or Timothy is the name of the person to whom St. Paul directs this and the following epistle; a name given him by his parents, to testify their pious desire that this their son should fear and honor God, according to the signification of his name.

His grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, bred him up in the knowledge of the scriptures from a child; he became first the disciple, and then the companion of St. Paul; was ordained by him, was very assisting to him, and inexpressibly dear to this great apostle, who knew how to value true worth in what age soever he found it; insomuch that St. Paul seldom mentions his name but with a mark of honor and esteem, calling him his son, his dearly beloved son, his faithful fellow-laborer, &c. He was a person of eminent gifts, and of a gracious disposition, but of a sick and weakly constitution, and being entered very young into the work of the ministry, St. Paul thought fit in his absence from him, to write two epistles to him, and to all succeeding ministers of the gospel after him, directing how to demean and behave themselves in their ministerial function.

In these two epistles, and that to Titus, we have a collection of canons truly apostolical, directing all bishops and pastors of the church how to govern themselves, and how to guide their people.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope;*

Observe here 1. St. Paul asserts his apostolical authority, calling himself *an apostle*; not that Timothy questioned it, but he writes it for their sakes, over whom he was now presiding at Ephesus, that neither ministers nor people might despise what Timothy did, it being enjoined both him and them by so great an authority as was that of an apostle, *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Observe, 2. What authority St. Paul had for executing this office of an apostle, it was *by the commandment of God and our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, by the appointment, injunction, ordination, and immediate commission of the Father and of Christ, by his voice from heaven, as the rest of his apostles were called by a voice from Christ on earth: in 1. Cor. i. he is said to be called by the will of God; not by his permissive will barely, but by his preceptive will particularly. Observe, 4. The title given to our Lord Jesus Christ, he is styled our *hope*, that is, the author of our hope, the object of our hope, the purchaser of what we hope for, the declarer to us of the hopes of glory expected by us. Where note; That our Lord Jesus Christ is undoubtedly and undeniably God, because he is our hope and trust: now, if he were no more than a man, though never so excelling, to make him our hope, would be to make ourselves miserable: for *cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh man his hope*, Jer. xvii. 5.

(No. 62)

2 Unto Timothy, *my own son* in the faith; Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Observe here, 1. That endearing title which our apostle gives to Timothy, he calls him his *son*, his *own son*, his *own son in the faith*; because as some think, converted by him to the christian faith; others, that he was more thoroughly instructed, edified and encouraged by St. Paul, but converted before; possibly also, he may call him his son, because he was as assisting to him, as obsequious and observing of him, as a son is to a father, he being a young man, and the apostle now aged; or it may be he calls him his son, because he resembles him in his faith and doctrine, preaching and conversation, as a son resembles a father in face and manners. Consider Timothy as a spiritual son to St. Paul, begotten to the faith by him, and then the note is this, That the ministers of Christ cannot but bear a fervent and an affectionate love to those that are their spiritual children, their sons in the faith, and converted to Christ by their ministry; consider him as an assistant to St. Paul, a co-worker and fellow-laborer with him in the work of the gospel, and thus affectionately beloved by him; and we may learn for our instruction, how fervently the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one of another, strengthen each other's hands, encourage each other's hearts in the work of God: we have little, God knows, very little love from the world: Lord! how sad is it that we should yet have less one for another: see how the heart of St. Paul and his assistant Timothy were knit together in love, like father and son to the great reputation, as well as the successful furtherance of the gospel!

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith; so do.

Note here, 1. The tender care which St. Paul took of the new planted church at Ephesus; when his office called him into Macedonia, he leaves Timothy behind him at Ephesus, to water what he had planted, and to build upon that foundation which he had laid; when I went into Macedonia, I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus. Note, 2. The charge and command which St. Paul left with Timothy at his departure from him, to take care that no new or strange doctrine be taught, or any other doctrine received by the church, than what was delivered by him; charge some that they teach no other doctrine. But who were these? Very probably they were the judaizing teachers, who strenuously endeavoured to corrupt the purity, and deprave the simplicity of the gospel. Thence learn, 1. That though the doctrine of Christ and his apostles was abundantly sufficient to salvation, yet the church of Christ, even the earliest days of christianity, were in very great danger of being corrupted early by other doctrines than those delivered by them. Learn, 2. That it is the great duty, and ought to be the special care of the ministers of God, that no new or strange doctrine be broached in the church of Christ; I besought thee—that thou mightest charge some that they

teach no other doctrine. But a farther and more particular charge is given, ver. 4. That the church at Ephesus give no heed to *fables or endless genealogies*, which rather occasion wrangling disputes, than tend to edification in faith and holiness: by fables, we may understand vain and idle speculations, jewish scruples, frivolous observances; whatsoever in preaching is delivered by us, which doth not answer the great end of preaching, namely, to build up men in faith and holiness, is trifling, and not preaching; what we deliver signifies no more than a fable or an imaginary tale that is told. But what were these endless genealogies here spoken of? *Ans.* Not scripture genealogies, for those are not vain, but useful; not endless but determinate; but these were endeavours of some particular persons, who that they might have a pretence to claim kindred with Christ, did make their genealogies endless, drawing down their line of descent from David, &c. or else endeavours to prove themselves sons of Abraham and Isaac, privileges which they highly valued themselves upon, and rested in, saying, *We have Abraham to our Father.* Whatever they were, our apostle charges Timothy, that the church at Ephesus give no heed to them, nor to the preachers of them, and the reason is given, because they only occasion disputes and tend not to edification.

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

6 From which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

In these words our apostle smartly reflects upon the judaizing teachers, who were so zealous for the ceremonial law; that they mingled works with faith in the point of justification; the apostle tells them, that the end of the law, aye, and of the gospel too, is love; the end, that is, the aim, the scope, the design, the perfection and consummation, the perfecting end; the sense is, that all the duties which the law of God and the gospel of Christ doth enjoin, are designed only as means to advance and perfect our love both to God and man; the end of all Christ's doctrine is charity, or the bringing of men to love God and their neighbour. Observe next, the apostle describes the nature and quality of that love which is the end and design, the intention and perfection of the law, and the fountain from whence this love must spring and flow, namely, from a pure heart, or a heart purified by the Spirit of Christ from a good conscience, or a conscience purified by the blood of Christ, and from a faith unfeigned: implying, that love either to God or men, is not sincere, unless it proceed from a clean heart, and is accompanied with an holy and innocent life, and has faith for the root and principle from which it flows. Observe lastly, How he taxes these judaizing, and false teachers, with swerving from charity, purity, and faith, and turning aside to vain-jangling; and that whilst they affect to be thought learned teachers, and expounders of the law, they betray their own ignorance, not understanding either what they say, or whereof they affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

Lest any should have apprehended, from the reflection he made upon the teachers of the law in the foregoing verse, that he did disparage and undervalue the law itself, our apostle in this verse declares, that the law rightly understood and preached was very good, given for, and serves unto excellent purposes, if we use it lawfully; that is, as we ought to use it, as God intended it, namely, as a perfect rule of life, to direct us in our obedience to God; but not so good as to expect justification by it; not good in opposition to the gospel, but in subserviency to the gospel; *the law is good if used lawfully*. Observe here, 1. Something implied, namely, that the law of God may be used unlawfully: but how and when may it be said so to be? *Ans.* When it is converted to unprofitable disputes, as was the case here, when men oppose it to Christ, when they seek justification by it, and the like. Observe, 2. Something expressed, namely, That the law of God, considered in itself, is good and excellent: it is good in regard of its author, it hath the authority of God stamped upon it; good in regard of the matter contained in it; good in regard of the end of it, to lead us unto Christ, Rom. x 4. *Christ is the end of the law*; good in regard of the use of it, and that, 1. To the ungodly, to restrain them from sin, to convince them of sin, to condemn them for sin. 2. To the godly, to discover sin more clearly and more fully, to drive them out of themselves, and from all expectation of righteousness and justification by any thing in themselves, or done by themselves; to cause them to put the higher value, esteem, and price upon Jesus Christ, and the benefits received by him. Thus the law is good; and if so, woe to the Antinomians, who deny the use and excellency of the holy law of God, who vilify it, trample upon it, and because it is not good for justification, affirm it is not good at all: What! is not gold good, because you cannot eat it for food? It was never intended for that purpose: is not obedience to the law as an eternal rule of holy living, and good works, agreeable to the demands of the law, necessary and good, though they never had the impress of God's ordination for our justification in his sight, he having provided a perfect and spotless righteousness for that purpose, which is highly pleasing to him? Lord! in the day when thou shalt come to plead with the world for transgressing thy law, how shall these men, who with tongue and pen have cried down the use and excellencies of thy law, show their heads before thee?

9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

Our apostle here declares the persons, 1. Whom the law was not made for, and them for whom it was made: it was not made for a righteous man; that is, say some, it was not made for him as a burden, to be an uneasiness to him, because he has a love to it, a delight in it, and does voluntarily conform himself to the observations of it: others say thus, The law was not made for a righteous man, that is, the righteous man is not under the coercive or vindictive, but directive power of the law only; he is not under the curse of the law actually, though all are under it meritoriously; and accordingly the law was never made to terrify, and affrighten, and condemn them. Next the apostle declares for whom, for what persons, and for what purposes, the law was made, intended and designed; namely, for restraining and condemning, first, in general all lawless persons, sons of Belial, as the scripture calls them, that is, men without yoke; the moral law in general is a rule of holy living, and the gospel in particular is Christ's yoke: now such as will not wear the yoke of Christ, must expect no benefit by the cross of Christ: then he instances in particular, what and whom the law was made for, namely, to deter and restrain persons from all impiety and profaneness, from all disobedience and stubbornness, from murder and manslaughter, from sodomy, from whoredom, and all manner of uncleanness, either natural or unnatural, from theft, from perjury, from lying and falsehood, and summarily, to curb and restrain wicked men from the practice of every thing which is contrary to the pure and holy nature of God. Learn hence, That there is such a propensity and inclination in the corrupt and depraved nature of man to the practice of all sin, even the greatest, the vilest and the worst of sins, that the law of God with all its threatened punishments, is not sufficient to deter, to terrify, or restrain sinners from the commission of them; but such as will not be under the restraining, must lie under the condemning power of the law.

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

Note here, 1. The title given to the gospel, it is called, *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*: partly, because the glorious attributes and excellencies of God are more resplendent in the gospel, than in the law of God: as also, because the gospel brings more honor and glory to God than all the works of creation put together. Note, 2. He styles God, the giver of this gospel, *The blessed God*, to signify thereby unto us, his transcendent mercy and excelling goodness, in that being infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his divine perfections, and incapable of any profit from, or advantage by, his creatures, he was yet pleased to give us his Son, his gospel, his Holy Spirit, to qualify us for, and bring us to the enjoyment of himself; *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*. Note, 3. What humble and thankful returns St. Paul makes to Christ, for the high honor, the rich and special favor conferred upon him, in calling him to dispense this glorious gospel, in call-

ing him to it, in enabling him for it, and rendering him faithful and successful in it; "I thank Christ Jesus who enabled me, and counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Where note, That all the fidelity, ability, zeal, and courage, which the apostle had exercised in the whole course of his ministry, is attributed and ascribed unto Christ, and not to himself; his faithfulness was not the cause or motive, but the effect and fruit of the grace of God in calling him to the ministry, 1 Cor. vii. 25. having obtained mercy to be faithful: had our Saviour only discovered this faithfulness in him, and not conferred it upon him, there had not been such reason for this affectionate thanksgiving which here we find from our apostle; "I thank Christ, who hath enabled me, counting me faithful."

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Note here, 1. What a prodigious sinner St. Paul represents himself before conversion. *I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious*: a blasphemer, the highest sin he could commit against God: a persecutor, the highest sin he could commit against the saints: injurious, the highest wickedness towards mankind; sins of such an aggravated and accumulated guilt, that they wanted but one ingredient, namely, sufficient knowledge, to render them the sin against the Holy Ghost. Be astonished, O heavens, at the great and infinite mercy of God towards great sinners! Even persecutors and blasphemers may be, and sometimes are converted, and brought home to God. Note, 2. The reason assigned by him, why such distinguishing mercy was dispensed to him: he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. The word because, doth not import or imply, that ignorance in the apostle was the proper cause of mercy in God, but that it made St. Paul a more capable subject for receiving mercy, than he should have been, if he had maliciously sinned against knowledge; not that St. Paul by less sinning did merit the mercy of God; but his ignorance and unbelief being in a sort invincible, through the prejudices of education, they did much abate the malignity of his sin; for he was bred a pharisee, which was a sect that had an implacable enmity against Christ and his holy religion. Observe lastly, The end and design of St. Paul in relating that his bitter persecution of christianity was in the time of his ignorance, and not done deliberately, knowingly and maliciously; partly to justify the divine mercy and free grace of God which pardoned his fury, his rage and madness against Christ and his saints: for, had he done thus deliberately and maliciously, for secular ends and worldly advantages, it had been the sin against the Holy Ghost which was unpardonable: and partly, he mentions his ignorance, to prevent the abuse of divine mercy in men, and to let the world know that none might, or ought to take encouragement from his example, to be of a persecuting spirit, and yet hope for mercy, when at the same time they sin against light and knowledge, I would to God the persecuting spirit amongst us would consider this, which is as bitter as ever in the breasts of some against their protestant brethren: but blessed be God, legally restrained: they cannot now afflict those whom they do not affect; yet it is evident, they do not rejoice, and are not so thankful

for their own liberty as they should, because those whom they hate enjoy theirs: their case is vastly different from our apostle's, they cannot pretend to do it ignorantly, though through infidelity in some sort they may.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Still our apostle goes on magnifying the transcendent mercy and abundant grace of God, that called him first to be a christian, and then an apostle: and he shows, that this great mercy of God had great effects in him of faith and love, both towards God and his saints. Where note, How St. Paul, after his conversion, abounded and excelled in those graces which were opposite and contrary to the sins committed in his carnal and unregenerate state: he abounds in *faith*, in opposition to his former *unbelief*: and in *love*, in opposition to his former rage and cruelty. A christian's fruitfulness in grace and holiness after his conversion, ought to bear some proportion to his unfruitfulness in a sinful state before conversion; the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love; he now glorifies God by excelling in those graces which were opposite to his former sins.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Observe here, 1. What an humble apprehension this great apostle had of himself: though then the greatest of saints in the esteem of others, yet the chiefest of sinners in his own account: for he doth not say, *I was* the chief of sinners, but, *I am so*: notwithstanding his repentance and remission, still he reflects upon his former unregenerate state and sinful condition. Learn hence, That when sin is mercifully pardoned, and cast behind God's back, the penitent sinner will and ought to set it continually before his own face to keep him humble, sensible of, and thankful for the rich grace of God dispensed to him, and received by him; *Sinners of whom I am chief*. Observe, 2. A most comfortable revelation made by the gospel concerning the redemption and salvation of a lost world, by our Lord Jesus Christ; *He came into the world to save sinners*. Where note, That the promised Messiah is come into the world; that Jesus Christ is that promised Messiah: therefore he was before he came, his divine nature pre-existing from all eternity; and in the fulness of time he assumed the human nature into an union with his God-head. Note farther, That the design of his coming was to save sinners, therefore, if man had not sinned, Christ had not come into the world: what need of a Mediator, had there been no breach? No need of a physician, had there been no disease. Farther, it was not absolutely necessary that Christ should come into the world to save sinners; but supposing God's purpose of saving sinners by way of a price and satisfaction, Christ coming into the world was indispensably necessary; for no mere creature could lay down a price satisfactory for the salvation of lost man. Observe, 3. The truth and certainty, together with the worth and excellency of the gospel revelation; *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation*: for, what is the gospel but a revelation of pardon to condemned male-

factors, a declaration of peace to proclaimed enemies, a proclamation of liberty to enslaved captives, an offer of cure to diseased persons? Oh! with what fervent zeal should this acceptable doctrine be preached by us, and embraced by our people, "That Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners!"

16 Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Note here, That God is pleased sometimes to magnify his mercy in the conversion and salvation of the most notorious sinners, that so the greatest of sinners may take encouragement from thence to hope and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ for pardoning mercy: thus here this great blasphemer and persecutor was received to mercy, for a pattern and example to all such sinners as should hereafter forsake their evil and wicked ways, and give up themselves sincerely to the obedience of the gospel; "For this cause I obtained mercy." Such a conspicuous example of Christ's clemency and grace towards so great a sinner, whom he not only pardoned, but preferred to the dignity of an apostle, and sent forth to preach the gospel to the gentiles, would be a strong motive to all such sinners to receive the gospel with faith and obedience; there could be no reason for any of them to despair of mercy, when they saw such a pattern, such an illustrious instance of pardoning mercy before their eyes; "In me first Jesus Christ showed forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him."

17 Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle being ravished with a sweet sense of the greatness of God's pardoning mercy towards himself, concludes this whole matter with a pathetic doxology, and an affectionate thanksgiving unto God. As if he had thus said, The sense of the aforementioned unspeakable mercy calleth up my soul to speak with joy the praises of our God, who is eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, absolutely wise, over angels and all creatures, to him be honor and glory for ever and ever."

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy,—

What charge? To stay at Ephesus, say some, for the benefit of the church there; to charge the false teachers not to give heed to fables, say others; to keep the doctrine committed to him by St. Paul, as a faithful minister and soldier of Jesus Christ, against all opposition: these were the charges given.

—According to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

(No. 62.)

Here St. Paul encourages Timothy to go on in the course of his ministry with courage and faithfulness, according as it had been foretold or prophesied he should do. Here note, That amongst the gifts of prophecy, which were found in the apostle's time, and the discerning of spirits, this was one, to foretell and choose out persons meet and fit to do God service in the ministry. Timothy was thus chosen by prophecy, that is, by the direction of the spirit of God; he was designed and notified by the spirit of prophecy, and therefore the apostle bids him, as it had been foretold he should be a faithful minister, to approve himself to be such; "According to the prophecies which went before on thee, war a good warfare." Learn hence, That young ministers ought to take heed, that what hopes, expectations, and good opinions others have had of them, and what prayers, promises, and engagements have been made for them, may not be made void, but made good by them, in the future course of their ministry.

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck:

St. Paul had exhorted Timothy in the foregoing verse, "to war a good warfare;" here he directs him to two weapons which he would have him use in that warfare, namely, "faith and a good conscience;" neither will do alone: not faith without a good conscience, nor a good conscience without faith; hold both, faith in thy teaching, and a good conscience in thy practice; hold them fast; for faith stands with a good conscience, and falls with a bad one. Learn hence, That in the most perilous times, when some lose their graces and comforts, their present peace and future hopes, that we may not lose what we have on earth, and what we look for in heaven, our continual care must be, to get and keep, to have and hold, faith and a good conscience. And mark the encouragement given to exercise this care; some through the neglect of it, "concerning faith have made shipwreck." Our life is a sea-faring condition; a good conscience is the ark in which we are secure, made by God's own direction, as was that of Noah, and pitched within and without, as was his; a window it has in the top, to let in the light of heaven, but not the least crack or crevice below, to let in a drop of guilt, or endanger its own safety; it shoots off all the showers that fall downwards, and all the floods that rage upwards. Such a security is an innocent mind and a clear conscience; but if we do not hold fast a good conscience, but let it go, we have seen the last of faith, it sinks, it shipwrecks presently; "concerning faith have made shipwreck,"

20 Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander;

That is, of the number of those who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, are these two men. They made shipwreck of faith; but how? By renouncing christianity expressly? No: but implicitly, by denying the resurrection, and maintaining such doctrines as utterly subverted and totally overthrew the faith.

—Whom I have delivered unto satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

11 R

That is, whom I have inflicted the church's censure of excommunication upon, cast them out of the church, and delivered to satan, as God's executioner, who oft-times tormented the person with grievous diseases and bodily pains, called elsewhere, "The destruction of the flesh," 1 Cor. v. 5. Learn thence, That excommunication rightly administered, is a very solemn ordinance; a shutting out of heaven him who is justly cast out of the church's communion here on earth. But observe, the charitable intention of the apostle in denouncing this sentence of excommunication; it was, "That they might learn not to blaspheme." Mark. It was none of satan's desire, but the apostle's, that they might learn not to blaspheme: satan was then God's executioner, when the church wanted the countenance of the christian magistrate, and his design was destruction, but the apostle's was reformation; not to ruin, but reclaim. Learn, That the end of the church's censure, in particular of excommunication, is not to serve to the destruction of the censured, much less to the private revenge of the censurer, but to reform and reclaim the offender, that others may be warned, and the infection stayed: "Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme,"

CHAPTER II.

The first chapter of this epistle acquainted us, that Timothy was left by St. Paul at Ephesus, to manage and superintend the affairs of the church in that city, whilst the apostle was absent from them, planting and propagating the gospel in other places; this second chapter directs Timothy to the management of his duty; and first, he exhorts him to take special care that prayers and supplications be publicly made, and so far as it was in his power, privately also, for all men. Whence we may learn, That religious and constant performance of the duty of prayer by all persons, publicly and privately, ought to be a special part of a minister's care and concern. His endeavour must be to bring his people to a great sense of this part of their duty to God their Maker, to bow their knees in public, private, and secret before him: for to live without prayer, is to live without God in the world.

I EXHORT, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty:

Observe here, 1. The duty which Timothy is exhorted to take care of, and that is, of the duty of public prayer; I exhort thee, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions, with thanksgivings, be publicly made; prayer being a special and principal part of public worship, the minister of God must be assiduous and constant in it; deprecating evils threatened, supplicating for mercies wanted, interceding on the behalf of others, and giving thanks for blessings received. Observe, 2. For whom we are to pray in general, for all men; because we cannot pray acceptably for ourselves, if we pray

only for ourselves: this is the noblest exercise of charity, and which God has put in the power of the poorest man upon earth to exercise; "Let supplications and prayers be made for all men." Observe, 3. For whom we are more especially, and in the first place to pray; for kings, and all in authority, who were then Pagans and persecutors. Mark, He says not for lawful and rightful kings, but for such as have the pre-eminence and power in their hands, for all power is of God; "And the powers that be, are ordained of God." Rom. xiii. 2. But why first for kings? Because they are such great instruments of good to mankind, because they most want our prayers, as they encounter with more difficulties, are exposed to more dangers, and are liable to greater temptations than other men. Observe, 4. The arguments which the apostle offers, to engage us to this duty. "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;" that is, that we may be secured in the quiet and peaceable possession of our civil rights, and interests, and that we may be protected in the free exercise of our religion, and in the practice of godliness: for though no prince can take our religion from us, if we resolve to keep it, yet they may disturb us in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of it: and therefore, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to pray for "kings, and all that are in authority."

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Our apostle subjoins his reasons for our praying for all men, because Christ came into the world to save all men, chap. i. 16. Because it is the desire of God, as well as the design of Christ, that all men should be saved, and because such prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of God. Learn hence, 1. That to pray for all men, as well enemies as friends, especially and particularly for rulers and magistrates, is good, acceptable, and agreeable to Almighty God, as all acts of obedience to his commanding will are: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God." Learn, 2. That it is not only all sorts of men that God and Christ desire should be saved, but our Lord willed, together with his Father, the salvation of all men in general, so far as to make a sacrifice sufficient for all, if they repent and believe, and to offer a general pardon to all on condition of acceptance, and to send his ministers amongst all with the word of reconciliation, accompanying it with an hearty desire that all would accept of it; in short, what Christ offereth to all, he undoubtedly purchased for all; but he offers to all pardon and life upon condition of acceptance; therefore, he is so far willing that all men should be saved. Learn, 3. The means and method by which, and in which, God would have all men to be saved, namely, by coming to the knowledge of the truth. It is evidently false then, which some confidently affirm, That a man may be saved in any religion: no, he cannot come to salvation but by the knowledge of the truth; without the knowledge of God, without faith in Christ, where he has been revealed, and without obedience to the gospel, where it has been made known, there is no possibility of salvation; God would have all men to be saved, by coming to the "knowledge of the truth."

5 For there is one God, and one Medi-

ator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The apostle's argument runs thus, "We ought to pray for all, because there is one God, who is good to all, and one Mediator between God and mankind, who took upon him the common nature of all men, and gave himself a satisfactory and sufficient ransom for all, which was in due time testified and born witness to us by his apostles. Learn hence, 1. That the only way of friendly intercourse between God and fallen man, is by and through a mediator; God cannot look upon fallen men, out of a mediator, but as rebels, traitors, and objects of his vindictive wrath: nor can fallen man, without a mediator, look up to God, but as a provoked majesty, an angry judge, and a consuming fire. Learn, 2. That there is no other mediator between God and man but Jesus Christ, who was born God and man; for though the apostle calls him the man Christ Jesus, this is not added to exclude the divine nature, from the Mediatorship, but emphatically to declare that nature, in which he gave himself a ransom for us; the human nature is the matter of our ransom, the divine nature gave worth and value to it; Christ suffered being man, and satisfied being God. Learn, 3. That this one mediator, Jesus Christ, gave himself a ransom for all; whoever perishes under the gospel, it is not because no ransom was paid for him, nor because it was not sufficient for him, for it is most notorious that God had issued forth an universal act of grace, offering pardon of sin, and eternal salvation to all men without exception, living under the gospel, upon condition of their believing acceptance; if they reject and refuse it, it is to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation. Learn, 4. That Christ's mediation and intercession is founded upon redemption: because he gave himself a ransom for all, therefore is he, and he only qualified to intercede for all, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind: therefore the distinction of the church of Rome, between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, is groundless; for who dares plead with an offended God, as an intercessor on the behalf of sinners, that has not first, as a redeemer, satisfied the justice of God for sin? As there was no redemption wrought by any, so there is no intercession to be made by any, but by Christ; as there is but one God, so but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

8 I will therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle declares his authority to publish the gospel to the Gentiles, and his integrity in the publication of it; I was ordained an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and verity. Observe, 2. That according to St. Paul's commission, he gave directions to all

sorts of persons for the regular performance of their duty. And, first, concerning the duty of prayer; *I will*, that is, God by me declares his will, that "all men pray," that they pray "every where" in the public assemblies, in their private families and apartments; "lifting up the hands," in token of expecting to receive an answer from heaven; lifting up holy hands; let their prayers be holy, accompanied with faith and charity; "without wrath and doubting;" a peaceable heart is as necessary in prayer, as a pure hand; it is in vain to ask in prayer the favor of God with anger and revenge in our heart against man; to pray with doubting, is opposed to faith, to pray in wrath is opposed to charity; as if the apostle had said, pray both in actual faith and love; there must be faith in prayer, otherwise we cannot lift up holy hands without doubting; there must be love, otherwise we cannot lift up holy hands without wrath; "Therefore" says the apostle, "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;" he and his service must be holy, that will serve God acceptably.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

The next apostolical precept here given, is to women concerning their apparel and attire, that at all times, but especially in public worship, they use such apparel as becometh modest and chaste women, expressing by their outward garb the inward gravity and modesty of their minds; not like proud and alluring persons, with embroidered hair, gold and pearl, to attract the eyes and hearts of the simple. Note 1. That the attire which all persons wear ought to be such as may answer the end for which apparel was appointed; which was to hide and shroud our nakedness, for differing and distinction of sexes; as also, for distinguishing between the qualities and ranks of persons: garments also are for defence and protection, and for decency and ornament. Note 2. That though persons of quality are not prohibited to wear such garments, though costly, as become their degree, yet none are to study the external adorning of the body, so much, as to neglect the inner man by good works. Note 3. That all attire, 1. is forbidden, which suspected women use either to provoke to lust in others, or to show inclinations to it themselves. 2. All such attire as, by the richness and costliness of it, shows pride and vanity of spirit, and an ambition to excel others; not but that there may be pride under mean apparel, and oftentimes is. 3. All such attire as is unsuitable either to the time or place of worship. Note 4. That this precept, ought not to be slighted, by women, as of small moment, because the two great apostles, St. Peter, and St. Paul, do both give it in charge unto them. Note lastly, That the men are by no means to look upon themselves as unconcerned in this apostolical precept given to women: it is much more inexcusable in them to affect gaiety and gaudy dress; for it is vain and foolish, troublesome and uneasy, the nurse of idleness, attended with luxury and wantonness, and very often with immodesty

and lewdness, and it is the great bane very often of justice and charity. How many are fine and gay, but at the expense, and sometimes at the ruin, of the poor tradesman? And how oft is that spent in vain decking, which ought to be laid out in the poor's clothing?

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Still our apostle is directing Timothy how persons should and ought to manage themselves in the public assemblies, and particularly how women ought to behave themselves at the time, and in the place of worship; let, says he, the women in your assemblies; "learn in silence, with all subjection" to the better sex; "for I suffer not a woman to teach" publicly, and to "usurp authority over the man," to whom God has given authority over her, but rather according to her duty let her learn in silence. Here note, 1. That it is only women's public teaching that is here forbidden; not their private teaching their children, or servants, or the younger women, or even their husbands themselves upon a fit occasion, Acts xviii. 26. we find Priscilla privately instructing Apollos. Note, 2. That none ought to teach but who have authority, and teaching is exercising that authority, a woman therefore teaching publicly doth usurp an authority not due unto her. Note, 3. There were some women in the Jewish church endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and particularly with the gifts of prophesying, who did teach publicly; as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna; and it is probable that the speaking of these extraordinary women encouraged others to do the like, whom the apostle here directs his speech against; "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority, &c."

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.

Here St. Paul offers a double argument to enforce the duty of subjection upon the woman, and to prevent her usurping of authority over the man, namely, because the man was first in the creation; "Adam was first formed, then Eve," and the woman was first in the transgression; "Adam was not deceived," that is, first and immediately deceived, but the woman being deceived was first in the transgression; she was guilty of her own and her husband's transgression, and accordingly, not only by the law of her creation, but as a punishment for her transgression, God has placed her in a state of subjection, and given the man authority over her, which authority she usurps over him, whenever she undertakes to be a public teacher of him: these two considerations doth the apostle make use of, to humble the woman, and to keep her within the sphere of her proper duty.

15 Notwithstanding, she shall be saved

in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety.

Our apostle having in the precedent verse acquainted us with the woman's sin, that she "was in the transgression," and first in the transgression, in this verse he informs the woman of a part of her punishment for that her transgression, and that is the severe pain and extreme peril of child-bearing; he acquaints her, 2. With a comfort and support under that punishment, and that is an hope of salvation, "she shall be saved in child-bearing." 3. With the condition upon which that hope of salvation is grounded and bottomed, "If she continues in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety." Learn 1. That pain in child bearing is a part of that punishment which was inflicted by God upon the woman for her first sin; and accordingly the woman's sorrow and sensible feeling of the pains of child-birth ought to bring to remembrance her original and first transgression; surely when the woman feels the original punishment, it ought to remind her of her original sin, as a child ought to remember his fault at that very instant when he is under his father's rod. Learn, 2. That the infliction of this punishment (the pains of child-bearing) even unto death, is and shall be no hindrance of the woman's eternal salvation, if there be found with her those holy qualifications and gracious conditions which the gospel requires; partly in regard of the relation which God stands in to her, partly in regard of the covenant which God has made with her; a child is as much a child under the rod as in the bosom; neither the father's stroke, nor the child's grief, can dissolve that relation. Learn 3. That faith and charity, holiness and sobriety, with a perseverance therein, are the great conditions of the gospel upon which the woman's eternal salvation in that hazardous condition doth depend; "she shall be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety;" the words may also refer to the woman's temporal deliverance in the time of travail, and the sense runs thus: she shall be saved in child-bearing, that is, she shall go through the pains of child-birth with safety if she continue in faith, putting her trust in God for deliverance, in charity exercising compassion to those in the like condition, and in the exercise of temperance, sobriety, and chastity, according to her matrimonial vow.

CHAPTER III.

The design of our apostle in this chapter is to instruct Timothy in one of the most important parts and duties of his office, namely, to take great care whom he did admit into the sacred function. And accordingly he gives him a catalogue of several qualifications, not fewer than sixteen, which ought to be found in the person whom he did ordain for public administration in the church of God. Thus he speaks. ver. 1.

THIS is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle acquaints Timothy with the dignity, honor, and excellency of the sacred function;

He that desireth the office of a bishop, that is, to rule and teach in the church of God, he desireth a good work, that is an honorable employment. As if our apostle had said, "Know, O Timothy, that as to the office of a bishop, whoever desireth it, doth desire a very great and excellent work: it is not a bare name, title, dignity, a plate of honor and command; but a work, a work of vast importance, labor and difficulty: take heed, therefore, whom thou dost admit, and of those that are also admitted into the sacred function, to consider the great weight of that important service, to enterprize it with extraordinary dread and caution, looking upon their office, not with aspiring but tremendous thoughts; for who is sufficient for these things?"

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.

Here we have St. Paul's positive character of a bishop, and what he ought to be, who is admitted into that high and honorable office in the church of God; he ought to be *blameless*, a person free from scandal, without any just ground of blame: the life of a bishop should shine so bright that others may not only behold it, but admire it, and guide their lives by the example of it: *the husband of one wife*: that is, one at a time; not guilty of the sin of having many wives, or of putting away the wife by divorce, as the Jews frequently did for frivolous causes. Here note, 1. The apostle's command (that the bishop be the husband of one wife) doth not oblige him to marry, but it establishes the lawfulness of his marriage, if he sees sufficient reason for it. Nor, 2. Does the apostle here forbid successive marriages, as if when a bishop has buried one wife or more he might not lawfully marry again, for this he elsewhere allows. 1 Cor. 7. 8. from this it may not be in a man's power to abstain; many lose their first, and sometimes their second wives so soon, that were not after-marriages lawful, all the ends of marriage must be frustrated as to them; yet may we suppose from these words, and many others, that St. Paul proposes a greater degree of chastity to church governors than to other persons. *Vigilant*, very diligent and watchful in the performance of his whole duty, not long absent from his flock, nor negligent when he is amongst them; *sober*, governing his passions and appetites, reducing those rebellious powers under the dominion of reason and religion; *of good behaviour*, in his words, in habit and garb, in his deeds and actions, neither proud and supercilious, nor morose and sour, but affable and easy, kind and courteous, of a composed temper and grave behaviour: *given to hospitality*, not to sensuality; it is not the keeping of a free table, and an open house for all comers, which St. Paul points at, but charity in entertaining strangers, poor christians, that left their country by persecution, or such as travelled upon their lawful affairs from place to place; the free relieving of such as are necessitous, and exposed to want and hardship, is the hospitality pointed at by our apostle, *apt to teach*, that is, both knowing and willing, able to teach, and forward to it, having both skill and will, ability and dexterity, for that part of his duty, one that is neither ignorant of his duty, nor negligent in the performance of it.

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not
(No. 62.)

greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous:

The negative character of a bishop now follows, showing what he must not be: *Not given to wine*; that is, to much wine, no inordinate lover either of wine or strong drink, no wine-bibber, nor sitter at wine in his own house, much less at taverns and public houses; *no striker*, either with hand or tongue, no quarreller, that cannot keep his hand from hurting, no word striker, no striker with his tongue in passion and anger; a word, we say, wounds deeper than a sword; the ministers of God may wound the consciences of men with the sword of the spirit, but they must not wound the reputations of men with their own wrathful spirits; we must use our tongues rather to heal than wound, or if at any time to wound it must be in order to healing: *not greedy of filthy lucre*; no inordinate lover of money, which makes a man base and sordid, both in getting, keeping, and spending; *but patient*, meek and forbearing, not rigidly exacting his due; not acting *summo jure*, but rather parting with somewhat which in strictness may be his right for peace sake; *not a brawler*, or contentious person, often engaged in law suits, but of a mild and peaceable disposition; *not covetous*, nor enslaved to the love of wealth; possess he may the good things of this life, but not be possessed by them.

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

A bishop being a ruler in the church of God, Timothy is advised to choose such a one to rule in the church that well and wisely governs his own family, having his children in due subjection, and both he and they behaving themselves with becoming gravity; and St. Paul subjoins a reason for this apostolical injunction, arguing from the less to the greater, thus, the church is a large family, the bishop's house a less; the former requires greater skill in governing of it than the latter; if then a man cannot rule a less province, how shall he manage a greater? if he cannot keep up his authority with decency and becoming gravity in his own family, how shall such a one be thought fit to be entrusted with the care of the church of God? Great are the obligations which lie upon the ministers of God, above all men, to guide and govern their own families, to keep their children in due subjection, and their servants in great order; because their family-miscarriages reflect greatly upon their authority and prudence, and the world will pronounce them unfit for rule in the church of God who cannot govern their own house; *if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* Learn hence, That he who knows how to rule his own house well, is in a good posture of spirit for public rule; the same wisdom, justice, and holiness, for kind, but more extensive, acts in either sphere, and will regularly move in both.

6 Not a novice, lest, being lifted up
11 S

with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

A novice, signifies a young plant ; here a young, raw, unexperienced person : yet not so much young in years as in knowledge : for Timothy himself was very young : not a novice in religion then, not one that is unexperienced in the mysteries of the gospel, undertaking to teach others before he has learnt himself. And the reason for this injunction is weighty ; *Lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil*, implying, that young, raw and unexperienced persons, when put into public office, are in very great danger of falling into the sin of pride, the devil's sin, and of exposing themselves to condemnation, the devil's punishment, because their knowledge is weaker, and their passions stronger, and their graces feeble, and they want that experience which should consolidate their judgments, are therefore in great danger of self exalting ; for none are so proud and confident as the ignorant and injudicious. Note here, That when St. Paul says, *Lest he fall into the condemnation of the devil*, it is, as if he had said, "Lest he be condemned for the same sin that the devil was condemned for, which was pride," not that the devil will condemn him for his pride, for the more proud a man is, the more the devil approves him : nor is it the devil's office to condemn, but to execute ; he is the executioner, not the judge ; he will not condemn for sin, but he will eternally torment them whom God condemns.

7 Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without ; lest he fall into the reproach and the snare of the devil.

Note here, How needful it is for a minister to be of an untainted reputation ; a bishop must be of good report, saith St. Paul ; it is necessary for his own salvation that he be good, and for the salvation of others, that he be accounted so : great is their sin, then, who go about to blast a minister's reputation, because something of reputation is absolutely necessary to render his ministry successful. Note farther, *He must have a good report of them that are without*, that is, without the church, unbelieving Jews or Gentiles, with whom he formerly conversed ; lest becoming contemptible, and so not able to perform his duty as he should, he gives occasion to the heathen to blaspheme christianity and to reproach him for his former course of life.

8 Likewise *must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.*

Note here, 1. That there are but two sorts of fixed church-offices mentioned by St. Paul, bishops and deacons : as the church had its own bishop, so likewise their own deacons : these were at first instituted for the service of the poor ; the alms of the church were brought to the altar, the deacons received them, and distributed them among the aged and impotent from house to house : now because they were thus employed, the apostle adviseth them to beware of those faults that are frequently committed in common conversation, as light and vain discourse, saying one thing to one person,

and the contrary to another. *Let the deacons be grave*, not guilty of levity, but serious and composed, men of a modest and becoming carriage, *not double-tongued*, nor over talkative persons, nor saying one thing to one person, and the contrary to another, according to the place or company they fall into ; *not given to much wine* ; not the thing, but the excess, is forbidden ; *not greedy of filthy lucre*, seeking to get wealth by sordid ways and means.

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

That is, they must be sound believers, and of an upright life, maintaining truth of doctrine, and soundness of faith, by sincerity of heart and integrity of life.

10 And let these also first be proved ; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless.

Here Timothy is directed not to put any persons suddenly into the office of a deacon, but first to prove them for some considerable time ; and their sufficiency being approved, let them be ordained, and use the office of a deacon.

11 Even so *must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.*

In the original it runs, *Let the women* ; by which is meant either the deacons' wives, or the deaconesses, who were appointed to take care of the poor women, as the deacons were of the men : understand it of both ; these qualifications are very excellent and well becoming of both ; they ought to be grave and sober, not light and airy, not slanderers, not devils, says the original ; the sense is, not railers, nor false accusers, but diligent and faithful in all business, and trusty in all affairs. It is not enough and sufficient that the ministers of the gospel themselves be of a grave and sober conversation, but their wives also must and ought to take especial care that they demean themselves answerable to their place and station, and suitably to the character which their husbands bear ; *so must their wives be grave.*

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

That is, "Let not any such be admitted a deacon who has more wives than one, or that hath injuriously put away one, and married to another ; and let them show, by the good government of their own children and household, that they are fit to govern the church of God." Note here, That the higher offices of the church were usually chosen out of the inferior ; and accordingly, the qualifications for both offices, namely, that of bishops and deacons, are for the greatest part the same, both in this epistle, and in that to Titus.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchased to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

That is, "Although the deacons be as servants to the bishops, yet such as use that office well, according to the foregoing rules, by so doing do purchase to themselves a good degree above the vulgar, and also have further hopes of being advanced in the church to higher offices; and when they preach the word (as did Philip and Stephen), they might do it with great boldness, and with expectation of success, living suitably to the qualification of their function; and walking according to the rule of the gospel, which they professed and taught.

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly :

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

As if the apostle had said, "I do hope to come to thee very shortly; but if I tarry long, or be prevented at last, as I am uncertain, I write these things to thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to converse in the house of God, the church of the living God, in which thou art a pillar and firm buttress of the truth." Some by the *pillar* here, will understand the church, as being the foundation on which truth is built, and giving it authority; but she is therefore the church of Christ, because she holds the truth, and it is essential to her being to maintain and teach all necessary truths; she holds it forth, and publishes it to the world, sustaining it, and supporting it as a pillar doth the king's proclamation: the truth receives not its authority from the church, but the church receives authority by adhering to the truth. Others, by the *pillar*, understand Timothy, and that St. Paul is here exhorting, that according to his office, Timothy should be a pillar and buttress of truth in the church. Hence Gal. ii. 2. James, Cephas, and John are said to be pillars there, as is Timothy here; a pillar in the church, signifies a man that is well rooted and grounded, and strong in the faith; this he exhorts Timothy to be. Observe here, 1. The church's surpassing dignity; she is called the house of God, in which he dwells: God is present in all places, even in hell itself, by the immensity of his being; but the church is his palace, the place of his peculiar residence. Observe, 2. The ministers of the church's important duty, namely, as pillars to support, maintain and uphold the divine truth against all those that seek to corrupt and suppress the same. Be thou, O Timothy, in the church of God as the *pillar and ground of truth*.

16 And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,

Our apostle having exhorted Timothy, in the preceding verses, to behave himself worthily in the church of God, and as a pillar, supporting, maintaining, and upholding the truths of God, in this verse he reckons up six principal

heads of evangelical truths, which are to be asserted and defended by him; ushering them in with this preface, *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*. Learn, That our holy faith, our christian religion, is a mystery, a great mystery, and unquestionable mystery, a mystery of godliness, a mystery hidden in God, Eph. iii. 9. hidden in Christ, Col. ii. 3. hidden in the scriptures, Rev. iii. 18. hidden in and under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law; nay, hidden even in the gospel itself, for we know but in part: and if christianity be a mystery, then the knowledge of it is the effect of divine revelation and supernatural discovery, not to be known by the light or benefit of nature, but God reveals it to us by his Spirit: Farther, if it be a mystery, then the dispensation of it is a special favor, an arbitrary and voluntary discovery of it, to whom, when, and how far God himself pleases: finally, if it be a mystery, then it is to be apprehended by faith, and not to be fathomed by reason; faith looks at revelation, reason calls for a demonstration; faith embraces like Abraham, what reason laughs at, like Sarah; *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*. This is St. Paul's magnificent preface, which requires not only the assent, but challenges the obedience and adoration of our faith. Observe next, the six principal heads of evangelical truth here reckoned up, for Timothy to study, to preach and defend. 1. *God was manifested in the flesh*; that is, the second person in the Godhead appeared in our human flesh and nature. Astonishing mystery! That the Creator of the world should become a creature, lodged in a stable, and cradled in a manger! The infinite Deity and finite flesh met in one person, and yet the Godhead not humanized, nor the humanity deified, but both invisibly conjoined; the human nature was united to the Godhead miraculously, assumed integrally, united inseparably. 2. *Justified in or by the Spirit*; that is, the Spirit was Christ's witness, that he was no impostor or deceiver, but the promised and expected Messiah, working all his miracles by the power of the Spirit, raising himself from the dead, and thereby declaring himself to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness; and by sending the Spirit after his ascension into heaven, down upon his disciples here on earth: thus the Spirit justified Christ really and truly to what he professed himself to be, and sealed his doctrine to the world. 3. *Seen of angels*; they celebrated his birth, and gave notice of it to the world, ministered to him in the wilderness, succoured him in the garden, were present at his resurrection, accompanied him in his ascension: *Seen of angels*. Lord, what a stupendous sight was this! For man to see an angel is wonderful, but for an angel to see God become man, was soul amazing; they sang their *gloria patri* at his birth, they beheld and applauded his happy victory over satan, in the desert. Oh! with what eyes did they look upon his bloody sweat in the garden! With what officiousness did they roll away the stone in the morning of the resurrection! And with what universal triumphs and acclamations did they accompany him to his celestial throne! 4. *Preached to the Gentiles*; the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile being broken down, Christ was by his commissioned apostles, preached to the Gentile world; the Jews were once children, and we dogs; theirs was the bread, ours were the crumbs; but now are we made fellow commoners with them, heirs of the same, partakers of the same glory. 5. *Believed on in the world*:

Christ came into the world in so despicable a manner, that he was disregarded by the world, who are allured and taken with pomp and outward magnificence: therefore, that any should believe on him in the world, is a just wonder, and a mystery of godliness; though Christ be liberally preached, yet he is sparingly received. Isa liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report?* Christ is believed on in the world; but, alas! comparatively but by few. Lord, enlarge the number of thy believers, and confirm that number in believing. 6. *Received up into glory*, where he sits in his glorified humanity, united to his glorious Deity, with all that blood and gore wiped off with which he was besmeared in the day of his passion, and his body shining brighter than ten thousand suns. This body the heavens must contain till the restitution of all things, when he shall come from heaven as he went into heaven, attended with glorious angels, summon the whole host of saints to meet him in the air, that so they may ever be with their Lord. Oh! strengthen our faith in this desirable happiness, and set our souls a-longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

The last verse of the foregoing chapter having fully acquainted us with the great and mysterious doctrines of christianity, namely, That the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, justified in and by the Holy Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and at last received up into glory; our apostle comes in this chapter to acquaint Timothy with (that he may forewarn the church of) an apostasy and revolt from the christian faith, though not in all parts of it; yet from several main and fundamental parts of it; withal assuring them, it was no more than what had been long foretold; for the Spirit spake expressly, that in the latter times some should depart, &c. ver. 1.

NOW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils:

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry; and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

As if our apostle had said, "Although the mystery of godliness, the doctrine of christianity, be so clearly revealed, and fully confirmed, yet the spirit of prophecy has very plainly foretold us, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith once embraced by them, either in the whole or in part; turning apostates by giving heed to impostures and doctrines of men, teaching errors suggested by devils, who cover their lies with hypocritical pretences, and are men of hardened hearts, seared consciences, profligate lives; for-

bidding some, whom they have seduced, to marry, and commanding them to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them which do believe and know the truth." Observe here, 1. That the apostasy and defection of a considerable part of the christian church in the latter times was foreseen and foretold very long before it came to pass; by Daniel, say some, chap. ix: 37, 38, &c. by St. Paul, say others, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians; and in his first epistle to Timothy, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that some shall depart from the faith, that is, from the doctrine of the faith received, which we know the church of Rome has most notoriously done. Observe, 2. The cause of this apostasy and defection from christianity, *Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.* Quest. But what is here meant by doctrines of devils? Ans. These (says our reverend Archbishop Tillotson) can be no other doctrines than those tending to idolatry, which the scripture every where doth, in a particular manner, ascribe to the devil, as the inventor and promoter of; therefore he tells us, that, in some ancient copies, the words run thus: *In the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall worship the dead, having regard to doctrines of devils;* so that the particular kind of idolatry into which some part of the christian church should apostatize, is here pointed at, namely, that they should worship souls departed, or the spirits of dead men, which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Israel did frequently relapse: these departed souls were called *demons*, and were esteemed a middle sort of divine powers, between the supreme gods and mortal men, whose office it was to be agents and mediators between the gods above, and men below; thus is the holy city trodden down by the Gentiles, that is, overwhelmed with the Gentiles' idolatry. Observe, 3. The persons revolting, who they are foretold to be; not all, but some only: *In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith;* not the whole visible church, but a very great and considerable part of it. Learn thence, That the true church of Christ was never wholly extinguished, nor the light of the gospel ever quite put out, no not in the greatest darkness that ever was, to overwhelm it; some (only) and not all, shall depart from the faith. Observe, 4. The persons described who should be the occasion of this apostasy and revolt, namely, such as *speak lies in hypocrisy*, and have *seared consciences*, that is, such stupid consciences as have lost the sense of good and evil, and do no longer do their office. These lies, which the apostate church of Rome is guilty of, the profound Mr. Mede styles, "Lying miracles, fabulous legends of the acts of saints and sufferings of martyrs, counterfeit writings under the name of the first and best antiquity." Lord! who could have coined or believed such monstrous stuff as the popish legends are fraught with, but such as are cauterized, past all feelings and tenderness both of conscience and sense itself. Observe, 5. The doctrines discovered which these apostates would teach, namely, the forbidding of marriage to some, and enjoining abstinence from some meats as unlawful and unclean to others, both which are called doctrines of devils, that is, wicked and devilish doctrines. Learn thence, That the popish doctrine forbidding marriage, not absolutely to all, but with restriction and limitation to some, to wit, their clergy, and all such as shall enter into holy orders, is a devilish and wicked doctrine; for it forbids that which the word alloweth, nay, in some cases commandeth, Heb. xiii. 4. *Marriage is honor-*

able in all, and the bed undefiled; if honorable in all, then surely lawful for all; under the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and Levites did marry; under the New Testament the ministers of God have a power to marry; 1. Cor. ix. 5. *Have we not power to leal about a sister, a wife?* And that they made use of their power, is evident from the following words, as well as other apostles and Cephas. The other wicked doctrine concerning meats is also found in the church of Rome, who by a law do oblige some orders of men, as monks do abstain from certain meats, reducing them thereby from their christian liberty to a conformity to the legal rites, which may well be reckoned as an apostasy from the christian faith: for although St. Paul, Rom. xiv. doth allow the forbearance of some sorts of meats to avoid scandal, yet he doth no where condemn the eating of them as unclean: the doctrine therefore of the church of Rome, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, is wicked and devilish.

4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer.

Here our apostle assigns a reason why christians are forbidden, under the gospel, to abstain from particular meats, namely, because the distinction of meats (clean and unclean) is taken away, and every creature of God is good in itself, and clean to us, and nothing to be refused as unlawful or unclean, if it be received thankfully from God's hand; for it is sanctified by the word, that is, by the gospel; it is made clean to us, and lawful for us, that having taken off the difference of meats, and to the pure made all things pure. Note here, 1. The quality of all God's creatures as they come from him, and are given to us, *every creature of God is good*. Note, 2. The use of God's creatures consisting in their lawfulness unto us, and our liberty unto them, *nothing is to be refused*; so that there is no sin in the use of them, nor no religion in the forbearing of them, or abstaining from them; this liberty was given us by God, and restored by Christ, therefore we must not suffer our christian liberty to be impeached by Judaism. Note, 3. A condition necessary on our part, lest the creatures, otherwise good and lawful, should become unto us evil and hurtful, and that is thankfulness; *If it be received with thanksgiving*, with the thankfulness of the heart, expressed by the language of the lips. Note, 4. The way and means by which the creatures become clean and sanctified to us; namely, by the word of God and prayer. 1. By the word of God; here observe, A threefold word of God, by which the creature is sanctified, namely, the word of donation, the word of benediction, and the word of promise. By the first he bestows his creatures upon us, by the second he blesses the creatures to us, and by the third he confirms his blessing in Christ; in whom and by whom, we have a covenant right unto, and a sanctified use of all the mercies which we do enjoy. 2. By prayer, namely, as it obtains from God, first, A right improvement; and secondly, a comfortable enjoyment of all that we do receive: or thus, the creature is sanctified to us by prayer in the procurement of it, in the fruition of it, in the review and recognition of it, and God's mercy in it,

with thanksgiving and praise, loving it after God, and for God, and in subordination to God. Thus then is *every creature of God good; and nothing to be refused, being sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness.

Our apostle proceeds, from this verse, to the end of the chapter, to lay several directions before Timothy with reference to his ministerial office. The first of which is, that he suggests unto, or put the brethren in remembrance of, those things which the apostle had taught him, in order to their preservation from the peril and poison of these impostors: thus doing he would approve himself a good minister of Jesus Christ, and one nourished up with the sincere doctrine of the gospel. Here note, that the ministers of the gospel are, in the first place, ministers or servants of Jesus Christ; secondly, and in subserviency, they are ministers of the church; as a nobleman's servant, employed by him to distribute wages, or appoint work to the inferior servants, is secondarily a minister to the servants, but primarily a servant to his Lord. The second duty that Timothy is exhorted to, is the avoiding and rejecting the doctrines of abstinence from meats and marriage, and to regard them no more than an old woman's tale, and to exercise himself unto real godliness. Note here, something that Timothy must forbear, and something that he must follow after: he must forbear, and refuse profane old wives' fables: if thou wilt not swim down the tide of these apostatizing times, take heed of steering thy course by profane, though ancient customs; refuse them with scorn, and reject them with anger: one way to prevent apostasy is to refuse ungrounded antiquity. That which Timothy is exhorted to follow after, is real godliness; this is his duty, both as a minister, and as a member of Jesus Christ; real godliness ought to be minded as every man's, especially every minister's chief and principal business; religion must be our chief occupation.

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

By *bodily exercise* he meaneth corporal austerities, abstinence from meats and marriage; all the external exercises of religion: these do profit a little, though but a little, in comparison of the profit of godliness. Where note, that fastings, humiliations and watchings, with other bodily exercises, which serve to bring down the pride and wantonness of the body, have their proper and necessary use, and are expressive of a just revenge which a sinner takes upon himself for former excesses; they are, when wisely managed,

what God accepts, but the least that God expects from us; *Bodily exercise profiteth little.* But observe, the universal usefulness of godliness to all the purposes of life: *Godliness is profitable to all things.* 1. It is profitable to make a man rich, to help him to get and increase an estate; because it makes a man wise and prudent, diligent and industrious, thrifty and frugal. 2. It is profitable to make a man renowned, as well as rich; it is the only way to attain a good name and reputation; the godly man is a worthy and excellent man, and he is an useful and serviceable man, and such do seldom miss of a good reputation in the world; those that want goodness themselves, will yet commend it in others. 3. It is profitable for pleasure, as well as for riches and honor; for a life of religion doth increase the relish and sweetness of all our sensible enjoyments, so far is it from abridging us of any earthly delights: and besides, it adds to us a world of pleasures of its own; thus *godliness is profitable unto men in all things*, having the promises of happiness both in this life, and that which is to come, annexed to it.

9 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance:

10 For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.

Note, that this phrase of a *faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance*, used here, was used before, chap. i. 15. That Christ came into the world to save sinners. Learn thence, that this proposition, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and this, that such sinners as of ungodly will become godly, and persevere in the practice of godliness, shall be happy in the life that now is, and that which is to come; these two propositions are faithful and remarkable sayings, worthy of the acceptance of all reasonable creatures. Note farther, that the belief of this proposition, that godliness has the promise of this and the next life, will cause all christians, as if did St. Paul, to labor and suffer reproach in the cause of God, and this without weariness and fainting. Note, lastly, the title given to Almighty God, *the Saviour of all men*, that is the preserver of all men: but especially of all good men, when their temporal preservation conduces most to the advantages of his glory and their good; or if it be understood of eternal salvation, we must take it thus, that he publishes and proclaims, offers and tenders salvation to all men, although believers only are actually saved, because they only accept the offers and conditions of salvation.

11 These things command and teach.

12 Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Still our apostle proceeds in farther direction and advice to Timothy, both as to his preaching and practice, both as to his doctrine and conversation. 1. As to his preaching, he requires it to be done with due authority: *these things*

command and teach, that is, these things teach commandingly, and with a necessary authority; the ministers of God speak from God, therefore may command for God. 2. As to his conversation, he exhorts him to exercise such a becoming gravity in his deportment, that though he was very young, none might despise him or his function, because of his youth; where piety and modesty meet in young ministers, it will preserve their youth from contempt; and where levity and vanity are found, it will expose not only youth, but gray hairs also to contempt and scorn. 3. He directs him to be not only a president to all ministers, but a pattern to all believers; *be thou an example of believers*, and that, 1. *In word, or speech*; look that thy discourse be wise and instructive, not idle and impertinent, much less frothy and profane, but let something for edification always drop from thy lips. 2. *In conversation* look that thy gravity be beyond thy years, make up in thy deportment what is wanting in thy age; observe a just equality, neither to be too assuming nor too prostrate, behave not thyself either above or below thyself. 3. *In charity*. show benevolence, and exercise beneficence towards all mankind, according to thy ability and opportunity: nothing gives a minister a greater advantage for the success of his labors than charitable distributions; this gives us a throne in the hearts of our people, when wisely managed. 4. *In spirit*, that is, in zeal and warmth of spirit, in fervency of affection, in an active and sprightly zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, such a zeal as may render thee industrious in feeding, governing, and instructing thy flock. 5. *In faith*, that is, in fidelity too, and constancy in the true religion, not enduring either to be huffed or wheedled out of the truth; for it is a sacred depositum, an holy treasure, which we must transmit to our posterity, as our forefathers did to us, with their precious blood. 6. *In purity*, in chastity and cleanness, abstaining from sensual lusts, from wantonness and worldly-mindedness; choose spiritual delights now, for they are the entertainment which we must live upon to eternal ages. By all this we see how much it is in a minister's own power to procure a due esteem of himself, at least to prevent his own contempt, since an holy and exemplary deportment, faithful and constant labors, never fail to do that in some measure: but if we fail here, what other methods soever we use, we shall find God making good his threatening, 1. Sam. ii. 33. that they which despise him, shall be lightly esteemed; nor will any titles, dignities, or preeminences above others, secure the guilty from the efficacy of this curse, which will cleave to their persons, yea, to their memories, like a girdle to their loins.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

St. Paul being uncertain when he should see this young laborer again, adds farther instructions to those already given him. And here, 1. He requires him to *give attendance to reading*, that is, be diligent in private reading the holy scriptures, to enable him to teach, instruct, and exhort others, what they ought to believe and know, and what

they ought to practise and do. Where note, that the illuminations and teachings of the holy Spirit must not take off any ministers from reading and studying the holy scriptures, but we must fit ourselves the better thereby, to exhort, direct, and instruct others. 2. He stirs up and exhorts Timothy, not to neglect, but to excite, to use, and diligently improve those eminent gifts which were given him by prophecy, that is, according to the foregoing prophecies concerning him, and by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, when he was ordained. Where note, that the ceremony of laying on of hands in ordination, is very ancient and apostolical; not accidental or indifferent, but a very necessary rite in the performance of that service: neglect not the gift which was given thee, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Note, 2. That persons ordained, ought, with great care and diligence, to stir up the gifts of God's holy Spirit conferred upon them; for negligence quenches the Spirit of God in them.

13 Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

He exhorted him to read the scriptures before, now to meditate upon what he read. Where note, that if those who were inspired, and divinely qualified, must yet read, meditate, study hard, and employ their whole time to fit themselves for the ministerial work, what shall we think of the ignorance and impudence of our lay-preachers, who, without any such divine qualification, and without any call or commission, without giving themselves wholly to these things, dare presume to teach the scriptures, when they never understood them; nay, can hardly read them! Meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them; be in them, says the original, lay out thy whole strength and time in studying God's will, and making known thy people's duty. Three things are here implicitly condemned in persons set apart for the holy function; 1. Sloth and negligence. It is a painful service we are engaged in, and woe unto us if we be slothful in business, if we be sparing of our pains for fear of shortening our days, and hastening our end; verily the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven. 2. Worldly-mindedness, 1. Pet. v. 2. feed the flock, but not for filthy lucre: the spiritual man must not so mind earthly things as to make them his principal aim and scope; for if so, he will act accordingly, and defeat all the ends of his ministry. The apostles had no settled maintenance, but their subsistence to seek; yet were wholly in these things. How much more should we be so now, who have our maintenance legally secured? How should we seek the kingdom of God and the welfare of our people's souls, seeing all other things are added to us, in measure, though not in excess? 3. Incumbrance by worldly business: he that must give himself wholly to these things, what leisure can he find for magistracy, for managing lawsuits, for farming of lands, and for secular concerns: we cannot make a business of two things so widely different from each other. Can we be spiritual persons and yet mere seculars in our thoughts and cares? Well therefore might St. Paul say to Timothy, *But thou, O man of God, flee these things*, 1. Tim. vi. 11. Observe lastly, the reason which the apostle subjoins why he would have Timothy

do all this; *that his profiting may appear to all men*: he must read, meditate, pray, and study, that he may improve and profit himself; though he was inspired, yet he must not rely upon the spirit's assistance without his own endeavours; and his improvement by study must appear not barely to himself, but to others, to his people as well as himself, yea, to all persons: his growth and improvement by study and exercise must be so conspicuous, that all his flock may bear witness to it, and bless God for it. *Meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all men.*

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; and continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

As if the apostle had said, "have a special regard to the piety of thy life, and to the purity of thy doctrine, and this continually; so shalt thou do what is in thee, to save both thine own soul, and the souls of all thy people." 1. *Take heed unto thyself.* Our lives must be such as become ministers of God; and preachers of righteousness: for the eyes of God and the whole world are upon us; the observing eye of God, the censorious and insidious eye of the world, who will charge the miscarriages of a single person upon the whole order, and condemn all for the faults of one: therefore let every one take heed unto himself; the honor of our profession requires it, the conscience of our duty challenges it, a due regard to the glory of God, and our own reputation commands it. 2. *Take heed unto thy doctrine*, that it be the pure and uncorrupted word of God, expounded agreeably to the sense of the ancient church, and of our own church in particular, which has with the greatest care followed the ancient pattern: many errors are abroad in the world, which have adulterated the truths of the gospel; it is therefore prudential and necessary, that the ministers of God keep at a great distance from every opinion which looks like heretical, and not to come within the reach of suspicion: it is not enough for us to be innocent, unless we appear so. Note farther, the order of the words: St. Paul bids Timothy first to take heed to his life, and next to his doctrine; not first to his doctrine, and then to his life; *take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine*: because the success of our doctrine depends upon the goodness of our lives; it is this must render our doctrine operative and effectual: this is the principal thing; we must do as well as teach: for who will believe him in the pulpit, who contradicts himself in his conversation? Therefore *take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine*. Note lastly, the great benefit of this course, and the blessed advantage of it; we shall *save ourselves*, deliver our own souls by our diligence and care; for the faithful nurse shall be paid, though the child dies at the breast; and not only ourselves, but our people also; *them that hear us*; that is, "we shall do our utmost, and all that lieth in us, to save the souls that are committed to us, that they may be our crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." God will pronounce us pure and innocent from the blood of all men; and if our people perish, their blood will be upon their own heads; which God avert for his mercy's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

REBUKE not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men, as brethren:

2 The elder women, as mothers; the younger, as sisters, with all purity.

Our apostle here directs Timothy how to manage rightly that great and important duty of ministerial reproof: if aged persons, elders in office, or elders in age, do transgress, they must be rebuked, not magisterially, but fraternally, with humility and gentleness, according to their years: not with austerity and roughness: *the elder men as fathers, the elder women as mothers*, both with just deference and due respect: the younger also must not be treated with contempt, but with gentleness; *the younger men as brethren, the younger women as sisters*, both without pride and fierceness, and with all purity; shunning all levity and wantonness, and eschewing all that savoureth of immodesty or unchastity in thought, speech, look, or behaviour. Learn hence, that although the ministers of God must not flatter or favor any person, to the prejudice either of truth or holiness, yet must they put a difference between persons in their reproof; they must not deal with the aged as they deal with the younger, (when we speak reproof, we must also speak respect to the ancient spiritual fathers) no more than natural children must behave themselves proudly against the ancient, and basely against the honorable,

3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

6 But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

Our apostle proceeds to give Timothy directions concerning widows, particularly those who were to be maintained by the church's charity, and to live upon it. Note 1. The persons who were to be relieved and supported by the church's charity, *widows indeed*; that is, such widows as were *desolate*, being deprived both of husband and maintenance at once; and having neither children, nor grand-children, nor near relations, in a capacity to relieve them; and they were also such as were resolved to continue in widowhood: these he required should be *honored*, that is, have

respect shown them, maintenance allowed them, employment provided for them, to visit the sick and poor, and give notice of their wants to the church, and to spend their time in the exercise of devotion, trusting in God: *continuing in supplication and prayer night and day*. Note, 2. that such widows as had children and near relations, were to be taken care for, by them, and not by the church; *let them learn to show piety at home*, that is, relieve their own relations before they show kindness to strangers, or before the church be burdened with them: where the original word is very emphatical and significant: let them exercise religion and godliness towards their own house; implying, that to extend our charity to our nearest relations is a duty in the first place, and to perform it with cheerfulness is an act of religion and godliness, and that it is in vain to pretend to religion, if we see a relation in want, and are able, but unwilling, to relieve them. Note, 3. The character which St. Paul gave of some widows in his time; *they lived in pleasure*; with the censure which he passed upon them, namely, that they were dead, whilst they lived: she that liveth in pleasure, that is, licentious, sportingly, wantonly, profanely, to the dishonor of her husband's memory, and her own personal disgrace, she is dead in sin, dead to Christ and his holy religion, whilst she lives in the world; and so is not to be looked upon by the church as a vital member of it, much less to be maintained by the church's charity. This is what St. Paul thought needful to give Timothy in charge concerning widows, that so they might be found *blameless*, and without scandal to religion.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

That is, "if any professing christianity, and having ability, provides not for his own kindred, but especially for those of his own house, as parents or children, he liveth so contrary to the christian faith, that in effect he denies it, and is worse than an infidel, who ordinarily take care of their parents, and make provision for their poor relations." The old heathens held this among them as an universal principle of nature. To honor the gods, and provide for their parents; affirming, that no man can do any thing more acceptable to the gods, than by heaping favors upon their parents; and that nothing can be a greater evidence of atheism and impiety, than to neglect and despise them. Learn hence, that it is most unnatural to be hardened against those to whom we stand engaged by near relation or natural bonds; the light of nature teaches infidels much better.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children; if she have lodged strangers; if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Our apostle had given directions concerning such widows as were to be maintained by the church's charity in the preceding verses; he speaks now of such widows as were to be admitted into the church's service, under the name of *deaconesses*, whose office it was to take care of the aged and impotent, to be stayed monitors to the younger women, to attend poor women in labor, and to assist at the baptism of the female sex. St. Paul advises that none be admitted under threescore years of age, and none that was divorced from one husband and married another; *Let not a widow be taken into the number, that is, of church widows or deaconesses, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man only.* Next St. Paul lays down the general and particular qualifications of such widows as should be elected into the church's service: the general qualification is fruitfulness in good works: *If she has diligently followed every good work.* Where note, it is not her age alone, nor her poverty alone, but her christian behaviour before all, that gave her a right to the church's service and maintenance. The particular qualifications follow: if she has brought up children religiously, *if she hath lodged strangers or christian travellers hospitably, if she hath condescended to the meanest offices, not disdaining to wash the very feet of poor christians in their journeying; if according to her ability she has done all the good she possibly could, though much short of what she desired.* Note here, That in those hot countries persons travelled on foot, and without shoes, wearing only sandals; and having few or no inns for entertainment, or but little money to defray travelling charges, it was a very great work of pious charity to entertain christian strangers, to receive and lodge them in their houses, to wash and cool, refresh and cleanse, their feet, and to administer to their necessities; such widows as are thus qualified, he directs may be taken into the church's service, and partake of her maintenance.

11 But the younger widows refuse. For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

13 And withal, they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

15 For some are already turned aside after satan.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that

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it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Next, he tells him what sort of widows he would have him refuse and reject, and by no means admit into the number of deaconesses, or the church's servants: namely, *the young widows, who were not past child-bearing; and therefore waxing wanton against Christ, would marry: that is, growing weary of the church's service, and despairing of marriage in the church, would revolt from the faith, and marry some infidel out of the church: Having damnation; that is, committing a sin worthy of damnation, and bringing themselves into a damnable condition. Because they renounce their first faith, which they made profession of when they were baptized, turning apostates to please their infidel husbands, which the apostle calls, a turning after satan, ver. 15. to the great scandal of christianity.* Observe next, Our apostle shows, that such young widows are usually idle, wandering about from house to house, prying into, and tattling about other folks matters; to avoid all which, he advises the young women, and particularly the younger widows, to marry and serve God in a conjugal relation, bearing and bringing up their children, guiding their families, and giving no occasion to the enemies of religion to reproach either it or themselves. From all which we may note, That celibacy, or single life, is no such state of holiness and perfection as the church of Rome would persuade us: we see here it has its temptations and snares, and those not a few nor small; and that our apostle, in some cases, and to some persons, recommends a married life before it. Observe lastly, for a close of his discourse concerning widows, he advises, That if any christian has any helpless widow of his own family, or amongst his relations, that he relieve and maintain her, if he be able, and not cast her upon the charity of the church, lest there be not a sufficiency to supply the wants of such as are *widows indeed*, aged and helpless; for any to eat the poor's bread, who are not poor, and to whom it does not belong, is robbery.

17 Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

Our apostle proceeds next to give Timothy directions concerning *elders*; not old men in years, but elders in office, such as were employed in the governing of the church, and over and above that service, labored even unto weariness in preaching of the word, and expounding the christian doctrine, requiring that *double honor* be given unto such. Note here, 1. The elders' work and duty declared: *To rule well; wisely to preside over, and discreetly to govern, the church of Christ; also to labor in the word and doctrine; to take pains in preaching the gospel upon all occasions; those that are advanced to the highest eminency in the church, will not think themselves above this part of their duty.* Note, 2. The honor and respect challenged on their behalf: *Double honor* is their due; namely, an honor of reverence, and an honor of maintenance, and a double measure of either; some think it an allusion to the first-born, who was the priest of the family, and had a double portion amongst his brethren; the Levites succeeded them, and the ministers of the gospel these; who, when laborious in governing and

teaching the church of Christ, deserved more honor and better maintenance than the unkind world is willing to confer upon them; who instead of double honor, sometimes deny them civil respect. Note, 3. In that the apostle styles the ministers' maintenance *honor*, it follows, that their maintenance is not to be esteemed in the nature of alms, but of a tribute paid by an inferior to a superior: neither is our maintenance mercenary wages, but such as ought to be given as a testimony of honor, as well as in the nature of a reward. As men they are worthy of, let them never fail to receive, *double honor*, who *rule well*, and also *labor in the word and doctrine*.

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: And, The laborer *is* worthy of his reward.

These words evidently show, that by *honor*, in the former verse, is to be understood *maintenance*: a place is here cited out of Deut. xxv. where the law of Moses forbade the *muzzling of the ox that treadeth out the corn*, but allowed him feeding all the time of working: in like manner, the labor of the church's guides, gives them a right to the church's maintenance and honor; but such as do not labor, have a right to neither.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

21 I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

Here our apostle directs Timothy how to proceed in church-censures against open offenders: which plainly shows, that there was a right of judging and censuring offenders in Timothy, by virtue of his office. First, then, he begins to acquaint him with his duty in censuring an elder, and advises him never to admit an *accusation* against such, without the attestation of *two or three witnesses*. Because, 1. It is the interest of the church of Christ, that the reputation of its ministers be supported. 2. Because prejudiced persons will be ready to accuse without reason. Conscientious ministers shall never want accusers, if false accusers can but find judges that are willing to believe them: therefore, *against an elder, receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*. Next he advises him, when there is a just or sufficient cause for censuring an elder, to do it publicly. *Them that sin*, that is, such elders as sin, and are convicted of it, and so are become scandalous by it, *rebuke* before all the church, before all the clergy, as in the synod, putting them to public shame, that others may fear to sin, seeing thee to punish so publicly and impartially. Lastly, he concludes his advice with a very solemn charge to Timothy, before God and Christ, and the glorious angels,

to observe these rules of justice in ecclesiastical judicature, without preferring one man before another, doing nothing by a partial respect of persons. Learn hence, That so heinous is the sin of unjust and unrighteous judging, especially in ecclesiastical persons, and of such fatal mischief to the church, that all imaginable care and caution ought to be taken to prevent both the sin and the danger of it. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ*, that thou observe these things.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words, 1. With reference to ordination, and so they are a caution to the governors of the church, to admit none into the sacred function hastily, rashly, without due examination, and sufficient trial; to which are added words of great terror, *neither be partaker of other men's sins*; which ought to make a mighty impression on the minds of those in whom the power of ordination is lodged, since the words do plainly import, that such as do ordain any rashly, intitle themselves to all the scandal they give, and are partakers of their guilt. Note here, 1. The nature of the office the ministers of Christ are ordained to; to rule and labor in the word and doctrine. Note, 2. An authority in Timothy to admit persons into this office, by laying on of hands. Note, 3. The great care and caution, the heedfulness and circumspection, necessary in admitting persons to this holy function; *Lay hands suddenly on no man*; The welfare of the church, the honor of religion, the salvation of men's souls, depend much, very much upon those who are admitted into holy orders. The second interpretation given of these words is, that Timothy is here directed how to carry himself in censuring and absolving penitents: as if St. Paul had said, "When thou hast justly censured an offender, be not too hasty in observing of him, (for this also was done by imposition of hands) till some trial be made of his reformation, lest by so doing thou become guilty of his future faults: but keep thyself pure from all sin; whose office it is to censure and reprove sin in others." In both these senses have these words been understood, *Lay hands suddenly on no man; keep thyself pure*.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities.

Note here, 1. There is a lawful use of wine to support nature, not to clog it; to cure infirmities, not to cause them: drink it Timothy might, medicinally, and no doubt for cheerfulness and alacrity, that the body might be more fit and expedite for duty; *use a little wine for thy stomach's sake*. Note, 2. That our meat and drink should be fitted for the preservation of health, rather than for the gratification of our appetite; the former is christian duty, the latter is brutish sensuality. Note, 3. That the apostles, who had the gift of healing, could not make use of it when and upon whom they pleased; no, not upon themselves, but must help their own infirmities in and by the use of ordinary means. Thus Timothy here, drink no longer water alone,

but use a little wine with it for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities thence proceeding.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some *men* they follow after.

25 Likewise also the good works of *some* are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

St. Paul had just before exhorted Timothy to keep himself pure from other men's sins, whether candidates or penitents, here comes in subsequent advice, in order therunto. As if our apostle had said, Timothy, if thou beest diligent to observe, and not over hasty either in ordaining candidates, or absolving penitents, thou mayest in some measure perceive who are worthy, and who are unworthy. If thou layest thine hands upon those that are actually faulty, thou partakest with them, by being an occasion of their sinning; but if thou canst not discover their faultiness beforehand, though they afterwards prove wicked, it is not thy fault; God will at length detect them, yea, they will discover themselves, and when their faults are manifest, deal with them according to the discipline of the church." Learn hence, 1. That how much soever sinners attempt the hidings, yet cannot they actually hide themselves, or their sinnings, from God's sight and knowledge. *They cannot be hid*, says St. Paul, though men labor much to hide them: Oh, sinner! there is no way to hide thyself from God: thou mayest by repentance hide thyself from God, in the love, in the favor, in the mercy of God, but from God thou canst not be hid. As the saints' good works are open and manifest in the sight and to the view of God, so they that are otherwise, cannot be hid: where can a sinner be hid from him who is every where? or what thing can be our covering from him, in whose sight all things are open? Lord! what will it avail to hide ourselves from men, when we lie open and manifest to the eye of God? *They that are otherwise cannot be hid.*

CHAPTER VI.

LET as many servants as are under the yoke, count their masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God, and *his* doctrine, be not blasphemed.

2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

Our apostle having, in the preceding chapters instructed Timothy to give the necessary directions for the performance of several relative duties, in this chapter, he particularly directs him to instruct christian servants, to the acceptable

performance of that great duty of obedience, which they owe to their respective masters, whether infidels or christians. Christianity frees persons from sinful slavery and bondage, but not from civil servitude and subjection. Religion does not level persons, but allows of an inequality amongst men, superiors and inferiors; and as it gives the former a power to command, so it lays the latter under an obligation to obey. Observe, 1. The general duty required of all servants towards their masters, and that is to give them all the honor and obedience which is due in that relation; let them account their masters worthy of all honor. What masters? 1. Their infidel and unbelieving masters; they are required to carry it dutifully and respectfully towards them. 2. Their *believing* or christian masters; they should not despise them because they are brethren; for christian brotherhood consists with inequality of place and relation, and with subjection of one person to another; but they ought to serve such masters the more readily and cheerfully, because brethren, beloved of God and partakers of the benefit, namely, of redemption by Christ, and of the sanctifying grace of God. Observe lastly, The grand argument which St. Paul uses to enforce the duty of obedience upon all servants, *that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed*; that is the men of the world will reproach religion, revile christianity, and say that it teaches, or allows at least, that men be stubborn and disobedient: Where note, That the poorest and meanest professor of christianity may do much good or much hurt to religion. Some might be ready to say. "Alas! What credit or discredit can a poor servant do to religion?" Much every way: he may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, Tit. ii. 9. by his christian behaviour; and the name of God, and his doctrine may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty: none are so inconsiderable, but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, and may honor God in some measure: and are capable of being honored by him upon earth, and with him in the highest heavens.

—These things teach and exhort.

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.

5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. From such withdraw thyself.

Observe here, 1. The solemn charge which the Holy Ghost by St. Paul gives to Timothy, to teach and press these relative duties of servants towards their masters, with great zeal and affectionate earnestness, *These things teach and exhort*, as if our apostle had said, "They are duties of great

moment, therefore teach and press them earnestly." Doubtless there is much of the pleasure and will of God in these commands, and the honor and glory of God is much concerned in them, otherwise, The Spirit of God had never been so earnest in the pressing of them; the power of holiness, in nothing discovers itself more conspicuously, than in the performance of relative duties; we are no more really, than what we are relatively: rational holiness is the brightest ornament of religion. Observe, 2. The high character which St. Paul gives of this doctrine, which urges the practice of these relative duties; he calls what he says and writes about it, *wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Learn thence, that the words written by St. Paul, in this and his other epistles, are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, words agreeable to his mind and will, written with an eye to his glory, promoting his honor, correspondent with, and suitable to his practice when here on earth. Observe, 3. The odious character wherewith he brands those false, flattering teachers, which preached contrary doctrine to what Jesus Christ by his apostles had delivered: he charges them with pride, ignorance, envy, strife, railing, evil surmising, and with supposing that gain was godliness; that is, their end in professing godliness was this, that they might make gain of it, and get preferment by it, making use of religion only as a block to take horse at: but to make use of religion in policy, for worldly advantage sake, is the way to be damned with a vengeance for religion sake. Observe lastly, St. Paul's advice to Timothy, to withdraw from these men, *from such withdraw thyself*; hold no communion with them, maintain no disputes with them, for they dote about questions, and strive about words. Note here, from St. Paul's bidding Timothy withdraw himself from them, that it is very evident that he speaks of persons who were then in being; the gnostic heretics according to some, the judaizing teachers, in the opinion of others; that is, they of the circumcision, who taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre sake. Whoever they were, St. Paul's admonition to Timothy, to withdraw himself from such, teaches us, that heretical seducers are to be shunned and avoided, rather than disputed with, as unfit for our christian communion, and common conversation.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

As if the apostle had said, "Although these seducers are for making a gain of godliness, yet we know that godliness is great gain, especially godliness with contentment; with contentment, I say, which it becomes us to have, *for we brought nothing into this world with us, and shall carry nothing away with us; having therefore food and raiment, let us be therewith content, and satisfied.*" Learn hence, 1. That godliness is the sincere practice of the christian religion, so called, because it directeth and prescribeth to us the true and only way of worshipping and serving God. Learn, 2. That some men suit their godliness with their worldly ends,

they make a trade and saving bargain of it. Learn 3. That godliness, or the sincere practice of the christian religion, is true gain, great gain, yea, the best gain, both for this world, and that which is to come. Learn, 4. That one great point of godliness, is to be content with what we have, yea, though it be only food and raiment. Contentment is a sedate and quiet temper of mind about outward things: it is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, but to some more, to others less, of these outward comforts; but nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary, a little will suffice a contented mind: he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough: that man is poor who covets more, having food and raiment: &c. Observe, lastly, The apostle's argument to excite and move the christian to this duty of contentment, without enlarging his desires inordinately after the world, and the persisting satisfactions of it; *For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*: Where remark, That the note of assurance is fixed rather to our carrying out than to our bringing in: the apostle doth not say, It is certain that we brought nothing into the world, and we shall carry nothing out: but he says, *we brought nothing in, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*. The note of assurance is applied to the latter; for this reason, I conceive because though all persons come naked, and bring nothing with them into the world, yet abundance is put upon them, and they are born heirs to vast possessions: but it is obvious to every eye, and most indubitably certain, that they carry nothing away with them. Death is called an unclothing; it unclothes the body, disrobing it of all its gaudy and glorious attire; yea, it unclothes the bones; our flesh wears off quickly in the grave; we proverbially say of a rich man, he has left a vast estate, left it behind him, carrying neither a foot of land, nor a farthing of money with him; therefore doth St. Paul add, *it is certain we can carry nothing out*.

9 But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Observe here, 1. The parties described, they that will be rich; that is, whether God will or no; their hearts are set upon the world, they feel it coming, and have it they will, if by any means, right or wrong, they can come at it, ask nobody's leave, no not God Almighty's leave, but rich they are resolved to be. Observe, 2. Their danger represented, they fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish lusts, &c. Learn hence, That a will and resolution to be rich, is the occasion of much mischief to those that cherish and allow it in themselves; a will to be rich, is to make riches our principal business, our main scope, our great work, to pursue the world with the full bent of our will: now the bent of our wills is discovered, first, by intention, secondly, by industrious prosecution; when the mind is wholly intent upon getting wealth, and unwearied industry and endeavour is found in the pursuit of it. Now this is to make a god of the world: for that which is a man's aim, design, and end, is his chief good, and that which is our chiefest good is God; *They that will be rich*. Learn, 2. That an hot and over-eager pursuit of the world, lays a man open to endless temptations, so that it is not only difficult, but im-

possible, to keep his innocency; and that being irrecoverably lost, drowns a man in perdition and destruction.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Here we have the nature of covetousness, the evil and sin of covetousness, and the mischief and hurt of it declared. Observe, 1. The nature of it: it is an inordinate love of money, an insatiable desire after wealth. Observe, 2. The evil and sinfulness of it: it is a root of sin, *The root of all evil*; the fruit of all sin grows from this root, distrustful care, tormenting fear, anger, malice, envy, deceit, oppression, bribery, perjury, vexatious law-suits, and the like: nay farther, covetousness is the root of heresy in judgment: as well as of iniquity in practice, *They have erred from the faith*; that is, in point of doctrine, as well as in practice: it makes a man believe, as well as act, against the rule of faith, for filthy lucre. Observe, 2. The mischief and hurt of covetousness declared: it pierces, *it pierces through with sorrows*, yea, *with many sorrows*. But whom doth it pierce? First, Others; it pierces the poor, the needy, the widow, the fatherless, all that fall within the reach of its griping hand; nay, it doth not spare its own master or slave rather, but pierces him: *They pierce themselves through*, says the apostle, *with many sorrows*, with many more, and much worse sorrows, than they pierce others with. Riches ill-gotten, by covetousness or oppression, instead of making their owners heartily merry, make their consciences ache, and give them many a stitch in their side. None can tell what gall and wormwood springs from this bitter root, both to themselves and others: *The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some covet after, they err from the faith, piercing themselves through with many sorrows*. It is the root of all evil, of sin, and also of trouble and disquiet.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's compellation, or the title given to Timothy; *Thou, O man of God*; it is a title borrowed from the Old Testament, where it is frequently given to the prophets, who revealed the mind and will of God to the people. Now by giving it to Timothy, the apostle intimates his duty to him, to condemn the world, and flee the eager pursuit of riches. As if the apostle had said, "O Timothy! Thou art a minister, and man of God, solemnly dedicated to his service, and devoted entirely to his glory; see then that thou abhor and avoid that detestable sin of covetousness. Heavenly truths are the subjects of thy daily study: Oh! let not earthly things be the object of thy chiefest delight and love: but follow after spiritual riches, namely, *righteousness and godliness, faith and love, patience and meekness*; that godliness which gives contentment with food and raiment, that faith which assures us of a better and more enduring substance, that righteousness of justice

which requires us to let every man enjoy his own, that love which makes us willing to distribute, that patience which makes us willing to submit to a low condition, that meekness which suppresses wrath against those that are injurious to us. All these virtues and graces are necessary to thee as a minister of God, they are certainly indications of a mind free from covetousness, and infallible preservations from it."

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

This whole verse is an allusion to the Olympic games, particularly to that of racing, where the garland or crown being hung up at the end of the goal, he that came first did lay hold of it, and take it to himself; and because these games were performed in the sight of many spectators, the apostle continues the allusion, and says, Timothy had before many witnesses professed his readiness to suffer for the faith. The sense of the apostle in this advice seems to be this: *Fight the good fight of faith*; go on by faith to overcome all temptations and difficulties; press toward the mark, till thou lay hold on the prize, which is eternal life; to which spiritual warfare and christian race thou gavest in thy name, when, being baptized and ordained, thou madest a public profession of the faith before many witnesses."

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords:

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honor and power everlasting. Amen.

Observe here, What a solemn adjuration and vehement charge is given to Timothy, by our apostle, to watch and guard against the sin of covetousness, and to avoid the eager pursuit of worldly wealth: *I charge thee before God and Christ, that thou keep this commandment spotless and unrebukeable, until the coming of Christ, and mayest be found such at his appearing*. Observe, 2. What a glorious display our apostle here makes of the adorable attributes of God: he styles him the God that *quickeneth all things*: that is, all things that have or shall have life; *the blessed and only Potentate*, because all power is essential in him, and derived from him; *who only hath immortality*, that is, an original, primitive, simple, independent, essential immortality, that is, only proper and

peculiar to God: he only is essentially and necessarily of himself immortal; *dwelling in that light* which is inaccessible, and none can approach unto; and *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*: God is invisible in his essence; he is not to be seen by any mortal eye on earth, the eye of faith sees him only here: nay, he is not to be seen by any glorified eye in heaven, in his divine essence: the nature and essence of God never was seen, nor shall be seen. But we are, by the sight of God in heaven, to understand a more clear and full manifestation of God unto us, even so far as our glorified nature can bear it; it will be abundantly beyond expression, yea, beyond our comprehension. Observe, 3. The testimony which the holy apostle bears to our Lord Jesus Christ when here on earth; that *before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession*: that is, he did not deny the truth to save his life, but gave all his ministers and people an example of courage and constancy in owning the truth, and sealing it with his blood.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Our apostle having, in a very solemn manner, exhorted Timothy to avoid that dangerous sin of covetousness himself, in the foregoing verses, he doth in these verses require him to lay the same charge upon others, particularly upon worldly rich men; *Charge them that are rich*. Observe here, 1. Timothy's duty, not barely to exhort and teach, but to charge and command. True, the ministers of Christ are servants to their people; but servants to their souls, not to their wills, much less to their lusts: there is an authority in our office, which impowers us to command for God, as well as to entreat. Observe, 2. The subject of this charge; *them that are rich in this world*. Mark, No man is forbidden to be rich, nor yet to use such lawful means, by which, through God's blessing thereupon, men may be rich: but rich men need a charge, they want plain dealing from ministers, because they meet with so little of it from other men; for some flatter them, others fear them: God's ministers ought surely to deal faithfully with them. Observe, 3. The charge itself; and this is set down negatively and affirmatively; both, two-fold. 1. The negative matter of the charge, *That they be not high-minded*: pride of heart and haughtiness of mind and spirit, is one special sin which great men are subject to. When God lifts them up by his providence, they lift up themselves by pride: there is a secret malignity in riches, when they meet with men's corruptions, to lift them up above their due region; though neither the wiser, the holier, the nearer heaven, for all their wealth, nay, perhaps a

great deal nearer hell for the abuse of it; yet still the rich think high, look big, breathe scorn, talk with disdain, forgetting that God gives them riches to exalt him, and not themselves. Next part of the negative charge is, *That they trust not in uncertain riches*: intimating, That creature confidence, or making an idol of wealth, is the dreadful bane and ruin of some rich men: their actions say to the gold, *Thou art my hope; and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence*: but the vanity and sinfulness of this appears, by the apostle's calling them, *uncertain riches*; uncertain in their abode and continuance with us, uncertain in their promises and pretences to us; we expect more from them than ever we find in them. Observe, 4. The positive part of the charge; 1. To trust in God, the living God, a bountiful God: he giveth riches; they buy, they do not give; he giveth *all things*: all the wealth in the world cannot buy a mouthful of air, or ray of light, if God withholds it. God is the giver of all; he giveth richly all things; the most miserable man cannot number the rich mercies which he doth receive; and he giveth *all things richly to enjoy*; that is, he gives an heart to take and taste the comfort of what he gives; he gives not only possession, but fruition. Riches can do none of these things; why then should we trust in *uncertain riches*, and not in the *living God*? Observe, 5. Another duty exhorted to; and that is to imitate God in the works of bounty; *To do good*. Rich men are to make their wealth the materials of good works; nay, they must not only do good works, but *be rich in good works*; as their estate is plentiful, so must their charity be proportionable; they must do it copiously; *be rich in good works*: they must do it cheerfully, *ready to distribute*, without grudging, and without delay: they must do it diffusively; *willing to communicate*, that is, to do as much good to the community as possibly they can, upon principles of humanity, and upon principles of christianity also. Observe, 6. The encouragements given to this duty, 1. Thus to lay out, is to lay up, and that as in a treasury; it is like scattering of seed, in order to an increase and harvest. 2. Thus to lay out upon others, is to lay up for themselves; they have the comfort here, and the reward hereafter. 3. It is to lay up for themselves a foundation: not by way of merit towards God, but by way of evidence in regard of ourselves; a testimony of our reconciliation to, and acceptance with, God. 4. It is a good foundation for *the time to come*; all our glory, wealth and substance, is no durable foundation; here to-day and gone to-morrow; but good works are a bank in heaven: all is deposited in a safe hand, that we lay out for God. 5. It shall be rewarded with eternal life: *Laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold upon eternal life*. Now from the whole, learn, 1. That the wisdom of God has seen fit to make a great distinction between men in this world; some are poor, others rich, as God sees best for both. Learn, 2. That some are rich, who are not rich in this world; rich in faith, heirs of a kingdom, yet wandering in deserts, dens, and caves. 3. That there are many who are only rich in this world; look beyond the grave, and they are poor men, miserable men, having great possessions in this world, but no provisions, for the next. Learn, 4. That the great design which all men, especially rich men, should pursue and prosecute in this life, is how they may in this life secure and lay hold of eternal life: blessed be God, it may be laid hold upon; it is worth laying hold upon: it is life; it is eternal life. *Quest.* But how

should we lay hold upon eternal life? *Ans.* 1. In our judgments; by having them convinced of the transcendent excellency of it, and by having them approve of the strictest conditions upon which it is tendered. 2. In our affections; by strong and vehement desires after eternal life. 3. In our endeavours; by a diligent use of all means in order to the obtaining of it, and particularly by doing good, by being rich in good works, by being ready to distribute, and willing to communicate; for hereby shall we lay up for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, and at length lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called :

21 Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

Our apostle concludes this epistle to Timothy with a very

passionate and pathetic exhortation to him : that he would maintain the purity of the doctrine of the gospel, and preach that to his hearers, avoiding all idle speculations and philosophical niceties, which the heathen philosophers admired, despising, in the mean time, the plainness and simplicity of the gospel : and he tells him farther, that some christians, being taken with this sort of learning, have corrupted christianity, turned heretics, erring concerning the faith ; to prevent which, he begs for Timothy the grace of God, to preserve, sanctify, and save him. Learn hence, That in the first beginnings of christianity, the philosophers, by pretences of great learning, were the greatest despisers and the bitterest enemies of christianity. Secondly, That the generality of them were taken up with mere useless quibbling, striving about words and barren notions, instead of necessary and useful knowledge. Thirdly, That Timothy, and every minister of Christ with him, ought to preach the gospel, without any such human mixtures in the purity and plainness of it ; and the people receive it, with a simplicity of mind, to be guided and directed by it. Lastly, That the sanctifying and establishing grace of God is necessary, and indispensably needful, to preserve both ministers and people steadfast in the faith of the gospel, and to persevere in their obedience to it.

THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO

TIMOTHY.

It is generally concluded, that it was not long before St. Paul's death that he wrote this epistle to Timothy; and some think it was the last epistle that ever he wrote; in which he foretells the near approach of his own death and martyrdom, chap. iv. 6. saying, I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand.

The design of our apostle in this epistle is twofold: first to forewarn, and thereby fore-arm, his dear son Timothy against those heretics, seducers and false teachers, which were then arising and creeping into the church; and next, to excite him to the utmost care and diligence in the faithful discharge of his office; exhorting him to prepare for sufferings and persecutions, from his own example set before him.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus ;

2 To Timothy *my* dearly beloved son :
Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

In these verses, we have the penman of this epistle described, by his name, *Paul* ; by his office, *an apostle* ; by the person that sent him, *Jesus Christ* ; by the end of his mission to preach, *the promise of life* ; that is the gospel in which the promise of life eternal is contained. Note here, 1. That it is God's call, and not barely God's permission ; his commanding will, and not barely his permitting will, which must warrant a person's undertaking the sacred office, and prove him a true minister of Jesus Christ ; *Paul an apostle by the will of God*. Note, 2. That as Adam brought the sentence of death upon us all, and the promise of life is made to us in and through Jesus Christ ; so that promise of life must have ministers to proclaim it, and to preach this promise is their proper work. Observe, 2. The person described, to whom this epistle is directed, and that by his name, *Timothy* ; by his relation, *a son* ; by his affection, *a beloved son*, a *dearly* beloved son. Some think St. Paul calls him his son, because converted by him to christianity ; others, because more thoroughly instructed, edified, and encouraged by our apostle ; possibly because he was assistant to him, a co-worker and fellow-laborer with him in the work of the gospel, and for that reason most affectionately beloved by him. From whence learn, with what fervor of sincere affection the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one of another, strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in the work of God. We have little love from the world ; Lord ! how sad is it that we should have less one for another ? Behold here how St. Paul's and his assistant Timothy's heart were knit one to another ; like father and son, to the great reputation, as well as successful furtherance, of the gospel. Observe, 3. The apostle's salutation, in form of a prayer ; *Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord*. Learn hence, That all spiritual blessings flow from God as the Father in Christ unto us ; and that no grace, mercy, or peace can be had from God the Father, but in, by, and through our Lord Jesus Christ :

3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience,—

But how could Paul, before conversion, be said to serve the God of his forefathers with a pure conscience, when he was a persecutor, and the chief of sinners ? *Ans.* The meaning is, That he worshipped the same God, and the only true God, which his forefathers worshipped, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and that he worshipped him in sincerity, according to his conscience, and the measures of light then received. Learn hence, That the church before Christ had the same faith, the same object of faith, and worshipped

God, the same God, under the law, with us under the gospel : *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers.*

—That without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day ;

Behold here the ministers' duty in a more especial manner, to be much in prayer one for another ; they stand greatly in need of this mutual help to strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in the ways of God : they should therefore, without ceasing, remember one another at the throne of grace,

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy :

Observe here, The vehemency of affection which our apostle expresses towards Timothy ; he desired, greatly desired, to see him, and with the sight of him to be filled with joy. Note, That though we must love all christians, with a sincere love, yet we may love some christians with a more fervent love than others ; choice and useful christians, endearing and endeared friends, may and must be beloved above others : *I desire greatly to see thee, &c.* Observe farther, St. Paul declares how mindful he was of Timothy's tears ; perhaps a flood of tears were shed at their last parting one from another. The best of men have a propension to weeping, and upon occasion, have shed tears : so had Jacob, Joseph, David, and Christ himself. True goodness promotes compassion ; good men ever have been, and are men of tender compassionate dispositions.

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice : and I am persuaded that in thee also.

This is another reason why St. Paul so earnestly desired a sight of his dear Son Timothy, namely, a remembrance of his faith, as well as of his tears ; which faith is described by the quality of it, *unfeigned* ; by the effect of it, it *dwelt* ; by the subjects wherein, in *Lois, Eunice, and Timothy* ; by the order in which, first, in the grandmother Lois, then in the mother Eunice, and lastly, in the child Timothy. Learn hence, That it is a most desirable and blessed thing when there is a succession of believers in a family, and to see faith transmitted down to posterity, when grandmother, mother, and grandchild, all walk in the truth. Thus here : And whereas Timothy received the advantage of a religious education from those two holy women, Lois, and Eunice, we learn, That God often blesses the labors and examples of holy women, to raise up excellent instruments in his church.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.

Observe here, 1. St. Paul's care in putting Timothy in remembrance of his duty, though he very well knew it before: *Wherefore, I put thee in remembrance.* None are so well instructed in their duty, but they may and ought sometimes to be put in remembrance of what their duty is. Note, 2. The duty which St. Paul puts him in remembrance of; namely, to "stir up the gift of God, which was in him, by putting on of the apostle's hands." Where observe, 1. What the gift was which he advises should be stirred up: namely, the Holy Ghost, in its ministerial gifts and sanctifying graces; particularly, a divine power, which disposed and enabled him to teach and live, to act and do, answerably to the duties incumbent upon him as a minister of Jesus Christ. Observe, 2. What care Timothy must take of this gift; namely, to stir it up: the word is a metaphor taken from fire, which, if not stirred up, grows dead, and gives little heat. They that have received much grace, and many gifts from the holy Spirit, may yet be wanting to themselves in stirring them up. This stirring up the gift of God in Timothy, respects either the means that are to be used in order to the duty, such are, prayer, reading, meditation; or the duty itself, which consists in feeding the flock of God, in reforming abuses in the church of God, and in enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. How this gift was bestowed upon Timothy; namely, by putting on of the apostle's hands, together with the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14. The authority and power was given by the apostle, the presbytery concurring as his assistants. St. Paul did not lay on hands without the presbytery, much less did the presbytery lay on hands without the apostle, but he and they in conjunction. From the whole, learn, That no persons, especially ministers, ought to suffer the gifts and graces of God's holy Spirit to remain in them unexcited and unstirred up: "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee."

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God.

Here our apostle exhorts Timothy to an holy courage and undaunted resolution in the execution of his office. As if he had said, "Be not discouraged by persecution: for God hath not given us, his messengers, the spirit of fear, but of courage and fortitude; fearless we are of the frowns of men: also the *spirit of love*, love to God and the souls of men, which will make the ministers of God indefatigable in their endeavours for the good of souls; likewise the spirit of a sound mind, which enables God's ministers to curb their passions, inordinate lusts, desires, and perturbations of mind; an admirable spirit to know when to be angry and severe, and when to be mild and gentle." Learn hence, That love is the genuine principle of obedience, and ought to be that frame of spirit, that inward affection of mind, from whence all our services to God and our neighbour do proceed. Thus, having fortified Timothy against fear, in the seventh verse,

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he next fortifies him against shame, in the eighth verse: "*Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*; that is, of giving testimony of the gospel of our Lord, whether by preaching of it, or suffering for it; nor be ashamed of me his prisoner; for I do not suffer as a malefactor; nay, be thou a cheerful partaker of the same sufferings as myself, and for the same cause with myself, according to the power of God; that is, being strengthened with the almighty power of God. Learn hence, That the ministers of the gospel are to take great care that they be always ready to suffer reproach for the gospel, but that they never be a reproach unto the gospel. Suffering for Christ will be sweet, if it be not embittered by sinning against Christ.

9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

As if our apostle had said, "To fortify thee against the fear of those persecutions, and to arm thee against the shame of those reproaches, which may probably attend thee in the work of the gospel, consider, that the God whom thou servest in this employment, is he that hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling: called us first, to christianity, and then to his holy function of the ministry; but to neither of them according to the merit of our works; as if we had done any thing to deserve either of these favors at his hands; but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ before the world began;" that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ: which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the world: "who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light;" that is, made a fuller and clearer discovery of it by the gospel; to preach which gospel I am a commissioned apostle, and for this I suffer; and God help you, when thereunto called, to suffer with me." Learn hence, 1. That God himself is the author of man's salvation; he hath saved us: That effectual vocation doth accompany salvation; that the christian's calling is an holy calling; that it is also an act of free and gracious favor in God to call; "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." Learn farther, That God's purpose or eternal decree to save before all time was manifested by Christ's appearing in time; "But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." Observe also, The happy effects of Christ's appearing: 1. To abolish death; not to root it at present out of the world, but to take away its dominion, its dread and terror, the

whole power and disposal of it, Rev. i. 18. "I am alive, and have the keys of life and death." 2. To bring life and immortality to light; that is, immortal life more clearly manifested and discovered. Note here, 1. That the soul of man is immortal, and that there is another state, an immortal state, which remains for men after this life; otherwise, the justice of God's providence could not be sufficiently vindicated; but upon the supposal of a future state of immortality, it may. An account of the unequal providences of God in this world, is easy to him that believes the certainty of another; as good and evil are at present different in their natures, so shall they be in their rewards. Note, 2. That the greatest discovery that ever was made of life and immortality to lost sinners, is made by Jesus Christ in the gospel. It was discovered, though darkly, to the Old Testament saints; but the discovery made of it by the gospel, as it was an unexpected discovery, a free and gracious discovery, so was it a more clear, more full, and final discovery of it; "Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, &c."

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

For which cause, that is, "For the sake of the gospel, and not as an evil doer, I suffer patiently all afflictive evils, without either fear or shame, well knowing in whom I repose my faith and hope, my trust and confidence; and firmly believing that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, my temporal life, yea my eternal life, the life of my soul, my reward in heaven: I have committed all unto, and deposited all in God's hand, and I am sure he is both able and willing, he both can and will keep in safety, that which I have thus committed to him." Note here, 1. That the knowledge of God must precede, or go before faith in God. *I know in whom I have believed*: Faith sees not him in whom it believeth, but it knows him in whom it believeth. Note, 2. There is no such way to secure the soul, as to commit it into God's hands; the way to make the soul safe, is to commit it to him to keep, and that in the way of well doing.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

By *sound words*, we are to understand the doctrine of the gospel; by *a form of sound words*, the truth and doctrine of the gospel methodically disposed and digested; to hold it fast, is, not to swerve from it in the course of our ministry, but pertinaciously to adhere to it, not parting with it ourselves, nor suffering it to be adulterated and corrupted

by others. This form of sound words some take to be the articles of our creed, in the words wherein we now have them, probably, the same in sense, if not in words. This is called, ver. 14. *That good thing* which was committed to Timothy to keep: meaning, that summary of christian doctrine which was committed to his care and keeping. Learn hence, 1. That evangelical words are sound words: and gospel-truth is of an healing nature. Learn, 2. That a form of sound words, or a methodical system of gospel truths, is very profitable both for ministers and people. Learn, 3. That such a form of sound words is very faithfully to be retained, and very carefully to be kept unto. Learn, 4. That faith and love are the hands whereby we are to hold fast gospel truth; "Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus" Learn, 5. That as christians are to hold these evangelical truths fast in their judgments, so are they to hold them forth in their lives and practices: *Keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*; that is, the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost will not be wanting to our endeavours, to help our memory, love, and practice, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

By *all in Asia*, we are to understand very many, almost all, not every individual person: some think they were teachers in Asia, others that they were private christians; some that they were his companions and followers who, when they saw him imprisoned, deserted and left him; and particularly, Phygellus and Hermogenes. Yet, note here, 1. That he doth not tax them of apostasy from Christ, when he accuses them of forsaking him; it is too harsh to say, that those that forsake a particular ruler of the church, do forsake Christ himself. Note 2. In that he says, *All that are in Asia are turned away from me*, that sin may, and oftentimes has the major vote on its side, the generality go one way, and usually the wrong way; sinners, like sheep, run after one another: like fish, swim down the stream together.

16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.

17 But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.

18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Our apostle having complained of many in Asia forsaking him, in the day of his sufferings, in the foregoing verse; in this, he makes a grateful commemoration of the kindness of Onesiphorus towards him, who refreshed him with his

presence and relief, and was not *ashamed of his chain*, of his imprisonment, as others were. Learn, 1. It is no new thing for the most holy and innocent servants of Christ to suffer hardship, imprisonment, banishment, yea, even death itself, for the sake of Christ; and when they do so, to have friends forsake, and turn their backs upon them. Prosperity affords many friends, more flatterers; but who regards the prisoner in bonds; who cares for looking upon the dial when the sun is off? Learn, 2. That not to be ashamed of the saints in the day of their sufferings, but to own them, and administer to them in such a condition, is a certain sign of a sound and sincere christian. Good Onesiphorus had this, amongst other evidences of his gracious state, that he was not ashamed to own a persecuted Paul in chains. Nay, he searched for the apostle very diligently, and found him; so far was he from hiding his eyes from him, and forsaking him, as the men of Asia did: Observe next, our apostle's fervent and affectionate prayer to God, abundantly to recompense this labor of love in Onesiphorus towards him: First, he begs mercy for his whole household, "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus;" Note, 1. How thankful the saints of God are for mercies received from God, by the hands of men. Note, 2. That acts of christian charity to the suffering servants of Christ, do receive a considerable part of their reward, even here, in the hearty and affectionate prayers of the people of God on their behalf. How well did it fare with Onesiphorus and his household upon the score of St. Paul's prayer, "The Lord show mercy to the house of Onesiphorus;" next he prays for Onesiphorus himself, "The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day;" that is, in the great day of judgment. Learn hence, 1. That the holiest of men, and best of saints will stand in need of mercy, much mercy, when they stand before God at the great day. Learn, 2. That the merciful christian, which has here shown mercy to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, may expect, and shall find mercy in that day, when they stand in need of mercy. They that show mercy in the evil day, shall certainly find mercy in the great day; "The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle in this chapter first exhorts Timothy, to the practice of several duties belonging to his sacred function; and that by sundry arguments drawn from wrestlers, soldiers and husbandmen, whose laborious industry and indefatigable services he exhorts him to imitate and follow; next he exhorts him from several sins which render the office of a bishop obnoxious to censure, and his person to contempt. Thus he bespeaks him;

THOU therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy with the hard things which he had suffered for the gospel of Christ, and withal informed him how many had flinched for fear of suffering, forsaking him and the cause of God defended by him; in this verse he exhorts Timothy to courage and holy resolution for Christ; "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" that is, when others show pusillanimity

and cowardice, do thou show thyself a strong and valiant man, not being affrighted at the dangers that threaten thee in publishing and defending the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be strong in the grace of Christ; that is, in the gospel of Christ, which contains a discovery of the riches of his grace, or be strong through the influences of the grace of Christ. Note, 1. That as all christians in general, so the ministers of Christ in particular, do need courage, *Thou, my son, be strong*; nothing he does, but is an act of valor, all duties are attended with difficulties, which put the christian upon disputing every inch of his way; they are only a few gallant spirits that dare take heaven by storm; and the ministers of Christ do meet with more difficulties than other men. Learn, 2. That our strength, both as christians and ministers, lies in Christ and not in ourselves: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" the strength of every saint, yea, of the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

A second charge given to Timothy, is to take special care that the doctrine of the gospel, and the precepts of holy living, which he had heard St. Paul deliver, in the presence of many witnesses, should be handed down and transmitted to men of great fidelity and ability, whom he was to ordain and empower to teach it unto others. Where note, 1. A direction given to the guides and governors of the church, how they ought to manage themselves in the ordination of the ministerial offices: this office is to be committed unto *faithful able men*; many may be useful in the church, that cannot be excellent, but he that is unfaithful, is only fit to make atheists. Note, 2. That such as have the gospel deposited with them, may and ought to deposit it with others, and they with others, to the end of the world, thereby to prevent all innovations and diversity of opinions in matters of religion: "What thou hast heard, commit to faithful men."

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4 No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.

6 The husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits.

7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Still we find our apostle prosecuting the great and general design of this epistle, which is to direct Timothy in the

faithful discharge of his office, as a minister of the gospel, and particularly to prepare for sufferings, and to inure himself to hardship, and to encounter with difficulties and dangers: hence, he compares him to a soldier, to a wrestler, and an husbandman: 1. To a soldier, "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Learn hence, That every faithful minister is a spiritual soldier, warring under Jesus Christ, his captain and chief commander: must the soldier be called and do all by commission? so must the minister. Must the soldier be armed, trained up, and disciplined, and made fit for service? so must the minister. Must the soldier shun no dangers, stick at no difficulties, pass through thick and thin? must he use allowed weapons, approved armor of his general's directing, not of his own inventing? all this, must the minister be and do. In a word, must the soldier please him that hath chosen him to be a soldier, and in order thereunto, *not entangle himself with the affairs of this life?* Such a life of freedom from encumbrance by secular affairs, should the minister of God desire and endeavour after. Soldiers must be as free as may be from distractions; a soldier that fights in fetters, fights thereafter; he must put off his fetters before he puts on his armor; the minister's work lies in the affairs of the other life: Now, he that is entangled in the affairs of this life, will do little about the affairs of the next. He must also please his captain, not please himself, his appetite, his pride, his covetousness, much less must he please the enemy he is to fight against, the devil, the world, and the flesh. Again, 2. The minister here is compared to a wrestler; *If a man strive for the mastery*; that is, for the prize, the garland, the crown, at the end of the race; he shall be crowned if he strives lawfully, if he runs fairly according to the rules of the game, and perseveres finally till he comes to the end of the goal. Thus must the ministers of the gospel strive for the crown of life, by putting forth all their strength, exerting their utmost endeavours; such as are now wrestlers, shall ere long be conquerors. Lastly, Timothy, and all with him in the work of the gospel, are here compared to husbandmen: as the husbandman must first toil and labor before he can partake of the fruits of the earth, he must plough and sow before he can reap and gather; so must the minister of God, by a laborious diligence, cultivate and improve the people, before he can hope to reap that great fruit and benefit, by gaining and converting of souls to Christ. God will regard no ministers but the laborious, he will never dignify drones in the church triumphant. Farther, by comparing Timothy to an husbandman, he intimates to him his duty, not to be discouraged if he doth not reap fruit presently; the seed sometimes lies under the clods long before it does appear; we must not despair of men too soon. And, lastly, by comparing Timothy to an husbandman, he seems to intimate, that he was to be sustained and maintained by those for whom he labored. Thus having laid Timothy's duty before him, under the metaphor of a soldier, a wrestler, and an husbandman; he counsels him to consider what he had said unto him, and desires of God to give him a right understanding and sound judgment in all things, intimating that they that will have God's word and good counsel blessed by God to their understanding and practice, must ponder upon it, consider of it, and duly apply it to themselves; "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the

seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

9 Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, *even unto bonds*; but the word of God is not bound.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, exhorted Timothy to patience and constancy under suffering, comes now to direct him as to the matter and subject of his preaching, particularly, that he insist upon the incarnation and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; *Remember that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah of the seed of David*, not of Joseph. Timothy is here called upon to assert the incarnation of Christ, there being some heretics which did very early deny the truth of his human nature, as the Marconites and Manichees; as there were others that denied the reality of his divine nature, particularly Ebion and Cerinthus. Secondly, He calls upon Timothy to preach and press the doctrine of Christ's resurrection also, both because upon that depended the great evidence of his divinity, that he was really God, (his resurrection by his own power declared him to be God, Rom. 1. 4.) and also because upon that depends the consolation and salvation of all believers. Remember, and frequently inculcate, that Christ was raised from the dead, *according to my gospel*; that is, according to the gospel of Christ preached by me. Christ's incarnation and resurrection, are truths much to be preached and inculcated by ministers, and frequently remembered and thoroughly considered by the people. It follows, "Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, *even unto bonds*: but the word of God is not bound: that is, for which gospel, and for preaching which resurrection, I suffer as a criminal and reputed malefactor, yea, I suffer to that degree, that I am bound with chains for preaching Jesus and the resurrection: *But the word of God is not bound*; though they have restrained me, they cannot restrain that; that is loose and at liberty; when the dispensers of it are in bonds, that has its free course. Learn, That the preachers of the gospel have, from the beginning, met with great persecutions, they have *suffered trouble as evil-doers, even unto bonds*. Learn, 2. That the persecution of preachers doth not hinder the progress and liberty of the word; when ministers are in prison, the word may have free passage, and holy men rejoice at its liberty, under their own confinement: yea, the providence of God so ordered it, (see Acts the last) that St. Paul, even during his imprisonment, preached the word with all boldness; his confinement had caused the gospel to spread in Rome. Thus God outshoots satan in his own bow: he thinks when he has the ministers of God in prison, he has done his work, but God overrules and causes their imprisonment itself to fall out rather to the furtherance of the gospel; *I suffer bonds*, says the apostle, *but the word of God is not bound*.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 *It is a faithful saying*, For if we

be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*.

12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: If we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy in the foregoing verses with his sufferings, even unto bonds, here he lets him understand and know, why, and for whose sake, he did so cheerfully endure all these things, namely, *for the elect's sake*. Though the rest of the world rejected the gospel, yet the elect would be confirmed by his example, and obtain that salvation which in and through Jesus Christ was offered and tendered to them. Here note, That there is a certain election of God, which hath infallibly chosen to salvation all those who make their calling and election sure, by perseverance in holiness and good works. Note, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do think no sufferings too much or too dear, for the sake of God's elect, (for the sake of believing christians, who are a chosen generation) so that their sufferings may but further their eternal glory, happiness and salvation. To encourage yet again to a patient enduring of all sorts of afflictions, he assures Timothy, that if we be rendered conformable to Christ in his sufferings, we shall be also in his glory: *If we suffer for him, we shall reign with him: if we be dead with him*, dead to sin, and dead to the world, *we shall also live with him*, in conformity to his resurrection: but if for fear of suffering we disown him, he will also deny us; *If we believe not*, if we be unfaithful and forsake him, yet he will be true to his word, he will not forsake his own cause, but make good his threatenings, his own veracity stands firm, and is as much engaged to execute the threatening, as to fulfil the promise.

14 Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers.

15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,

Observe here, 1. The excellent advice which St. Paul gives to Timothy, to all the ministers of the church, and to all the christian churches far and near, that they spend not their time in disputes, that they contend not about words, which have no tendency to make men either wiser or better, but serve only to violate the laws of charity, and cause men to wrangle eternally, and persecute one another with hard names and characters of reproach. Here note, 1. What those things are which ought not to be matters of contention among christians; namely, 1. Such things in which we differ from each other, rather in words, than in sense; oft-times opponents mean the same things, but differ only in

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the way and manner of expression. 2. Such things as tend to little or no profit, either as to edification in faith, in love, or in practical godliness. Observe also, The apostle's argument, why we should not contend about these things; because they tend to beget strife and contention among christians, by dividing them into factions and parties, and also tend to the subversion of the hearers, causing them to doubt of the truth of the faith, about which the contending parties cannot agree; "Charge them, therefore, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." Observe next, The solemn charge given to Timothy, as to the matter, manner, and method of his preaching; that the matter of it be the word of truth, the pure word of God, that it be divided rightly, to every one his portion, to every hearer his due, methodizing and distributing truth, as God would have it; terror to whom terror is due, comfort to whom comfort belongs. The original word rendered rightly to divide, some think a sacrificial word, alluding to the right dividing of the sacrifice, which was laid upon the altar, separating the precious from the vile, and severing the parts which were not to be offered from them that were, and cutting out the sacrifice in such manner as all had their share in them. As if St. Paul had said, "Study not for the applause of men, but for the approbation of God, as becometh a good workman, who needeth not to be ashamed of his work, whoever looks upon it; but let thy preaching and living be straight and conformable to the gospel, and thus study to show thyself approved of God." Hence learn, That although curious and unprofitable trifling with words in a pulpit be vain and sinful, yet it is the part of a skilful teacher, to order, methodize, and distribute truth in its proper place, and give every hearer his part and portion.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: Of whom is Hymeneus and Philletus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying, That the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

St. Paul having now finished the exhortatory part of this chapter, and acquainted Timothy what he would have him practise and do, now comes to a dehortation, advising him what he would have him avoid and shun; and here, first, he bids him *shun profane and vain babblings*; the vain babblings of the heathen philosophers, and the profane notions of heretical and seducing teachers, particularly the Gnostics, the followers of Simon Magnus and Menander, who were guilty of an apostasy from christianity, by turning the resurrection into an allegory; affirming that the resurrection of the soul to piety and virtue, was the only resurrection to be expected, disowning the resurrection of the body, and asserting, that the flesh was unfit to rise. Observe, secondly, The nature of erroneous doctrine declared; it is of a devouring, spreading and destroying nature, *their words will eat as doth*

a gangrene. *Quest.* How doth a gangrene eat? *Ans.* It eats speedily, it eats incurably, it eats mortally, as it is well known the gangrene doth. *Quest.* But what is it that heresies eat? *Ans.* Faith, peace and godliness; so here they overthrow the faith of some, and increase unto more ungodliness. *Quest.* How comes it to pass that they so eat. *Ans.* The spreading and prevailing of heresies, may be ascribed partly to the subtilty and activity of seducers, partly to the curiosity and simplicity of the seduced, and partly to the justice of God, for the manifestation of those that are sincere, and the punishment of those that receive not the truth in the love of it.

19 Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding that Hymeneus and Philetus, with others, are fallen away, nevertheless we know, that the foundation of God, his holy covenant, standeth firm and sure, having a seal annexed to it, (as usually contracts have, whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other,) which seal on God's part has this impress of inscription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*; and on our part is written, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" Learn hence, 1. That the covenant of God made with us in Christ Jesus, is a firm and sure foundation to build our hopes of perseverance and eternal life upon; *The foundation of God standeth sure.* Learn, 2. That the covenant (according to the nature of all covenants) is conditional; on God's part promising assistance, acceptance, and rewards; on our part, a departing from all iniquity, and an obligation to the love and practice of universal holiness. All that make a profession of christianity ought to take special care that their lives may answer their light, their practices correspond with their profession; christianity being not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

21 If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Our apostle had told us at ver. 17. and 18, of certain heretics, such as Hymeneus and Philetus, whose doctrines did eat like a canker or gangrene; he tells us here, that it is not to be wondered at, that there should be such persons in the church, because the visible church is God's great house: now it is no uncommon thing in great men's houses, to have vessels of all sorts, some of wood and earth, others of gold and silver, some to honorable uses, and others to dishonorable: in like manner, it is in the church of Christ, there will be a number of orthodox, and also of heterodox christians,

hypocrites and sincere christians. He advises Timothy therefore, not to be scandalized at them, but to purge himself from them, to keep himself pure from heresy and impiety; thereby he would manifest himself to be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master's use; that is for the service and glory of God, and disposed for every good work. Learn hence, That all christians, but especially the ministers of Christ, ought to be, like the consecrated vessels of the temple, dedicated and set apart for our Lord's especial use and service; we are not only with other christians dedicated by baptism, but consecrated to our solemn ordination; so that there is a sacredness upon our persons: and to prostitute ourselves to any lust, is a greater profanation than Belshazzar was guilty of, when he desecrated the holy vessels of the temple.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

Still our apostle proceeds in his holy cautionary directions to Timothy, what to avoid, and what to follow. He advises him, 1. to avoid and flee youthful lusts: by which may be understood, not only the lusts of the flesh, but also the lusts and vices of the mind, as ambition and pride, vain-glory and ostentation. Where note, That the flesh, with its affections and lusts, are such dangerous enemies to our holiness and salvation, that the holiest of ministers and best of men have need, very great need, to be warned of them, and cautioned against them; Flee thou, O Timothy, also youthful lusts. 2. He adviseth Timothy also to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, that is controversies and disputes, knowing that such contentious wranglings, do but engender strife. It is not unworthy our observation, that no less than four times in these two epistles, do we meet with this precept from the apostle, to avoid these questions and disputes, and to apply to that which is practical, showing of what great importance it is so to do; and we shall meet with it again in the epistle to Titus, chap. iii. 2. From whence learn, That disputes about matters which only serve to beget strife and contention, but tend little to edification in faith and holiness, are vain talking, unprofitable disputes, and as such to be avoided. Observe next, He directs Timothy what to follow, having shown him what to avoid: namely, to follow after righteousness and faith, peace and charity with all persons, but especially with all our brethren and fellow christians calling on the same Lord, and professing the same faith with us. Where note, That we ought to have charity for, to maintain peace with, and by no means to separate from our communion, any person who serves Christ with a pure heart; Follow says our apostle, charity and peace, with all those that call on the Lord Jesus out of a pure heart.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient;

25 In meekness instructing those that op-

pose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth:

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

By the servant of the Lord here, we are to understand all the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers of the church; by not striving, that they are not to irritate and provoke such as dissent and differ from them; not to strive indecently with the tongue, but by soft and gentle words, by close and hard arguments, endeavour to convince their judgment; for no man that is in an error thinks that he is so; therefore if we go about by violence to rend men's opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have but so much patience and charity as to unrip their errors by degrees, they will at last fall in pieces of themselves, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all and patient;" it follows farther, "in meekness instructing, if God, peradventure."—Where note, 1. The duty directed to; and that is, without bitterness and passion, but with great lenity and meekness, to instruct the erroneous, even when they oppose the truth; such especially as do it out of ignorance, and for want of better information, are particularly to be pitied, and patiently borne with, together with those who labor under the prejudices and prepossessions of a contrary education; *in meekness instructing those that oppose*—Note, 2. The benefit hoped for, and the advantage to be expected, by such meek and gentle methods of instruction, as are here directed to; 1. That Almighty God may peradventure give them repentance, blessing such prudential and pious means for their conversion from error and seduction; and 2. That they may be recovered out of satan's snares and temptations, they being at present captivated by him according to his will. Learn, 1. That if erroneous and misled persons will not bear gentle touching, much less will they yield to sharp invectives, or provoking disputes. Yet, 2. Disputations wisely managed, like defensive wars, are both useful and necessary in defence of the truth, though they do not bring over gainsayers. Learn, 3. That till erroneous and misled persons can be brought by consideration to be agents in recovering themselves, no teaching or disputing will be sufficient and effectual to recover them; "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him." Lastly, Error is the devil's snare as well as sin: error is as dangerous as vice: the one is an open road, the other a bye-path, to hell and destruction; consequently such a christian as has a due regard to, and value for, his own salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices; "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle having, in the two foregoing chapters, forewarned Timothy of those dangerous heretics, and false teachers, which were then arising and creeping into the church, he comes now, by a prophetic instinct, to foretel of

greater evils and mischiefs, which should certainly arise towards the end of the world, which he calls the last days and perilous times. The prophetic perdition runs thus:

THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

As if the apostle had said, "O my son Timothy, be not thou discouraged; neither let any of thy successors be dismayed, at the sects and schisms, at the heresies and blasphemies, at the vice and impiety, which will be found in and amongst persons in the last days, when, certainly know, that perilous times shall come." Where by the last days, understand all the times from Christ's first coming in the flesh to his second coming to judgment: in the beginning of which times, several sorts of persons, yea, several sects and parties of men arose, to whom the following characters did belong; namely, proud, covetous, boasters, and the like. As the judaizing teachers who urged the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; also the gnostics, and followers of Simon Magnus, have these characters applied to them in those early days: and it were well if the church of Rome, in these latter days, could clear herself of these characters, which are found upon her, as the marks and badges of an apostate church. Learn hence; 1. That the days we now live in are the last days, and our times the last times. 2. That the last times are and will be, the worst times, perilous times, full of sin, and full of trouble: old age is the dregs of life, the world draws upon its lees, the dregs are apparent; *in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2 For men shall be lovers of their own-selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;

Here our apostle reckons up the several sins, which would abound in these last days, and make the times perilous; persons professing christianity shall appear inordinate self-lovers, insatiably covetous, vain-glorious, boasters, proud, despisers of others, blasphemers of God and Christ, and the holy Spirit, by denying the pre-science and foreknowledge of the former, the divinity and Godhead of the latter. Learn hence, That sins, especially great sins, seldom go single and alone, but commonly generate and beget one another. Thus here, self-love begets covetousness, covetousness pride, and pride blasphemy. Thus men fall from one sin to another, and proceed from one degree of wickedness to another.

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

This is the last yet not the least sin of the perilous times: the apostle first tells us what these men have, *a form of godliness*, that is, a vain empty show of piety and religion, which discovers itself in external devotion, in a profession of the christian faith, in an external show of mortification, in a great zeal for some particular party, or private opinion. 2. What they want, the power of godliness, that is, the truth and sincerity of it, consisting in true love to God and our neighbour. 3. The apostle directs us as to our behaviour towards such men, *from these turn away*. Learn hence, 1. That a person may go far and advance high in an external profession of piety and religion, and yet have no more than a form of godliness. 2. That notwithstanding this there is such a thing as the internal and inward power, of godliness and religion which few maintain, but most deny. Learn, 3. That christians must shun familiarity with such as have the brand of the foregoing infamous sins upon them, and not hold correspondency with such as are the avowed enemies of Christ and his kingdom.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In these words, our apostle renders a reason why we should turn away from the forementioned sins and sinners, namely, because these heretical and false teachers before characterized, are of an insinuating temper; they vent not their errors openly, but in corners; they creep into houses and there set upon women with their temptations who have less ability to detect them: and first upon women, that they may better win their husbands over to compliance with them; and upon silly women, such as were laden with sins and led away with divers lusts; they make a prey of such women as are weak in their intellectuals, and corrupt and wicked in their morals: which women always pretend to be "learned, but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," and consequently, are an easy prey to seducers, and very capable receptive objects for such deceivers to draw away. Learn hence, That seducers observe a method in seducing. They begin with women, weak women, and usually wicked and loose women. Carefully ought that sex to resolve, and shun conversing and disputing with them.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

Jannes and Jambres were two famous magicians in Egypt, who withstood Moses when he was working miracles before Pharaoh to hinder him from believing; their names are not mentioned in scripture, but taken by St. Paul, either from public tradition, or from some ancient Jewish records. Now, says the apostle, as the magicians resisted Moses, so these heretical seducers resist the truth, making a violent

and rancorous opposition against it. Thence learn, That there have been false teachers in all ages, who have with vehemency opposed the truth, and the professors of it: neither the members nor the ministers of Christ shall ever want enemies to war with; whilst the seed of the serpent remains in the world. Observe, 2. The character of these men who resist the truth, they are men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith; they have lost all sound judgment and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. A corrupt head, a corrupt heart, and a vicious life, usually attend and accompany one another; loose principles dispose men to loose and licentious practices; such as are latitudinarians in opinion, are oftentimes so in practice too. An heretical head and an upright heart are incompatible; a good conscience and a true faith, like Hippocrates' twins, live and die together.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Here our apostle encourages Timothy, and in him all the succeeding ministers of the gospel, to the end of the world, against all the discouragements which either he or they might meet with from the impostors and seducers of the times, by assuring them of the issue and event of these trials; first, That God will put a bar in their way, *that they proceed no farther* in their hypocritical and juggling practices. Learn thence, That heretics and seducers are limited and bounded by God: they cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Secondly, That God would make their folly and madness manifest to their own confusion: their folly shall be discovered, and then abhorred, as was the folly and madness of Jannes and Jambres. Learn, That God will, in his own time, by the preaching of the word, discover false teachers and their delusions to the world.

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience.

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

A special mean is here propounded, how Timothy and his successors may be preserved from the seduction of false teachers, namely, by setting before themselves the example of the great apostle St. Paul; we are more easily led by precedents than by precepts: therefore the apostle propounds his own example as a pattern; *Thou hast fully known my doctrine, my manner of life and conversation, my purpose to adhere to my faith in Christ, my long-suffering and patience in undergoing persecution for him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, and how God was graciously pleased to deliver me out of all*. Learn hence, 1. That younger ministers ought especially to observe the doctrine and conversation of

the elder, the pious way and walking of the graver ministers, and must follow them. Aged Paul propounds his virtues to young Timothy for imitation; "thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life;" my doctrine to be sound and sincere, my life to be holy and unblameable. Learn, 2. That it is both lawful and laudable, at some times, and upon some occasions, to mention both the grace which God hath wrought in us, and also the sufferings and persecutions which we endure and undergo for him; "thou knowest what persecutions I endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra." Learn, 3. That always opposition, and often persecution, attends the preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. St. Paul went to Antioch, from Antioch to Iconium, from Iconium to Lystra, preaching the gospel; but persecution followed him hard at the heels wherever he went; but observe, how the goodness of God accompanied him too; *out of them all the Lord delivered me*; not only our dangers, but our deliverances also, must be recorded and observed. Observe, farther, how the apostle argues, from his own persecutions in particular, to all the godly's persecution in general; "yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Mark, not this or that godly man, but all, every one without exception; the better the men, the sooner persecuted; the devil shoots his arrow at the whitest and fairest mark: again, all that *will*: he doth not say, all that wish well to godliness, but, all that *will*, all that are absolutely resolved so to do: and farther, if he will *live*, if he can or will keep his godliness in his heart, and not discover it in his life, he may escape hatred and persecution: but if he will live religiously, let him look for persecution. Observe, farther, It is said, he that will live godly, and not civilly, but living godlily, exposes to the world's scorn and hatred: in a word, his goodness in Christ Jesus, that is, such godliness as is exerted in the virtue, strength and power of Christ Jesus particularly. Godliness in Christ Jesus is real and true godliness; it is exact godliness, it is an active godliness, it is a prevailing godliness, it is a world condemning godliness; such godliness cannot escape the world's hatred. Learn, that all those that show forth the power of religion in an holy conversation, must certainly look for persecution.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Our apostle having acquainted us, in the former verse, with the condition of the godly, that they must expect and prepare for persecution, he lets us, in this verse, understand the miserable condition of the wicked, that they *wax worse and worse*; their proficiency is mere apostasy, they actively deceive others, and are passively deceived themselves by the devil, that lying spirit, that grand impostor. Learn hence, that the prosperous estate of wicked men is much more dangerous and miserable than the afflicted persecuted condition of the godly; the good by persecution grow better, but the wicked by living easy, *wax worse and worse*.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Several arguments are here made use of by St. Paul, to press Timothy to the duty of perseverance in the doctrine of Christ, contained in the holy scriptures: the first is drawn from the authority of the person from whom he had received that doctrine, to wit, St. Paul himself, an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ. Continue in the things which thou hast learned; that is, from me, and by me, as an authorized apostle. All the servants of God, but especially the ministers of God, must continue constant in the faith, and steadfast in the truth received. The second argument for Timothy's adhering to the doctrine of the scriptures, is drawn from his long acquaintance with the scriptures, even from his childhood, yea, from his infancy; *from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c.* And the argument lies thus: "thou O Timothy, hast learnt the scriptures from thy infancy; now, what a shame would it be for thee, who hast been taught so early the true religion, to turn from it and forsake it; from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, from a suckling, as the word signifies." From whence learn, that it is the duty of parents to instruct their children betimes in the holy and good word of God: we read before of the care that Timothy's mother and grandmother took in that matter. Observe, 2. The title given to the word of God, the holy scriptures; they are holy in their author, holy in their matter, holy in their penman, holy in their end and design, which is to make us holy, John xvii. 17. The word of God is not only pure, but purifying, not only clean, but cleansing. Observe, 3. The high commendation given of the word: *it is able to make thee wise unto salvation*; no knowledge can bring us to salvation without the knowledge of the holy scriptures; the philosophers will teach you moral wisdom, but not a word of salvation by a Redeemer, without whom our salvation is impossible; therefore it is here added, *—wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Jesus Christ.* Learn thence, that the holy scriptures, though they instruct us in the way of salvation, yet cannot save us without faith in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to Timothy to persevere in his study of the holy scriptures, by an argument drawn, 1. From the dignity and authority of the scriptures; 2. From their utility; 3. From their perfection, 1. From their dignity and authority, *they are given by inspiration of God*; that is, they are not the contrivance of any man's wit and fancy, but a revelation of the mind and will of God; and those that wrote them, were excited to it, and assisted in it by the Spirit of God: no part of scripture had either angels or men for its author, but every

part of scripture is divinely inspired, or breathed by God, both for matter and order, style and words. A second argument is drawn from the utility and sufficiency of the holy scriptures; they are *profitable for doctrine and instruction*, teaching us what to know and believe in order to salvation, concerning God, and Christ, and ourselves, &c. *for reproof of error*, and confutation of false doctrine, *for correction of sin and evil manners, for instruction in righteousness*, directing us how to lead a righteous and holy life according to the will of God. A third argument is taken from the perfection of them, they are able to make "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" that is, to make the ministers of Christ complete in knowledge, faith, and holiness, every way fitted for their work and duty, as christians and as ministers. Observe here, 1. That the scriptures of the Old Testament, and not of the New, must be the scriptures here intended, they being the only scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; that was before the scriptures of the New Testament were written. Observe, 2. That the apostle doth not say that these scriptures were of themselves sufficient to make Timothy wise unto salvation, but only that with faith in Christ Jesus they were sufficient for that end: much more then must the scriptures both of Old and New Testament together, when accompanied with faith in Jesus Christ, be sufficient for that end. Observe, 3. That the scriptures are a perfect, plain, and sufficient rule in all things necessary to salvation. 1. They are a perfect rule, because the writers of them were divinely inspired, and consequently their writings are infallible. 2. They are a plain rule; otherwise they would be no rule at all, of no more use to direct our faith and practice than a sun-dial in a dark room is to tell us the hour of the day: a rule that is not plain, whatever it may be in itself, is of no use to us till it be made plain. 3. They are a sufficient rule, they are able to make the man of God perfect, and wise to salvation. Here the church of Rome distinguishes and says, the scriptures are sufficient to salvation, but not to instruction; to whom one of the martyrs replied, "if so, God send me the salvation, and you the instruction." It is conceived by some, that this was the last epistle that ever St. Paul wrote; if so, this is the last charge that ever he gave, and concerns us the more to attend the solemnity of it. The chapter before us is St. Paul's *cygnea cantio*, his last and sweetest song; by a spiritual sagacity he saw his end approaching, and the time of his martyrdom to be at hand; he therefore like a dying man, adjures Timothy in a most awful and tremendous manner, to preach the word with all diligence and care, which he had so highly extolled in the foregoing chapter, as being able to make all persons wise unto salvation.

CHAPTER IV.

I CHARGE thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom:

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke,

exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Observe here, 1. A most solemn adjuration and charge given, "I charge thee before God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," the Judge of quick and dead. Lord! what opiate can stupify the conscience of a minister, that he shall not feel the awful authority of such a charge, or not be awakened by such ardent expressions? How can they appear before the most high and everlasting Judge? What will be a sufficient defence before his enlightened tribunal? If such in the last judgment, who neglected to feed the poor with material bread, shall be placed at Christ's left hand; how can those whose office it is to dispense spiritual bread, if they neglect to do it, escape condemnation? Observe, 2. The subject matter of the charge, to preach according to Christ's commission, Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go, preach and baptize*; to preach the word, not the fancies and inventions of men, but the wholesome word of God, and the whole word of God, both law and gospel; the one to keep men from presumption, the other from despair, to be instant and active, urgent and zealous in the discharge of this duty, in all the parts of it, in instruction, reprehension, and exhortation; and this *with all long-suffering*, patience and lenity, undergoing meekly the contradiction of sinners, and the reproaches of men: and for the time to do it, *in season, and out of season*; that is to take all occasions, and be thankful unto God for all opportunities of preaching his word: the lazy may find a thousand excuses, but willing minds know no difficulties; they consider the price paid for souls, and the account that must be given of them. Observe, 3. The person to whom this charge is given; to Timothy, an ordained person, one set apart for the work: this is not a work common to all, but peculiar to some: God's Timothy's only, who are called and set apart by imposition of hands for the work of the ministry, must preach the word; and such ought to take all occasions, and be very instant in so doing, 1 Cor. ix. 16. "Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe be unto us if we preach not the gospel."

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away *their ears* from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Here we have the reason of our apostle's solemn adjuration in the foregoing verses, by which he stirs up Timothy to a careful discharge of his duty; namely, in regard of the apostasy of the times, in which many would grow weary of sound doctrine and follow fables. Here note, 1. The ground of this apostasy, men's hatred of the truth; *they will not endure sound doctrine*; that is, they will reject and abhor it; they love their lust above God's law, and will not endure to hear it. A second ground of their apostasy, is, a delight in false teachers; *they heap up to themselves* such as will claw their *itching ears*, and gratify their wanton desires, and in no wise disturb their lusts. Thirdly, here is the doleful

issue and dreadful consequence of this their malicious contempt of the truth: "they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned into fables;" that is, say some, to the fabulous divinity of the Gnostics, made up of Gentilism and Judaism; the fabulous traditions of the Jewish doctors, say others. Learn hence, 1. that christian doctrine is sound doctrine, wholesome words. 2. Unsound persons cannot endure sound doctrine; sore eyes cannot abide the light. 3. That in the last days there shall be many false teachers to claw and gratify itching ears. 4. That the more false teachers do abound, the more careful and industrious should the ministers of Christ be to oppose them, by preaching sound doctrine.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Behold here a fourfold duty pressed upon Timothy; 1. Watchfulness: *watch thou in all things.* As if he had said, "false teachers will beset you round on every side; therefore guard and watch every where." 2. Courage; *Endure afflictions;* he that fears the frowns of men, can never discharge his duty faithfully to God. 3. Fidelity: *do the work of an Evangelist;* which was an extraordinary, and therefore but a temporary office, to assist the apostles in preaching and publishing the gospel from place to place; they watered what the apostles planted. 4. Sincerity: *make full proof of thy ministry;* so fulfil all the parts of it, that none may charge thee with the neglect of any part of thy duty: let the world see that thou makest it thine own and only work to win souls. Learn hence, 1. That the apostasy and looseness of the times we live in, must oblige all persons, but especially the ministers of Christ, to watch: who should watch, if not the watchman? Learn hence, 2. That ministers, of all men, need courage: they must inure themselves to endure hardship, and expect hard words, hard dealings, nick-names, and all kind of reproaches; and these must be endured with patience, with courage, and with constancy. Learn, 3. That ministers must make full proof of their ministry; that is, must fully and faithfully discharge all the duties of their calling, not do their duties by halves; but accomplish all the parts of their ministry, strengthening the weak, comforting the afflicted, reducing the wandering, and adorning their doctrine by a pure and unblameable conversation. This is to fulfil our ministry.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Our apostle being now come almost to the end of his christian and ministerial race, he first looks downward into his grave with comfort, ver. 6. and sees his death a pleasing sacrifice to God, and a sweet departure to him: *I am ready*

to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Next he looks backward, and reflects upon his well spent life with joy; *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,* ver. 7. Last of all he looks upward, and there sees heaven prepared for him, ver. 8. *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* Observe, 1. St. Paul's intimation of his death; I am ready to be offered up; a sacrificial word: "I am ready to be poured out as a drink-offering; my death will be a sweet sacrifice to God, my blood being shed for Christ, as the wine was poured out on the meat-offering." Learn hence, that the death of God's ministers, especially of such as die martyrs, is a most pleasing sacrifice unto God: precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all, but especially of such saints. Observe, 2. St. Paul's narration of his life; *I have fought, I have finished, &c.* The words run in figures taken from the Olympic games, where were combating, wrestling, running, according to the laws of the games, and judges appointed to declare the victories, and to give them the prize, a crown of garlands. The first metaphor is taken from a soldier, a combatant, a champion; *I have fought a good fight.* Learn, Every sincere christian, but especially every faithful minister, is a spiritual soldier; their enemies are spiritual, their weapons spiritual, their warfare spiritual, their victory spiritual: they must be men of courage, men of conduct, men that can endure hardship, men of unity and activity among themselves. The second metaphor is taken from a strenuous runner; *I have finished my course;* "I am come to the period of my days, and to the end of my race;" alluding perhaps to his course of life after his conversion, which was wholly spent in running from place to place to preach the gospel; and now he was come to the last stage or goal at Rome, where he was to receive his garland, his crown of martyrdom. Learn hence, A christian's life is a race, which he must not only cheerfully begin, but perseveringly finish: so says the apostle here, "I, Paul the aged, have fought the good fight, &c. have not only begun, but finished my course." O what a comfort is it to be an old soldier of Jesus Christ! St. Paul is now reckoned to be 61 years of age when he suffered martyrdom; he runs his race patiently, cheerfully, reservedly, and perseveringly. The third metaphor is taken from the depositaries, who faithfully keep things committed to their trust without embezzlement. This depositum, the christian faith, St. Paul had kept; *I have kept the faith:* he kept, first, the grace of faith, secondly, the doctrine of faith inviolable, endeavouring to transmit it down to posterity, in despite of the legal Jew, or the profane Gentile. Observe, 3. St. Paul's expectation of his reward: *henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* Here note, the reward is a crown of righteousness; because given only to righteous men; the person rewarding, Christ, the righteous Judge; the person rewarded, me, St. Paul himself, and all the faithful that love Christ's appearing. The certainty of the reward; *it is laid up,* reserved, and kept safe, as an inheritance for a child: the time of the reward: *in that day,* the great day of the Lord, when he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Learn hence, 1. That the reward, which God has in hand for his faithful servants, is no less than a crown of glory. 2. That the time when this reward shall be fully and finally dispensed is the great day. 3. It is the property of the godly to look, love, and long for that day.

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica: Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia,

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

Our apostle comes now, in this second part of the chapter, to treat of some private and personal affairs: and first, he desires Timothy to come speedily to him, having a great desire to see him, and be comforted by him, before he died: the strongest of christians may sometimes be helped by the weaker; a Paul may stand in need of a Timothy: there is not a member in the body, but is some way serviceable to the head. Secondly, he assigns a reason why he did thus desire Timothy's presence, because of Demas and others' absence; Demas had forsaken him, *having loved this present world*. The best may sometimes be forsaken by their bosom friends; Demas was such to St. Paul, yet left him: for what cause? For the love of the world. This, when it grows inordinate, will cause a man first to forsake his friend, and then his God. Thirdly, Crescens was gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, Tychicus to Ephesus; all of them, no doubt, to spread the gospel, to plant or water the churches. Good men will be doing good wherever they are, wherever they come or go. Only Luke was with him; nothing could separate that good man from him. A faithful friend loveth at all times; yet friendship (*ollæ amicitia*) will vanish in adversity; but true christian friendship is perpetual; the foundation of it is eternal. Lastly, He desires Timothy to bring Mark with him, not for rest or recreation, because he wanted a companion for his diversion; no, but to assist him in his work: *bring Mark: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*. It is happy when the ministers of God affect the company, and desire the presence of each other, for spiritual ends and religious purposes.

13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments.

St. Paul having desired Timothy's company at Rome, requests him to bring with him such things as he wanted, and stood in present need of. 1. His *cloak*; probably a garment which in the winter season he might want the warmth and benefit of, especially being in a cold prison. So long as we are upon earth, a prudential care must be taken to preserve our health: when winter approached, St. Paul sent for his winter garment to keep him warm: the body is the soul's organ or instrument by which it acts; therefore, we must do what in us lieth to keep it in tune for the service of the soul. 2. His *books*; probably the books of the

Old Testament; certainly no profane books; he had no leisure for, nor liking to any such. 3. *But especially the parchments*: these are thought to be note-books of his own collecting, in which he had written several things for the help of his memory, and the benefit of the church. Behold here, 1. An eminent pattern of pious studiousness in St. Paul: he was an aged man, an aged minister, that had already read much; a prisoner, no very proper place for study, were prisons then filled with such brutes as generally now; nay, a dying prisoner, one that looked for death and beheading every day; yet aged Paul, dying Paul, cannot live without his books; he must still be reading, learning, studying the scriptures, especially, which are such a vast deep, as the line of an apostle could not fathom: behold I say a pattern for such ministers as think they know enough, they have studied enough, and are too old to learn; so was not our apostle, when within a few months of his death. 2. Behold here an eminent pattern of pious humility in Timothy, if bishop of Ephesus now, as some affirm, if only a minister of a particular church as others affirm; yet was he undoubtedly a very humble person, otherwise, St. Paul had not desired, and Timothy had certainly disdained to carry this luggage with him to Rome. Pride would have stooped to nothing of this, but thrown all to the dunghill; whereas true humility disposes a man, especially a minister of Christ, to become all things to all men.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works.

15 Of whom be thou aware also: for he hath greatly withstood our words.

Here our apostle, 1. Complains of the injuries and opposition which he had met with from *Alexander the coppersmith*, who was before a great professor, but now become a grievous persecutor: he made shipwreck of the faith, 1 Tim. i. 19. which he did before profess; nay, it is thought this man, Acts xix. 33, was near martyrdom, yet afterwards an opposer of the truth. The best things corrupted, become worst, the sweetest wine makes the sharpest vinegar. Be not offended then, if at any time you see professors turn blasphemers; nay, preachers themselves turn persecutors. Observe, 2. An apostolical prediction, rather than a dreadful imprecation, passed upon Alexander; *the Lord reward him according to his works*. The Lord will reward him according to his works. The apostle by a prophetic spirit, saw what was coming upon him, and foretels his doom. Imprecations against the enemies of the church, if lawful, yet must be cautiously and very rarely used: what we find in scripture looking like such, are rather to be accounted predictions than imprecations. Observe, lastly, the caution given to Timothy to shun him; *of whom be thou aware also*, for he is an opposer of the truth. Wicked men do not so much oppose the ministers, as the ministry; not so much oppose preachers, as preaching: it is the light of truth which evil-doers hate; because it has a searching, discovering, condemning power. St. Paul doth not complain of Alexander's unkindness towards him, but of his malicious resisting the truth, and hindering the preaching of the gospel; *he hath greatly withstood our words*.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me; *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.

Our apostle here complains of the timorousness of weak christians in their carriage towards him, at his first appearing before Nero the emperor of Rome, or some of his officers; they deserted him, they all 'deserted him, very few durst own him: but this was out of weakness and timorousness, not out of maliciousness, as Alexander in the former verse; therefore, St. Paul prays for them. That *God would not lay it to their charge*, but pity and pardon their infirmity. Learn hence, How hard it will go with the holiest of saints, if God should lay but one sin, though a sin of infirmity, to their charge; it would sink them to the lowest hell. Lord! how sad must it then be to have the sins of the wicked man's whole life charged upon him! Learn, 2. That the holiest servants of God, in a suffering hour, may and must expect to be left alone, forsaken of all their friends, none daring to open their mouth, and speak a word for them: the apostle met with it here, and a greater than he before him; when Christ was apprehended, all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

17 Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and *I* was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

That is, "Though man forsook me, God stood by me; the Lord Jesus strengthened me, that by me, thus standing up in the defence of the gospel, the preaching of it might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear the defence of it; and thus, for that time, I was delivered out of Nero's hands, that bloody lion's mouth." Learn, 1. that whilst God has any farther work for his servants to do, he will assist and sustain them in despite of all opposition and discouragement whatsoever; though Nero roar, and persecutors rage, and friends desert, yet God will stand by, God will deliver, till his faithful servants have finished their work; *The Lord stood by me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*, says the holy apostle. See here the certain character of the church's enemies: they are lions; lions for power, lions for policy, lions for terror, lions for cruelty; God sometimes delivers his people, and saves them from, sometimes suffers his dearest children to fall into, the paws, yea, the mouths, of these devouring lions.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Mark, he doth not say, the Lord will deliver me from every evil worker, but *from every evil work*; though he doth not save me from my temporal enemies, blessed be God my
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spiritual enemies shall never hurt me, neither sin nor satan. Lord! it is a far greater favor to be preserved from sin, than from any temporal affliction that can befall us, yea, than from death itself; *The Lord will deliver me from every evil work*; yea, farther, *He will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom*; God has a kingdom, an heavenly kingdom for all his saints, his suffering saints especially; it is prepared for them, they are preparing for it, and they shall be put into the possession of it in due time. He closes with a doxology here: *To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen*. As God has prepared an eternal kingdom for his saints, so the desire that God may have glory from them to eternal ages: grace enlargeth the heart towards God, in fervent desires that his glory may be eternized.

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

Observe here, How mindful the apostle is of his absent friends; though he was now in prison, and they a great way from him, yet he sends pious salutations to them. This Prisca or Priscilla, and Aquila, are often remembered by St Paul, he lodged in their house at Corinth: the saints and servants of God forget not one another, when at the ends of the earth.—He salutes also Onesiphorus and his household, wife and children, and servants. Thus do pious governors procure a blessing upon their families as well as upon their persons. Onesiphorus is not only prayed for himself, and saluted singly, but likewise his household also; *Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus*.

20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Erastus is mentioned, Rom. xvi. 23, as chamberlain of the city of Corinth, one that showed kindness to Paul; he was a great man, the treasurer of the city of Corinth; yet neither his riches, nor his great place, could keep him from loving the apostle and the afflicted church of God. Rarely are great men good, and as rarely are good men great; yet some great men are good, and some good men are great. Lot and Abraham, Job and David were full of riches, yet full of piety, under the Old Testament: so were Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Zaccheus, under the New. Thus God magnifies the power of converting grace.—*Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick*. This man was a citizen of Ephesus, a disciple and companion of St Paul, Acts xx. whom he was forced to leave sick at Miletum. Note, Strength of grace cannot prevail against bodily weaknesses and diseases; sickness may seize even the best men. Note also, that the apostles had not the gift of healing, when they pleased, but only when God gave it them.

21 Do thy diligence to come before winter, Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

Our apostle being greatly desirous to see Timothy before his death, reneweth his request and suit to him to make haste and come before winter: the personal presence of good men

is much, very much desired by them, in order to excite and quicken each other. To encourage Timothy to hasten to him, he names several persons of note that were then at Rome, who sent salutations to him, and would rejoice to see him: but where were all these when our apostle was upon his trial? *Ans.* They all forsook him, and not one of them stood with him. Behold what frailty there may be! and what fear will do, in persons of choice note for eminency and grace in the church of God!

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

The apostle concludes this, like his other epistles, with an apostolical benediction, *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit*: as if he had said, "Be not sad at my departure; for, though I must leave thee, yet the Lord will uphold thee by his grace, and be present with thee by the influence of the

holy Spirit." The inward presence of Christ with the spirits of his people, directing their spirits in thinking, judging, choosing, and refusing, is a sweet privilege and greatly to be desired. Happy they who have the spirit of Christ perpetually present with them, who so live, that Christ may delight to dwell by his Spirit in them. *Grace be with you*, that is, with all of you; he doth not say, riches be with you, or honors be with you, or the favor of man be with you, but grace, and the favor of God be with you. God's special favor and distinguishing grace is to be sought by all persons, above and before all things.—Lastly, Our apostle ratifies and seals up all with that concluding particle, *Amen*; teaching us, that whatever we should pray for, should be rightly understood, firmly believed, and earnestly desired, and heartily consented to: they sin in prayer, who understand not what they pray for, and who do not earnestly desire what they pray for: for in testimony of our desires to be heard, we say, *Amen*.

THE

EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO

TITUS.

St. Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, are the church's canons which the Holy Ghost indited very sufficient to their use and end. O how happy had the church been in all ages, if strict canonical obedience had been paid, as well as sworn unto them.

Titus was a Gentile, converted early to Christianity by St. Paul, who having great experience of his piety and prudence, left him in Crete, to govern the church of God in that island.

This epistle to Titus is of the same nature, and wrote with the same design, as those to Timothy, only shorter; because Titus seems to have been the ancients and more experienced person; St. Paul briefly instructs him in all parts of his duty, in electing church governors, in censuring false teachers, in instructing the ancient and younger persons, in pressing upon all persons obedience to magistrates, and a care to maintain good works.

CHAPTER I.

Titus being placed by St. Paul in Crete, St. Paul writes to him how he ought to demean himself there, by appointing in every city bishops or elders, to teach and govern those that were already or should afterwards be converted to the faith of Christ; exhorting him to be very careful to make choice of worthy and fit persons into this high and honorable office, men of sound doctrine, and unblameable lives.

PAUL, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God, our Saviour.

4 To Titus mine own son, after the common faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

These verses contain the apostle's salutation, and the first part of this chapter; in which, observe, 1. The person saluting, described by his name, Paul; by his general office, *a servant of God*; by his special office, *an apostle of Jesus Christ*, by the end of his office to *preach the faith*, and thereby to promote the faith of God's elect, and to bring persons to the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the gospel, which is truth according to godliness. Learn hence, that the great design and end of preaching the gospel, is, to produce faith in the heart, and holiness or godliness in the life, of those that sit under it; not that common notional, and intellectual faith, which is oftentimes found in unholy persons; but that lively faith, which is elsewhere called *The faith of the operation of God*, and here, *The faith of God's elect*; even such a faith as is the parent and principle of obedience. Observe, 2. The apostle declares a farther end of his office, namely, to raise christians up to a lively hope and expectation of that *eternal life, which that God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began*. But how could God then promise, when there was none to promise to? *Ans* The promise was made to Christ, and in him to all his members: for there was a federal transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity; the Son promised to give his soul an offering for sin, and the Father engaged that he should see his seed, and the travail of his soul. Observe, 3. How God, who promised us in Christ eternal life, before all time, did accomplish and make good that word in the fulness of time. Verse 3. "He hath in due time manifested his word through preaching;" that is, what God

so long ago purposed in himself, and promised to his Son, he hath in the fittest appointed seasons, made manifest by the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to me by the appointment of God and Christ. Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation is much more clearly revealed to us that live under the gospel, than it was to the fathers of the Old Testament: life and immortality, that is, the clearer knowledge, and more full assurance of eternal life, is now brought about, by the preaching of the gospel. Observe, 4. The person saluted, Titus described by his relation, *St. Paul's son in the faith*; he begat him by his ministry unto God, was the instrument of his conversion to christianity: *his son after the common faith*. Where note, that the church hath but one faith, common to all christians, it has one common object of faith, Christ crucified; it has one common end of faith, eternal salvation: this is the end of every believer's faith and hope. Observe, lastly, The salutation itself: "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour;" that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings, I most heartily wish unto you from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our worthy Mediator. Learn hence, that whatever spiritual grace, or temporal blessing we now receive from God, is from him not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours forth the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kinds of blessings unto us.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

Observe here, 1. The erection of a power in the person of Titus: *I left thee in Crete to ordain elders*: "I who am an apostle of Christ, and have received a commission from him thus to do. *I left thee*, thee who wert so dear to me, so useful to me; yet, for the church's service, did I deny myself and part with thee." Behold here a blessed pattern for our ministerial imitation. St. Paul did, and could, most cheerfully sacrifice all his private advantages, the tenderest and inmost of his affection to the benefit of the church, and the interest of religion; let us go and do likewise. Observe, 2. The end of this institution, or the use and exercise of this power, to order and to ordain, corrupt and constitute; 1. *To set in order things that are wanting*: the ship of the church is never so well rigged, but something is wanting that might be added: whilst the tabernacle of God sojourns here below, some pin or other will be lacking in it. 2. *To ordain elders in every city*, such as might govern and teach, and administer to God in holy things; wherever a church is planted, there is an absolute necessity of a settled ministry, and a succession of ministers, without which it is impossible that religion should either prosper or long continue: and care must be taken, that such ministers be duly qualified, and regularly ordained, "I left thee in Crete to ordain elders." Observe, 3. The limitation of these acts, according to the apostle's prescription, *as I had appointed thee*. Thus must do nothing but according to commission, and by special direction. Where note, that the ordering and governing of the church was not left arbitrary, no, not to Titus himself: but whatever he did, was done by apostolical direction:

"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee."

6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, and accused of riot, or unruly.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Here St. Paul gave Titus, as he had before done Timothy, the character of such persons as were to be admitted into the sacred function. The character is two-fold, positive and negative; he shows them both what they should be, and what they should not be. The positive characters of a bishop, yes, of every one that administers to God in holy things, are these: he must be *blameless*, free from scandal, not blame-worthy, a minister's life should be so bright and shining, that all persons who behold it may admire it and guide their lives by the direction and example of it. *The husband of one wife*; that is, at once; the apostle's command doth not forbid successive marriages; for this he elsewhere allows; see the note on 1 Tim. iii. 2. Nor does the command oblige him to marry at all, but it establishes the lawfulness of a bishop's marriage, if he sees reason for it; yet, no doubt, by these words, *The husband of one wife*, St. Paul proposes a greater degree of chastity to church-governors than to other persons. *Having faithful children not accused of riot, or unruly* Titus must not only look at the person he is to ordain, but to the family and household of the person ordained, that they be well governed, because the honor of religion, and the reputation of the church suffers exceedingly, when any of the bishop's family, his children especially, are riotous and unruly; besides, the world will pronounce them unfit to govern the church of God, that cannot command their own families. *As the steward of God*; the steward is an appointed and deputed officer, he acts by commission, and distributes his Lord's allowance, according to his Lord's command, and is accountable for all he does; and as he is over the inferior servants, so must he be a pattern and president for them; a steward must be both wise and faithful: *A lover of hospitality, sober, temperate*; mark, of hospitality, not of luxury and sensuality; as he commands hospitality, so he regulates it too, *a lover of hospitality, yet sober and temperate*; riotous housekeeping is not hospitality in St. Paul's account, but the liberal and free relieving of such as are in necessities and straits: *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught*. He must be a person well instructed, well settled and confirmed in the faith, of ability to defend the faith, and to stop the mouths of gainsayers:—*Just, holy, and a lover of good men*, a person of

strict holiness and piety towards God, of exact righteousness and justice towards man, and a sincere lover of all good men. These are the positive characters required in a bishop. The negatives follow, and they are five; *not self-willed*; not so adhering to his own resolutions, that nothing can divorce him from them; he that is of an inflexible will had need be of an infallible judgment; *not soon angry*, and subject to passion, for he stands in God's place, and ought to resemble God in long-suffering and patience; *not given to wine*; that is, to much wine, no inordinate lover of it, no sinner at wine, either in his own house or elsewhere; *no striker* either with the hand, or with the tongue; *not given to filthy lucre*, seeking to get wealth by sordid ways and means; the sin of covetousness is not so base in any man as in a minister; many are unjustly charged with it, but where it is really found it is a sordid sin. How unfit is he to administer in holy things to God, who prefers the world before God? By making a god of the world we make an idol of God.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision:

11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

A reason is here subjoined by our apostle, why Titus should take such special care to fill the church with able guides, namely, because there were a multitude of false teachers dispersed abroad, and scattered up and down every where, particularly, the Judaizing doctors, those of the circumcision, mentioned, Acts xv, who would make christianity nothing more than a supplement to the law of Moses. These, he tells Titus, must have their mouths stopped, not by force, for Titus had no power of the sword, but by confutation; he must take care to ordain such as might silence them, though not satisfy them. For, mark the efficacy of error, and the power of seduction, *they subvert whole houses*, they make proselytes without number. Learn hence, that such is the strength of error, and the weakness and unsteadiness of many christians, that whole households may be subverted by the most gross deceivers. If the apostle's converts were thus easily and universally misled, no wonder if ours be so.

12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

13 This witness is true: Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from truth.

The next argument Paul makes use of to excite Titus to take great care how he behaved himself at Crete, and what bishops he left there, is drawn from the quality and

nature of the people in that island of Crete, where God's providence and the apostle's care had placed him: he tells him that one of their own prophets or poets, Epimenides, had given this character of them. That the Cretians were a lazy and a lying people, ready enough to be misled by the false teachers, particularly the Judaizing doctors, who imposed circumcision and other ceremonial rites upon them, which were now old fables, but tended to pervert men from the truth: therefore, he charges Titus to reprove sharply and cuttingly, *that they may be sound in the faith*. The word is a metaphor taken from surgeons, who cut out dead flesh to the quick, but it is in order to healing; cutting words have done great cures: many a diseased, festering soul has been made sound both in faith and manners, by severe reprehension. Learn hence, That although generally speaking, we ought to temper our reproofs with much gentleness and meekness, yet there is a time when we must reprove sharply, *that men may be sound in the faith*. We may, we must speak cutting words, when kind words will not do.

15 Unto the pure all things are pure: But unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.—

Here our apostle intimates what those Jewish traditions and fables were, which those judaizing doctors and false teachers would obtrude and impose upon persons at that time, namely, pretences that men were defiled by eating things unclean, by not observing their days, and keeping other ceremonial rites. But, says the apostle, *unto the pure all things are pure*; that is, to believers who are sanctified by the christian faith, and purified from sin and guilt, all meats, and days, and things of this nature are clean and lawful, and may without sin be used, every creature being sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Here note, The honorable title which a gracious and merciful God puts upon good men, notwithstanding they have much impurity and sin inhering in them, and many sinful weaknesses and infirmities cleaving to them, yet God calls them pure. *Unto the pure, &c.* they are now initially so, and shall ere long be perfectly so. Note, 2. A privilege purchased for them by the blood of Christ, and that is, the lawful liberty and use of all meats, &c. under the gospel, which were prohibited by, and forbidden under the ceremonial law; *unto the pure all things are now pure*.

—But unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, *is* nothing pure;

Mark, He doth not say, to the defiled all things are unclean, but, *nothing is pure*; they pollute all they touch: to an unsanctified man nothing is sanctified; whatever he does is unclean, either in the matter, in the manner, or in the end of his doing it; and the reason follows, because *their mind and conscience is defiled*. No wonder the streams are polluted, when the fountains are poisoned. *The mind and conscience are defiled*, partly by blindness, partly by stupidity and senselessness.

16 They profess that they know God;

but in works they deny *him*, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Behold here the dismal character of many hypocritical persons in the Jewish church: they professed the knowledge of God, the true God; but in their works, in their lives and actions they denied him, and so became abominable both to God and man, disobedient to the law, and averse to every good work. Here learn, 1. That hypocrites are generally great professors; they profess great knowledge of God, and great zeal for him. 2. That to deny God is a very heinous sin, and an abominable wickedness: there is a twofold denial of God; first in works, expressly and openly; secondly, in practice, closely and consequentially; "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." There may be at once a professing of God, and a denial of him: many a man's practice speaks loud, that there is no God, when he makes a fair confession and profession of him with his mouth and tongue. Learn, 3. That no sorts of persons are so odious to God, and abominable in his sight, as those who make a profession of his holy name and truth, but walk contrary in their lives to that profession.

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle in this chapter directs Titus how to discharge his duty faithfully as a minister of Christ, in preaching the gospel, advising him to instruct all, both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants, in the practice of their relative and respective duties one towards another, that God might be glorified, and religion adorned: and here, first, he instructs him in general to preach to the people wholesome and sound doctrine; and then directs him particularly to apply that doctrine to the several sorts and conditions of men.

BUT speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.

As if our apostle had said, whatever the forementioned judaizing doctors preach, though they dote upon dreams, and feed their hearers with fables, and fancies, to poison and corrupt their souls, and turn them from the truth; be sure that thou carriest thyself as becomes a sound preacher of the gospel, and speak only the things that become sound doctrine: the body may as soon be nourished with carrion, as the soul with rotten and unsound doctrine. Christian doctrine is sound doctrine: and the ministers of Christ, who feed his people, must take care that they bring such wholesome doctrine, to their people, as may contribute greatly to their spiritual health and soundness; "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."

2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience:

By aged men, we may understand all ancient men in general, and church officers in particular, in whom our apos-

He requires and calls for gravity and sobriety in behaviour, temperance in all things, that they be *sound in faith*, sincere in *charity*, and constant in *patience*. Where note, That our apostle exempleth none from the instructions, admonitions, and exhortations of the ministers of God. God's school is as well for the aged as the young, not only for initiating youth, but also for edifying the aged, and building them up in their most holy faith; the aged have but a little time to be in the world, their nature declines, their days are almost ended, they must therefore labor to recompense a decay of nature with increase of grace, the weakness of body with strength of faith: *Let the aged men be sound in the faith*. Note farther, That sobriety, gravity, temperance, soundness in the faith, eminent charity, and exemplary patience, are the great ornaments of persons in their old age.

3 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children:

5 *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Instructions are here given for the aged women, as before for the aged men, that is, for all in general: and such aged women in particular as were deaconesses, or servants to the church, that they being placed in the rank of church officers should act and walk as becometh holy persons employed about holy things; particularly, that their deportment and behaviour be such, both in habit and gesture, as becometh holiness, that they be not *false accusers*, devils, the original signifies, because false accusing is the devil's work; they that do his work shall bear his name: *Not given to much wine*; excess in drinking is bad in men, worse in women, worst of all in old women, who ought to be patterns of piety and prudence, of sobriety and temperance, to the younger women; for St. Paul here directs them to *teach the younger*; that is, by their private admonitions and prudent examples, instruct them to be wise and sober, not light and airy; and to love their husbands and children in a fit and becoming manner, and to show it in their behaviour; discreet and chaste in all their actions, keeping at home and minding the affairs of the family; to be kind and obedient to their husbands, lest the miscarriages of young women should bring reproach upon religion, and the gospel be thought by the men of the world to infuse any thing into them contrary to moral virtue. Learn hence, That the wholesome doctrine of the gospel must be preached and practically applied to women as well as to men, as they cannot, without the danger of damnation, despise or neglect the ministry of the word.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

Note here, 1. That the ministers of God must apply themselves and their doctrine to the several sexes, ages and conditions of their people; that every person, man and woman, young and old, superior and inferior, may know not only what is lawful, but what is expedient, most becoming their quality, and best becoming their age. Here our apostle directs Titus to exhort first the aged men, next the aged women; now the younger men, that they be *sober-minded*, settled in the truth, governed by sound judgment, not governed by passion, not led by sense and appetite, not pulled up with proud conceit: where it is observable, that St. Paul's warnings here given in this chapter to the aged men, the aged women, and the younger men, do intimate to us what vices they are that all persons are subject to, and most endangered by; and this is the wise improvement that all should make of it, to watch against the sins of their age and condition, their complexion and constitution, their calling and vocation, every sin that doth so easily beset them, and obstructs and hinders them in their christian course.

7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: In doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.

8 Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having *no evil* thing to say of you.

St. Paul having directed Titus what doctrine to preach, comes now to instruct him what example to lead: *in all things show thyself a pattern of good works*; as if he had said, in all the good which thou exhortest thy hearers to, be an eminent pattern of it thyself: that they may see that visibly in thy life, which thou presentest upon them by thy preaching. By piety and good works second thy doctrine; there must be a sweet harmony between a minister's doctrine and his conversation; otherwise he pulls down faster than he builds up: an heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell. He closes this admonition to Titus concerning preaching, with this solemn charge, namely, that his doctrine be sound and profitable, sincere without mixture, grave without levity, sound words, that can never be confuted by gainsayers, which must be expected; but happy will you be if they can have nothing justly to charge your doctrine or conversation with. Learn hence, That the ministers of God have ever had, and must always expect some that will withstand, oppose and gainsay them, as long as there is a devil in the world; and so long as the ministers of God endeavour to batter down the wall of his kingdom, he will raise storms about their ears. Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and must be the care and endeavour of all the ministers of God, to oblige themselves to such an exemplary piety of conversation, as may stop the mouth of slander, *that the contrary party may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say against them*.

9 *Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all things; not answering again;

10 Not purloining, but showing all good

fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Although Titus, according to some, was a bishop, yea, an archbishop, yet St. Paul exhorts him to look upon the instruction of servants as one part of his charge. *Exhort servants*; the souls of the poorest slaves, and servants, for whom the Son of God died, must be of precious account with, and be particularly concerned for, by the highest ambassador of Christ: as all souls had an equal price, so must they have an equal care. Observe, 2. The general duty which servants are exhorted to, and that is *obedience to their own masters*, in all honest and lawful things, whether their masters were pagans or christians; if pagans, not thinking that their christianity freed them from their just commands; if christian masters, not thinking that they had therefore a greater liberty to be saucy with them, or less obedient to them. Observe, 3. The particular duties here pressed upon servants. 1. *Not answering again*, not crossing or contradicting what they are commanded, not saucily replying when they are reprov'd. 2. *Not purloining*, that is, not stealing the least thing, nor taking any thing that is their master's, which is not allowed by their consent, but showing all conscionable trustiness, and that great fidelity and honesty may be found with them. Observe, 4. The argument or motive to stir up servants to this conscionable care and conscientious discharge of their duty, "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," that is, that they may put honor upon Christ and his holy religion, by beautifying their christian profession by a suitable and becoming conversation. Learn hence, That it is in the power of the poorest and meanest servant to do much good or much hurt to the christian religion: some might be ready to say, Alas! What good or hurt, what credit or discredit can a poor servant do to religion? Much every way: he may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by his christian behaviour as a servant, and the name of God and his doctrine may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty. None are so little and inconsiderable, but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, capable of doing good service for God on earth, and of being eternally rewarded by God in heaven.

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

12 Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

As if the apostle had said, Let all sorts of men, servants and masters, children and parents, old and young, discharge their duties faithfully to God and one another: for the grace of God discovered in the gospel, has appeared to all men, teaching them to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly, and all worldly lusts of sensuality, and that we should live soberly, with respect to ourselves, righteously and charitably towards our neighbour, and holily towards God in this present world. Note here, 1. A choice and excellent description of the gospel; it is *the grace of God*, that is, the doctrine of God's free grace and gratuitous favor declared in Christ to poor sinners. Note, 2. The

joyful message which the gospel brings, and that is salvation: the gospel makes a gracious tender of salvation, and that universally to lost and undone sinners. Note, 3. The clear light and evidence that it does hold forth this message in and by; it has appeared or shined forth like the day star, or the rising sun. Note, 4. The extent of its glorious beams, how far they reach, to all indefinitely, *The grace of God bringing salvation has appeared to all men*; that is, it is tendered to all without restriction or limitation. 1. As to nations, Jew or Gentile; 2. As to persons, rich or poor, bond or free; 3. Without restriction, as to the number and greatness of their sins; 4. Without restriction, in reference to the degree of their graces. Note, 5. The great lesson which the gospel teaches, negative and positive: 1. Negative, *To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*; where, by *ungodliness*, understand all sins committed against the first table; by *worldly lusts*, all sins committed against the second table; called *worldly lusts*, because the object of them is worldly things, and because they are the lusts of worldly men. 2. Positive, *to live*. 1. *Soberly*; he begins with our duty to ourselves, then to our neighbour, and last of all to God, and so proceeds from the easier to the harder duties: and observe the connexion, *soberly and righteously, and godly*, not disjunctively; as if to live soberly, righteously, or in pretence godly, were sufficient. A sobriety in speech, in behaviour, in apparel, in eating and drinking, in recreations, and in the enjoyment of lawful satisfactions. 2. *Righteously*, exercising justice and charity towards our neighbour: he that is uncharitable, is unjust and unrighteous, and the unrighteous shall no more enter into the kingdom of God, than the unholy: and all a person's pretences to godliness are but hypocrisy, without righteousness towards our neighbour. 3. *Godly*; Godliness has an internal and external part; the internal and inward part of godliness consists in a right knowledge of him, in a fervent love unto him, in an entire trust and confidence in him, in a holy fear to offend him, in subjecting our wills entirely to him, in holy longings for the fruition and enjoyment of him. The external and outward part of godliness consists in adoration and bodily worship; this is due to God from us; he was the Creator of the body as well as of the soul, the Redeemer of the body as well as of the soul, and will glorify the body as well as the soul; therefore are we to glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are the Lord's. Note, 6. The time when, and the place where this lesson is to be learnt, *in this present world*. Here is the place, and now is the time when this duty of living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, is to be performed by us. Learn, That a sober, righteous and godly life, in this present world, is absolutely necessary in order to our obtaining the happiness and glory of the world to come. Inference: If so, what a cheat doth that man put upon his soul, who trusts to a death-bed repentance? Be it never so sincere, how can it be said to be a living soberly, righteously and godly in this world, when just stepping into eternity?

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Observe here, 1. The character given of that reward which the gospel promises to them that live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; this is described

1. By its futurity, it is *hope*, something expected, and to come; 2. By its transcendency, it is a blessed hope. Learn, That the christian's hope (or the good things hoped for) is laid up, not in this world but in the other; because this world, and this present state, is not capable of that happiness which the christian hopes for. It is too great, it is too good for earth, it is laid up in heaven. Observe, 2 The time and season when this glorious reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed and given forth unto the godly, and that is, at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Where note, A threefold description of Christ. 1. By the immensity of his Deity, he is the great God. 2. By the graciousness of his office, our Saviour. 3. By the glory of his advent, or appearance, "looking for the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Observe, 3. The christian's duty, with reference and relation to this reward, and to the appearance of Christ, when it shall be dispensed and given forth, namely, to look and long for that joyful hour. Learn, That the great duty incumbent on all the people of God, is to be continually looking and longing for, hoping and expecting of, the coming and appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; looking for the blessed hope, &c.

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Observe here, 1. The way and manner how Christ came to be our Saviour, He gave himself for us. Note, 1. The giver, Christ, he gave. 2 The gift, himself. 3. The persons for whom he gave himself, for us. Learn, 1. That all that Jesus Christ suffered, he did sustain and undergo freely and voluntarily. 2. That that which Christ gave for our redemption, was himself. 3. That it was especially for his church, that he gave himself, who gave himself for us. Observe, 2. The great ends for which Christ gave himself for his church, and they are two: 1. To redeem them from all iniquity. 2. To purify them a peculiar people to himself. 1. To redeem them from iniquity; redemption supposes a thralldom and bondage; redemption from iniquity supposes a thralldom and bondage to sin and iniquity: our Redeemer therefrom is Jesus Christ, and by dying for us, he did, and only could redeem us: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." 2. Another end of Christ's redeeming us, is to purify us to himself a peculiar people. Here note, That as redemption did presuppose a bondage, so purification, supposes an uncleanness, that is, sin. Note, 2. That Christ's redeemed people are a purified people, and a peculiar people, possessed by the Spirit of Christ, with a zeal for good works. Note, 3 That it was not only for us that Christ redeemed and purified us a peculiar people to himself, but ultimately for himself, and for his own and his Father's glory and complacency; that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

15 These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

As if he had said, Let these necessary practical truths be the subject-matter of thy preaching, and according to the authority of thy office rebuke gainsayers, and let thy doc-

trine and behaviour in wisdom and gravity be such, as may keep and preserve thee from all contempt. The ministers of Christ are to take especial care that they neither expose their persons nor their office, by any indecencies to contempt; Let no man despise thee.

CHAPTER III.

In the former chapters our apostle instructed Titus, that he should, in the exercise of his ministry, propound the several offices and duties of christianity unto several estates and conditions of persons; to men and women, to young and old; that so they might be good in all relations, and live religiously in every capacity.

Now in this concluding chapter of his epistle, he directs Titus to preach and press more general duties which concern all mankind, as, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man; to show meekness to all men, to be careful to maintain good works; because the false apostles, instead of pressing the necessity of a good life, did amuse the people with idle notions, foolish questions, and endless disputes. Accordingly, St. Paul doth thus bespeak him:

PUT them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.

Observe here, That in those early days of christianity, great scandal was brought upon religion by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates; and this upon a false notion of christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false apostles, Judaizing teachers, and gnostic libertines: whereupon he requires Titus to put christians in mind of their duty in that particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the christian religion might not be slandered upon this account. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers." Learn hence, That the duty of subjection to governors and government, and of obedience to magistrates and rulers, is of very great importance, and ought to be enforced and frequently inculcated upon the people by the ministers of God; because by nature all men desire liberty, and to cast off the yoke of God: every one would rule and govern, although the duty of subjection be much the easier duty. 2. From St. Paul's pressing Titus to preach up the doctrine of obedience and subjection to governors and government, learn, that there is no such way and method to bring the world to live regularly under government, like planting the gospel among them, and making them subject to our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.

Calumny and evil-speaking has been a reigning vice in all ages, and a greater guilt is contracted by it than men apprehend: every man ought to be as just to his neigh-

hour's reputation as his own? If what we report of another we know to be false, it is downright lying; if what we report of others we believe to be false, it is slander; if what evil we report of others be really true, and we know it to be so, yet it is defamation, and contrary to that charity and goodness which christianity requires; for to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity, is certainly a sin, and included in this apostolical prohibition: to think and speak evil of others, is not only a bad thing but a sign of a bad man; and in many cases it is as great charity to conceal an evil we hear of our neighbour, as it is to relieve him in his distress. The next exhortation is, *to be no brawlers*; in the original, *no fighters*! that is neither with tongue nor hand, but meek and gentle, putting up a double wrong, rather than revenging a single injury, using all meekness towards all men. Meekness pacifies wrath, and conquers animosity to a wonder, making him tame and gentle, who by opposition is furious and implacable; the hardest flint is sooner broken upon a pillow or cushion that gently yieldeth, than upon a bar of iron that furiously resisteth.

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Here we have a very weighty reason laid down by our apostle, why christians should be found in the practice of the forementioned virtues of equity and lenity, of patience and charity, of meekness and long-suffering one towards another; namely, because before their conversion they themselves lived in the practices of the forementioned vices as well as others, *we ourselves also were foolish, disobedient, &c.* that is, the servants of sin, and slaves to our lusts, suffering wrath to rest in our bosoms till it boiled up to revenge; having formerly, therefore, been such ourselves, we ought to pity rather than spurn at those that are so still. No argument will more effectually incline and dispose us to pity the miscarriages of others, than the consideration, that we ourselves are prone unto, and have heretofore been guilty of the same, or the like provocations ourselves.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

As if our apostle had said, though in our heathenish and unconverted state, we were as bad and vile as any, yet no sooner did the loving-kindness of God to fallen man appear, by the illumination of the gospel, and the communication of his grace, not for any good works or deserts of ours, but of mere mercy and free goodness, he saved us from that state

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of sin and misery by regeneration, signified and sealed in baptism, and by renewing of the Holy Ghost, which holy Spirit was poured forth in an extraordinary measure upon us (according to promise) after Christ's resurrection. Here observe, how every person in the Trinity acts distinctly in the work of our salvation: 1. The fountal cause, the spring and source of our happiness, lies in the kindness and love of God the Father. 2. The meritorious and procuring cause of the application of this love, is Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption and mediation. 3. The immediate and efficient cause of the communication of that love of God the Father, procured through the mediation of Christ the Son, is the holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.

—Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;

That is, which holy Spirit was in its gifts and graces plentifully poured forth upon us, and dwelleth in us, not essentially, but energetically, illuminating, guiding, strengthening and confirming of us: and the end of God herein, is, *that being justified by his grace*, that is, by faith in his Son, *we should be made heirs of eternal life, according to the hope* which the promises of God have given us thereof. Learn hence, 1. That all the grace which is so plentifully poured forth upon believers, is by the means and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Learn, 2. That justification being a sinner's absolution from guilt and punishment by the satisfaction of Christ the Redeemer, is yet an act of special grace, and free favor in God, *that being justified by his grace*. Learn, 3. that it is the blessed privilege of all justified persons, that they are now heirs to, and ere long shall be possessors of eternal life; they shall ere long have in hand, what now they possess in hope; *being justified by grace, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life*.

8 *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works, these things are good and profitable unto men.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, spoken of justification by grace without works of righteousness, doth here immediately give a strict and solemn charge to Titus, to press the necessity of good works, upon those who did believe and embrace the gospel, on purpose to prevent all mistake and abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, and free grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ; intimating, that they who are justified by the faith of the gospel should be so far from thinking themselves hereby excused from good works, that they ought, upon that account, to be the more careful to maintain and practise them, because by the very profession of the christian faith and religion, they have solemnly engaged themselves so to do. Observe here,

11 D

1. That the great design of christianity, and the end of God in the revelation of the gospel was to reform the lives and manners of men, and to oblige all persons both to be good, and to do good. Learn, 2. From the apostle's vehement asseveration, *this is a faithful saying*, and his solemn charge, *these things I will that thou affirm constantly*; that there have been persons in all ages, who have exalted the virtue of faith, if not intentionally, yet indiscreetly, to the prejudice and neglect of a good life. As if by a mere speculative belief and profession of christianity, men were discharged from the practice of moral duties. God grant that the decried morality of some persons may be an integral part of my religion. Learn, 3. That though good works are not necessary before justification to bring us into a justified state, yet are they necessary after justification in order to our continuance in that state:—*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, that is, before faith*: but he doth not exclude the works of righteousness in the least, that they should hereafter do, by virtue of the new nature given to them, from being conditions of their future happiness. As morality doth not make faith useless, so neither doth faith bring any excuse for immorality. Learn, 4. That it is not sufficient that believers do good works, but they must *maintain* good works; the word signifies they must be patterns and precedents, they must be eminent and excelling in good works: and let their faith be never so excellent, if they do not add to their faith, virtue, it is but fancy, a strong faith built upon a weak foundation.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

We have the same charge given to Timothy, 1 Epist. i. 4. See the note upon it. And learn hence, that disputes about matters, which only serve to beget strife and contention, and tend little to our edification in faith and holiness, are vain talk and unprofitable disputes, to be declined and avoided by all wise and serious christians; *avoid foolish questions, for they are unprofitable and vain.*

10 A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject:

11 Knowing that he who is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

As if the apostle had said, avoid and shun, and refuse communion with him that doth obstinately persist in dangerous errors and heresies, and accordingly let him be excommunicated. Learn hence, 1. Who is an *heretic* in the apostle's sense, even he who is perverted from the true faith, and holds opinions which subvert the foundations of it; and one who is condemned in his own conscience, and sins against his own convictions: for the apostle here bids Titus not inform him of his errors, but admonish him of his faults; which shows, that the crime lay not in his head, in his understanding, but in his will and affections: for no man, who acts according to his judgment and conscience, how erroneous soever, is self-condemned in that action. Learn, 2. That even heretics themselves ought to be tenderly and

lovingly dealt with, so long as there is any hope that they may be gained or won. Learn, 3. That the charity of the church, in her censure of excommunication, aims rather at the cutting off of errors than of persons.

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me at Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

Our apostle having finished all such common precepts as respected the whole church in Crete, he now passeth to such private affairs as did more particularly respect the person of Titus and himself. First, he desires Titus to come to him to Nicopolis from Crete, but not before he had sent thither Artemas or Tychicus to officiate in his place: wonderful care of the holy apostle! And a mighty concern for the welfare of all the churches! St. Paul very well knew how fatal and dangerous it might be to the churches to be left destitute of their spiritual guides, though for a very small time. St. Paul knew the malice of the devil, the subtilty of seducers, and the weakness of christians' faith, too well, to give all, or any of them, advantages of doing mischief in the absence of Titus from them.

13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Here we have a second private affair which is given in charge to Titus, namely, that he help forward on their journey Zenas and Apollos, both apostolic men; the former an expounder of the law of Moses, the other an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures; both these cleaved to St. Paul, and therefore were worthily to be respected by Titus, whom the apostle therefore bids him be kind and courteous to, and help them forward in their journey. Learn thence, that christianity is no enemy to, but a great promoter of all offices of humanity and civil courtesy towards all persons, towards strangers particularly, towards good men especially. Observe next, St. Paul desires Titus to take care that those servants of God be so supplied, that they lack nothing: such as are engaged in the Lord's work must be carefully provided for, and care taken that they lack nothing.

14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

Let ours, that is, either 1. Those of our order, the ministers of the gospel, or those that are our converts, such as are christians, let them study to excel in good works, be diligent in the labors of their calling, that they may have wherewith to supply the necessities of others, to the intent that they may not appear *unfruitful*. Learn hence, that as christianity is no barren and fruitless profession, but all persons professing religion ought to take care, that good works may accompany their faith; so the ministers of Christ in special ought to be careful herein, and by no means to bind that duty upon others which they do not practise themselves, they must by charity and good works, second their doctrine, and so win persons to a love of religion.

13 All that are with me salute thee.—

By these words St. Paul gives Titus to understand that all the christians that were then with him did embrace him, with an endearing and loving affection, and would have their mindfulness of him witnessed by a kind and familiar salutation. These salutations had more in them than humanity, civility, and common courtesy; they were attestations of a truly christian love and brotherly affection, of one member of Christ towards another for grace's sake.

—Greet them that love us in the faith.

That is, as christians, as brethren, and fellow-members

in Christ, *verus amicus qui vere et in Deo diligit*. Grace binds man to man in the strongest and most indissoluble bonds and ties.

—Grace be with you all Amen.

This is the salutation of St. Paul, always written with his own hand, in all his epistles; although the epistles themselves were writ by others. he did it to prevent counterfeits, that no spurious writings might be obtruded upon the church; and whereas he says, *Grace be with you all*, it plainly intimates, that although this epistle be written by name to Titus, that yet it was intended for the benefit and advantage of the whole church.

THE

EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO

PHILEMON.

This epistle was writ to a particular person, and upon a particular occasion. The person was Philemon, an eminent officer of the church of Colosse; and, as some say, successor to Timothy, as bishop of Ephesus. The occasion this: Onesimus a naughty servant, running away from his master Philemon, and carrying away probably something of his master's substance with him, by the providence of God comes to Rome, where St. Paul was now a prisoner and preacher in bonds: God blessed the apostle's ministry for the conversion of this fugitive, who was brought to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and after his conversion, for a time, administered to St. Paul in prison; but the apostle understanding that he was another man's servant, and particularly his dear friend Philemon's, sends him back to his master, earnestly desiring him to pardon him, and to receive him into favor.

PAUL, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer.

2 And to our beloved Appia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house:

3 Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Observe here, 1. The writer of this epistle described by his name, *Paul*; by his condition, a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*; by his office, a *laborer*, a *soldier*, a *fellow-laborer*, and a *fellow-soldier* with Philemon and Archippus. Where note, That to be a laborer, a soldier and a prisoner for Jesus Christ, are the titles that St. Paul glories in, and not in worldly dignities, *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ*; yet was

Paul a prisoner in *libera custodia*, not so closely confined, but he had pen, ink, and paper; God gave Paul then, as Joseph before, favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison: let persecutors send their saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn. Happy was it for thee, Onesimus, that Paul was sent to gaol; his imprisonment was the happy occasion of thy spiritual liberty. Observe, 2. The persons to whom the epistle is directed; first, and eminently to Philemon the master, and to Appia the mistress of the family, in which, and with whom Onesimus had dwelt, but was now run from. St. Paul writes to both, judging the mistress' consent necessary for taking this fugitive back into her family, as well as the master's: intimating thereby, that although the husband, by the ordinance and appointment of God, has the highest place, the first and chief power in the government of the family, yet the wife being given him of God, as an assistant and fellow helper in government, her subordinate authority given her by God is to be owned and acknowledged. Next, this epistle is directed to Archippus, who dwelt with, or near Philemon: him he calls his fellow-soldier, and Philemon his fellow-laborer. Where note, that the ministers of the gospel are compared to soldiers: they have enemies to encounter and conflict with, satan's temptations, the world's persecutions, sinner's corrupt lusts and affections. Let the ministers of God then reckon beforehand upon a toilsome and troublesome life; if they resolve to be faithful, the devil will plant all his artillery against them. Last of all, the epistle is directed to the church in Philemon's house; by which some understand the company of christians that met together at his house to worship God; for christians then had not liberty publicly to perform that duty. Others understand it of Philemon's own family, which speaks at once Philemon's privilege and duty, that he had such a well ordered family, that it was a little church; that is, it was a lively image and representation of the church, both in its doctrine and worship.

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.

Observe here, our apostle's holy insinuation and pious wisdom; that he might make a more easy way for his petition, he labors to possess Philemon with an opinion of his endeared affection towards him, and of his continual prayers even by name for him; "I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers." Where note, that St. Paul did, and we may make particular mention of persons and churches in our daily prayers to Almighty God; I make mention of thee always in my prayers.

5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual, by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love; because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Our apostle having discovered to Philemon his fervent prayers for him, next makes mention of the excellent graces which were so orient and shining in him, namely, his faith and his love; his faith in Christ produced love to him and to all saints; not to a party of christians only; *hearing of thy love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and in him toward all the saints*. The saints are to be loved next to Christ, and in and for Christ. Observe next, St. Paul prays that Philemon's faith and love might be made manifest to be effectual by producing all sorts of good fruits in him and by him: that the communication of thy faith may become effectual. Observe, lastly, the great joy and consolation which the apostle had in the operativeness of Philemon's faith and love, whereby the bowels of the saints were greatly refreshed. Learn hence, that administering to the necessities of the saints, and relieving the bowels of the distressed members of Jesus Christ, is a blessed evidence of the sincerity of our love to Christ and christians: there is a frozen charity and a lip love found among many professors, whom Christ will disown at the great day; but such as, by offices of kindness, performed with a tender and pitiful heart, do refresh the bowels of the saints. Christ reckons it as done unto himself, whatever is done to those his suffering members, Mat. xxv. and God himself is thereby refreshed, Phil. iv. 18, "An odor of a sweet smell, and a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." Note, lastly, What the condition of the holiest and best of God's servants in the world has been, is, and may be, namely, such, that their bowels may stand in need of refreshing, whilst the wicked are fat, fresh, and flourishing; but, blessed be God, if his children miss of refreshment from men, their time of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient.

9 Yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

Observe here, the marvellous condescending humility of our apostle in these expressions: as an apostle, he was the highest ruler and officer in the church of God, and had the fullest authority and power that a person could have upon earth, to command, require, and enjoin Philemon to the practice of his duty; but he tells them, though he might be bold to enjoin, yet he rather chose to beseech; *for love's sake I rather beseech thee*. Learn hence, that church rulers and governors, although they have a commanding power and authority, which upon occasion they may and must make use of, yet they should choose much rather in love to intreat, hoping that will work more kindly and effectually upon the minds of persons. Observe, 2. The argument

St. Paul uses as a ground of intreaty, *I Paul desire and beseech thee, I Paul the aged, I Paul a prisoner*. Note, He urges his years as an argument for granting his request; that he was aged, and an aged minister of Christ: if honor be due to an aged person walking in the way of righteousness, much more is it so to an aged minister, grey headed in the service of Christ, and having faithfully discharged his duty there. He also urges his sufferings as well as his years: *I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ*. The sufferings of Christ's ministers in the cause of God should by no means lessen and diminish, but rather augment and increase that reverence, regard and respect which is deservedly due and payable unto them. Observe, 3. The person whom he thus intercedes with affection for; Onesimus, whom he calls his *son begotten in his bonds*; that is, his spiritual son, converted to christianity by his ministry, when he was in prison. We note, That endearing love, and that fervent affection which the ministers of Christ bear to their converts, to such as they have gained unto Christ: it equals, nay, perhaps exceeds the natural affections of parents towards their own children. Note also, who they are that best deserve the name of *fathers* in the church, verily those that have begot most spiritual children unto God; such as can say, "Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Nevertheless, for our comfort, God will, at the reckoning day, account and treat such as spiritual fathers, who have been faithful, though unsuccessful in the work of Christ, because they have cast forth the prolific seed of the gospel: therefore the cause of sterility and spiritual barrenness cannot be imputed to them, they having exerted and put forth their best endeavours. Note also, The high honor which God confers upon his faithful ministers; the scriptures allow them, though but instruments, what is properly attributed to God himself, namely, to beget spiritual children; this is God's work: *Of his own will begat he us*. James i. 18. God allows that to be in an inferior sense attributed to the ministry, which is strictly applicable only to himself. Observe, 4. How the apostle wisely answers the objections which Philemon might make against his request, of receiving Onesimus, that he had been vile, fugitive, a thief, what not! St. Paul implicitly owns all that, yet with a softening distinction, *he was unprofitable in times past, but now profiteth both thee and me*. Now St. Paul pre-occupating and answering this objection before Philemon made it, shows how hard it is for the best men to forgive and forget injuries done unto them, especially by their relations, those in their own families, whether children or servants. Note also, The character given of Onesimus before conversion, *he was unprofitable*. Lord, what an useless unprofitable creature is an unsanctified and unconverted sinner! Unprofitable to God, unprofitable to others, unprofitable to his own soul; but by conversion he becomes universally useful and profitable to all about him, but especially to himself; others may have the benefit of our estate, our parts and gifts, but we ourselves shall have the chief benefit, comfort, and advantage of our own grace.

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels.

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have mi-

nistered unto me in the bond of the gospel.

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Here are several arguments used by our apostle, why Philemon should receive Onesimus into his service again. 1. Because St. Paul had sent him for that end, a long and tedious journey from Rome to Colosse, and because he came with the apostle's commendatory letters, and in his name. We are not easily to reject those that come to us countenanced and encouraged with the commendations of the reverend and faithful ministers of God. In the close of the first argument, at the foot of the twelfth verse, observe the endearing title he gives Onesimus, he calls him *his own bowels*; receive him that is *my own bowels*. O Lord! certainly there is no stronger love, nor more endearing and endeared affection between any relations upon earth, than between the ministers of the gospel and such of their beloved people whom they have been happily instrumental to beget unto thyself. How inexpressibly dear is the soul of a poor servant to a faithful minister of Christ, and how lovely when once converted? Receive him, for he is as dear to me as if he had proceeded out of *my own bowels*. Again, Another argument is this; St. Paul sends him, because he was another's servant, even of Philemon his friend, and being very serviceable to the apostle, he would have gladly detained him; but could not satisfy himself to do it without Philemon's consent. Masters have such a right in their servants, and such a right unto their service, that they are not to be disposed of, without their own consent. St. Paul, though he wanted, yet would not detain Onesimus, though a fugitive servant, without Philemon's knowledge: christian religion is no destroyer, but an establisher of civil rights. Onesimus' conversion to christianity, gave him no manumission and liberty from Philemon's service, and accordingly our apostle remits and sends him back to his old master Philemon.

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever;

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Here our apostle answers an objection which possibly Philemon might make: Thus, "Onesimus ran away from me, What reason have I to receive him again?" The apostle seems thus to reply upon it: if his departing from thee was so managed by the wise and merciful providence of God, that it might be an occasion of thy receiving him again for ever, then for all his departure thou oughtest to receive him. But verily thus it is, the wisdom of God has thus overruled the matter; he went from thee a fugitive, thievish and purloining; but he returns a convert, a christian, a brother in the faith, and as such to be entertained by thee, being doubly related to thee, both as a servant, and as a fellow-member of Christ. Observe here, 1. The large extent, and

next the overruling power of the divine providence: its extent, it reaches not only to kingdoms and nations, but to families and persons, even to poor bond-slaves; a fugitive runs not from his service, but the providence of God eyes and observes it, nay, wisely and mercifully overrules it. Oh! the depth of divine knowledge and wisdom, the providence of God concerns itself, and has a hand in those actions of men which are sinful, without any blemish to his holiness; he concurs to the act, but not to the laxity and disorder of the action; he that rides a lame horse, is the cause of his going, but not of his halting. Observe, 2. The privilege of our spiritual conjunction in Christ, above any other civil conjunction. The former lasts for ever, the latter but for a short time; the relation between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, alas, it is but for a moment. Death will soon dissolve all civil relations: but the spiritual relation and conjunction being effected, by the bond of the spirit, is indissoluble, it is for ever. Death itself cannot dissolve it, yea, it knits the knot faster: *He departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.* Observe, 3. That although christianity doth not take away the degrees of persons, and the civil differences between man and man, yet it maketh us all equal and fellow-brethren in Christ. *Receive him, now, not barely as a servant, but above a servant, as a brother in Christ;* you and he are now brethren by grace. Learn hence, That religious servants are more than ordinary servants, they are brethren in Christ; and when humility, fidelity, and prudence are found with them, as they are more than ordinary servants, so God expects that we should give them more than ordinary respect, and we sin in denying it. O servants, would you have high respect showed to you? Become then first humble servants to Jesus Christ, and then faithful and prudent servants where God has placed you, and you shall never want respect either from God or men; *for them that honor God, he will honor.*

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

19 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.

19 I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand, I will repay it; albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Observe here, 1. Another argument wherewith St. Paul doth press Philemon to receive Onesimus, and it is drawn from a partnership and communion with him in the faith; if we are partners, and have communion and fellowship one with another, as christians, comply with my desires herein. Learn hence, That there is a communion, a fellowship, a partnership between christians, and this communion which is between saints, should make saints respect one another, "If thou count me a partner, receive him; yea receive him as myself;" a very high expression, still discovering that affectionate tenderness which St. Paul bare to this new convert. Observe, 2. Another objection answered; Philemon might say, "How can I receive him that has wronged me, robbed me, and run away from me? sure it is enough to

pardon him; must I receive him too?" Our apostle implicitly grants, that there was a debt due from Onesimus to Philemon; "If he has wronged," that is, granting that he has done it. Where note, Religion destroys no man's property, nor does communion of saints make a community of goods; otherwise from this community, Onesimus, or St. Paul for him, might have pleaded an immunity, both from restitution or punishment; St. Paul acknowledges, not denies the debt. But observe farther, He takes it upon himself; *Put it on my account; I will repay it.* It is not then unlawful in itself, for one person to become bound and surety for another: yea, it is a work of mercy, which not only may be done, but sometimes must be done, but always with due caution and consideration. Observe, 3. The wonderful modesty of the apostle in mentioning his own praises and commendations, *I say, not that thou owest to me even thine own self,* implying what great things he had done for Philemon in his conversion, so great as made Philemon a debtor, not only of his own goods but of himself too: however, the apostle only glances at it modestly, and that upon a just and great occasion too; *I do not say, (though I might have said it) that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.*

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee. in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

21 Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

22 But withal prepare me also a lodging. For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Observe, 1. A pathetic repetition of our apostle's former petition, with the force and strength of a fresh and additional argument. Thus, "O my brother, that which revives me in a prison, and refreshes my bowels now I am in bonds, that assuredly thou oughtest to do; but thy remitting and receiving Onesimus will thus refresh me, therefore do it." Learn thence, That whatever christians know will rejoice the hearts, and revive the spirits of one another, ought in mutual condescension and kindness to be performed towards each other upon their mutual requests. How unnatural is it for one member to vex and grieve another? As unbecoming is it in the body spiritual, as it is in the body natural; *brother, let me have joy in the Lord, refresh my bowels in the Lord.* Observe, 2. Our apostle's holy confidence in Philemon's obedience and compliance: *having confidence in thy obedience, I know thou wilt do more than I say.* See here what credit and honor, conscience and obedience puts upon a man; Philemon's good conscience occasioned St. Paul's confidence: it is a special honor when the general course of man's life is so steady, so uniform and even, that either our ministers or pious friends dare to be confident in us, vouch for us, and engage for our obedience and compliance with whatever becomes us. Observe, 3. St. Paul having finished his request for Onesimus, speaks one word for himself, namely, that a lodging might be prepared for him, hoping it seems, for a deliverance out of prison, by the help of the church's prayers, *Prepare me a lodging.* Religion is no enemy to hospitality: nay, it requires it and

encourages to it, Rom. xii. 13. Heb. xiii. 2. It is a duty incumbent upon all, but especially ministers; but an unkind world takes care that some have scarce bread sufficient for their families, much less have any ability for hospitality, or indeed for those necessary acts of charity which are required by God, and expected by man, to render their labors amongst their people both acceptable and successful. The ministers of God when they ask bread of some, they give them a stone, and when they demand their dues of others, they sting like a scorpion: but blessed be God, it is not thus universally. Note, lastly, What it was St. Paul grounded his expectation of deliverance upon, namely, the help and benefit of the church's prayers, *I trust through your prayers I shall be given unto you*. Learn, That our deliverance from trouble is to be expected and sought by the means of the prayers of such as fear God; yet mark, though prayer obtains much, yet it merits nothing at God's hand, *I trust through your prayers I shall be given*, that is, freely given unto you: though we obtain blessings by prayer, yet not for the merit of our prayers. If mercy were due to us, thankfulness were not due to God.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus;

24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-laborers.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of his epistle, he shuts it up with salutation and prayer: first, he salutes Philemon from Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, some his fellow-prisoners, all his fellow-laborers. Here note, How graciously God provides for the comfort of his children in a prison; he sweetened St. Paul's affliction with the saints' communion: it was no joy to St. Paul that Epaphras was in prison, he had rather he had been preaching at Colosse: but seeing he was a prisoner, the apostle, no doubt, was very thankful that he was in the same

prison with him, where they had opportunity (it is hoped to pray together, to discourse, encourage and comfort one another: and note the cause of Epaphras' imprisonment, in Christ Jesus, that is, for the sake of Christ Jesus. No doubt there were others in prison besides Epaphras, but none were St. Paul's fellow-prisoners but he, because, though sufferers in the same prison, yet not for the same cause, *Epaphras my fellow-prisoner salueth thee*. Observe, 2. Our apostle's concluding prayer, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*. Here note, 1. The person prayed to, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, our anointed King; from Christ we are called *christians*, because every one of us, in our measure, are partakers of a divine unction with and from him, 1 John ii. 20. *Ye have an unction from the Holy One*. This oil ran down from the head of our great High-Priest, to the very skirts of his garment. Note, 2. The blessing prayed for, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit*; that is, "May the special favor of God, both in its effects and influence, in its graces and comforts, reside in thy soul and spirit; may the blessed Spirit of our Lord Jesus evermore dwell in thee by his sanctifying impressions, by his powerful assistances, and by his quickening influences." Note, 3. He doth not pray for Philemon solely, though for him eminently, but for all the saints at Colosse, who had obtained like precious faith with him: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, not thy, but your spirit: all the saints of God in general, yea, the whole race of mankind universally, must be remembered by us in our prayers. Amen is a word that denotes our earnestness of desire to be heard, and our comfortable expectation of being answered; it teaches us, that whatever we pray for, should be rightly understood, firmly expected, and earnestly desired. They sin in prayer who either do not understand what they pray for, or do not earnestly desire what they pray for, or do not believe God's readiness to grant what they pray for: therefore in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard in prayer, we say Amen.

LAUS DEO.

THE
EPISTLE
TO THE
HEBREWS.

As touching the author and penman of this Epistle to the Hebrews, there have been many and various opinions; some have supposed it written by St. Luke, others by Barnabas, or Clemens, but most by St. Paul, which they attempt to prove from chapter xiii. 23. Know ye not that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; because it is customary with St. Paul, when he writes epistles, to call Timothy his brother, 2 Cor. i. 1. Col. i. 1. And also from the words of St. Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 15.. As our dear brother Paul hath written unto you in all his epistles. Whence it is evident, that the apostle Paul had writ to them, to whom St. Peter was then writing; that is, to the believing Jews in general, and to those of the dispersion in particular. But since we are assured that the Spirit of God did indite the book, we need not be over-solicitous to find out whose hand it was that held the pen.

The persons to whom this epistle is directed, are styled Hebrews; that is, the believing Jews converted to christianity, chiefly those that inhabited Judea, and in and about Jerusalem: who though they had embraced the gospel, yet they adhered to the Mosaic rites, and Jewish ceremonies, joining them with christianity, as necessary to salvation. Now, for this bare profession of christianity, they were exposed to a bitter persecution by the unbelieving Jews. Our apostle therefore justly fearing lest their sufferings for christianity should occasion their apostasy from it, writes this epistle to establish and confirm them in their holy profession, by acquainting them with the sad and fatal consequences of a ruinous apostasy, and the fruitlessness of former sufferings, without a resolute perseverance in the christian faith, and patience under all tribulations.

That St. Paul did not prefix his name to this epistle, as he did to others, the reason supposed is this, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and not of the circumcision, or of the Jews; and his name being not over-acceptable to them, he sets it not at the front of this epistle, lest the sight of it should have prejudiced the Jews, and taken them off from duly weighing and considering the weighty matters which he wrote about.

The general scope and design of this epistle is to inform the Hebrews, that the gospel ministry, or dispensation under the new Testament by Jesus Christ, far surpasseth and transcendently excelleth the ministry of the Old Testament under Moses and the prophets: and to prove, that Christ was greater than the angels, a greater person and lawgiver than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, a greater prince than Melchizedec; and the Levitical priesthood, and the old covenant, were to give place to Christ our great High-Priest, and to the new covenant established upon better promises.

CHAPTER I.

In the first chapter of this epistle, the proofs of the eternal deity of Jesus Christ are produced with such clear evidence of scripture light, that only a veiled heart, and obstinate infidelity, can resist. And the medium which the inspired penman makes use of, is, the comparing Christ with the angels, (the glory and beauty of the creation,) and showing that he is infinitely dignified above them: and that religious adoration is due unto him from them, even from the angels of the highest order, ver 6. Let all the angels of God worship him. But this will most evidently, appear by a particular explication of the several parts and verses of the chapter, in which our apostle thus speaks:

GOD, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in those last days spoken unto us by his Son,—

Our apostle intending here a comparison between the law and the gospel, shows first wherein they both agree, and next wherein they differ. They agree (first) in this, that God was the author of them both: both law and gospel received the original from God himself; and God the Father, by way of emanency, was the peculiar author both of law and gospel. God, that God, “who spake in times past by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. Observe, 2. The difference between the law and the gospel, with respect to the manner of their revelation. The revelation of the will of God under the law was, 1. At sundry times: before the flood, by Enoch and Noah; after the flood, by Abraham, by Jacob, by Moses, and all the prophets. 2. In divers manners; sometimes by a lively voice, sometimes by dreams and visions, sometimes by inspiration and immediate revelation, sometimes by Urim and Thummim, sometimes by signs from heaven. 3. The revelation of the law was made of old, formerly, in times past; this of the gospel was made in these last days. 4. That was made to the fathers, this to us. 5. That revelation was made by the prophets, this by the Son, Jesus Christ. From the whole, learn, 1. That Almighty God did not leave the world only to the light of nature, and to know him barely by his works of creation; but bestowed upon them the invaluable blessing of supernatural revelation, thereby to bring mankind to the clearer knowledge of their duty. Learn, 2. That the revelation which God was pleased to make of himself, his mind, and will, was gradual, and by parts, not all at one time, and in one manner, but at sundry times, and in divers manners. Learn, 3. That the gospel dispensation is the most perfect revelation of the will of God, which God ever did, or ever will make to the sons of men. Learn, 4. That as it is a perfect, so likewise a final revelation of God’s mind and will to a lost world: a farther discovery of the mind of God for man’s salvation is not to be expected. The gospel is the last effort which the divine mercy and goodness will make upon mankind, in order to eternal happiness; herein God has spoken to us by his Son: and if we will not hear him, he

will speak no more, we must expect no other: he can send no greater prophet, no dearer person to us than his own Son; and as he can send no greater, so will he send no other: for if we despise him, whom will we reverence? Now, the dignity of this person, our apostle proceeds in this and the next verses to describe:

—Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;—

The title of *heir*, which is here given to Christ, setteth out his dignity and dominion, together with the right he has to both: namely, that of his sonship; for what is an heir but his father’s successor; Christ, as a Son, being heir of all things, imports, that he is lord of all, and has a sovereign empire and dominion over all persons and things, over all angels and men, whether living or dead. Learn hence, that God the Father has given and granted unto Christ his Son, as Mediator and Head of his church, a sovereign power and authority over all persons and things, both in heaven and in earth, to be disposed of by him at his pleasure, and according to the sovereign purpose of his will; “whom he hath appointed heir of all things.”

—By whom also he hath made the worlds;

By whom, not for whom, as the Socinians would suggest; the word signifies the efficient and the final cause, according to Col. i. 16, 17. “By him were all things created, and by him all things consist.” And by him, not as an instrument or created cause, for then must he be created by himself, seeing all things were made by him, and nothing made without him. John i. 3. But as the principal efficient cause, according to St. John v. 19. “Whatsoever the Father doth that doth also the Son likewise.” The Father doth all by the Son, and the Son doth all from the Father. And by making the worlds, we are to understand his forming of the old world, not his reforming of the new; for if so, the apostles might be said to make the worlds as well as Christ, because they had a principal hand in converting and reforming the world. But by the worlds, here understand the visible and material worlds, all things in heaven and in earth, which were made by Christ, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a primary and principal agent, which sets forth the omnipotent power of Christ, and consequently proves him to be truly and really God. Learn hence, That the Lord Jesus Christ, by making the world and all things therein, by his own immediate power, has given a full and ample demonstration of his divinity, or being essentially and really God.

3 Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;—

Our apostle here proceeds in describing the divinity of Christ’s person, by whom the Father has made known his will to us under the gospel. He declares, 1. what he is. 2. What he does, or did. 3. The consequent of both, or what he now enjoyeth. Observe, 1. Our apostle declares who,

and what Christ was, and is, namely, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." As the brightness of the sun is of the same nature with the sun, and of as long continuance as the sun, and cannot be separated from the sun, and yet the sun, and the brightness of the sun, are really distinct from each other. In like manner the Father and the Son are of one and the same essence, co-eternal and inseparable, yet the person of the one is distinct from the other. And as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, so doth God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us by Jesus Christ. Learn hence, that the Son is of the same essence with the Father, yet a person really distinct from the Father, and all the incomprehensible glory of the Father brightly shines forth in Christ his Son.

—And the express image of his person.

That is, the express character of God the Father's person, his natural image, and essential likeness; all the perfections shining forth in God the Father, are substantially in Christ the Son: is the Father eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent? so is the Son, whose character he is; whose resemblance and image he bears; John x. 38. *The Father is in me, and I in him*; the same essential properties and nature being in each person, by virtue thereof their persons are said to be in each other. All the glorious perfections of the nature of God do belong unto and dwell in the person of the Son of God. Observe, 2. Our apostle having declared what Christ is, next declares what he does; namely, that he *upholdeth all things by the word of his power*; that is, he exerts and puts forth the same omnipotent power in the work of preservation, which he did in the work of creation, keeping it from sinking into its original chaos of confusion. This work of conservation say some, is a greater act of omnipotency than that of creation: by the former, all things were brought out of nothing, by the latter, they are preserved from returning into nothing, which their own nature, and their perpetual conflict, by contrariety of qualities, would necessarily precipitate them into. Learn hence, 1. That such is the nature and condition of the universe, that it cannot subsist one moment without continual support; such is the dependant condition of the whole creation. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus Christ has the weight of the whole creation upon his hand, he upholdeth what himself created; and as well his upholding as creating, his conservation as well as creation of all things by the word of his power, do prove him truly and really God. Observe, 3. A farther evidence and proof of the divinity of Christ, produced here by our apostle; as he made the world by his omnipotent power, and upholds it by his wonderful providence, so he redeemed it by his blood, *he by himself purged our sins*. He that made the heavens, bowed the heavens, and came down from heaven, and became a sacrifice for sin on earth, and by himself alone, by himself without a partner, by himself without a comforter, expiated the guilt of sin, and satisfied the justice of God for sin, suffering as he was man, and satisfying as he was God; *who by himself purged our sins*. Learn hence, that so great was the work of expiation of sin, that it could no otherwise be really effected and accomplished, than by the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, who was truly and really God. Observe, 4.

The consequent of all that Christ did, or his glorious condition after his humiliation, "having purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:" that is, God the Father clothed him with the highest honor, and endowed him with the greatest power that heaven itself could afford; the right hand is the place both of dignity and honor, and also of superiority and power; Christ's sitting at God's right hand imports his exaltation to the highest authority and most supreme dominion. Learn hence, that when our Lord Jesus Christ had finished his sufferings upon earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honor and authority at the right hand of God his Father in heaven, even to be the object of adoration both to angels and men, as the following verses declare in which our apostle thus speaks:

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again when he bringeth in his first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

In the foregoing verses a comparison was made between Christ and the prophets, here between Christ and the angels, and the preference and pre-eminence is given to him above them all. Angels were very glorious creatures, employed by God in giving of the law; but Christ whom God the Father employed in the dispensation of the Gospel, is far superior to them, and has an excellency above them. 1. *A more excellent name*, they being called ministers or servants, he styled a Son. 2. *A more excellent nature*, his being a divine, theirs an angelical nature: yea, his human nature, by virtue of its union with the Godhead, has a dignity surpassing the nature of angels. 3. *A more excellent office and function*, as Mediator between God and man, which belongs not to any angel. And, 4. *Consequently a more excellent power and authority*, with a right to adoration and worship, which the angels have not, but are commanded to worship him. *when he brought his first-begotten into the world*, that is, in the morning of the resurrection, when he was in a glorious manner begotten from the dead; the Father says, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and therefore he that is to be worshipped, is greater than they that are to worship him. Learn hence, 1. That the evidencing and declaring of Christ to be the Son of God, was the particular care and special work of God the Father; he said it, he recorded it, he revealed it: thou art my Son. Learn, 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, is in his own person, God blessed for ever, to whom divine honor and religious worship is due and payable from glorified angels; "let all the angels of God worship him." Learn, 3. That the command of God is the

ground and reason of all religious worship; the angels are to worship Christ, but the ground of their doing it is God's command; he saith, "let all the angels of God worship him." Learn, 4. That it can be no part of our duty to worship the angels, who are our fellow servants in the worship of Jesus Christ; they that are to worship Christ with us, surely are not to be worshipped by us.

7 And of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son, *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, *even thy God*, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Still our apostle goes on, comparing Christ, and the angels together, and giving a transcendent preference to the one before the other. The angels are ministering servants, but Christ a natural Son; the angels are the prime instruments of the Father's providence, most zealous and active to accomplish his pleasure, but the Son is God; "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." God, not by analogy and deputation, as princes are, nor with a limitation and diminution, as Moses was made a god to Pharaoh, but absolutely and really, as subsisting in the divine nature; to the Son he saith, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Learn hence, that it is the divine nature of Jesus Christ that gives stability and fixedness, yea, immutability and unchangeableness to his throne and kingdom: "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And whereas the sceptres of earthly kings are often unrighteously managed, and their thrones do ruinously fall, the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Christ's kingdom; that is, all the laws, and the whole administration of his kingdom by his word and Spirit, are all just and equal, righteous and holy; "a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." And farther, the apostle declares, that the righteous administration of Christ in his kingdom, proceeds from his own habitual righteousness and love thereunto: thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, and for that reason he was dignified and exalted by God over and above all his fellows. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ as Mediator, because of his love to righteousness, and hatred to sin, is dignified and advanced by God, not only above all men, but likewise above all angels. "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee above thy fellows."

10 And, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remain-

est; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

What proof can be more desired of Christ's divinity, than what is here given by our apostle? the name and attributes of God are given to him, as also an everlasting throne and kingdom; divine honor is required to be paid to him: and here such divine works are ascribed to him, wherein no creature can have any share of efficiency with him; such is the making of the world, "thou, Lord, laidest the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands:" here we have Christ's omnipotency declared, "thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are thy handy-works:" and his eternity and immutability asserted, "when the heavens perish, thou remainest; when they wax old, and are changed, thou art the same." Learn hence, that the whole world, the heavens and the earth being made by our Lord Jesus Christ, is an evident proof that he is exalted above all creatures, that he is an almighty and unchangeable God, *thou, Lord, hast laid, &c.* Learn, 2. That such is the frailty of man's nature, and such the perishing condition of all created things, that nothing will or can yield stable consolation to us, but a firm belief of the omnipotency and immutability of our Lord Jesus Christ.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

This verse contains a farther proof of Christ's preeminence above the angels, and that he is in reality the Son of God; namely, because he sits, in the quality of a Son, at the right hand of God the Father; equal to him in dignity, power, and glory, commanding all the visible and invisible world, most easily, yet irresistibly; though gradually subduing his enemies to a consummate and complete victory. *To which of the angels said he at any time?* The words are an interrogation, which have the force of a vehement negation, and imply, that God the Father did never say this to any of the angels, nor put such honor upon any one of them, as to say, sit on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool; but to Christ he saith it, Psalm. cx. 1. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ is a spiritual king; and as such has many enemies to his kingdom and government. Sin is an enemy to Christ, and his kingdom: it makes an universal opposition to Christ and his government: satan is a sworn enemy to Christ and his throne, and he exerts his enmity by temptations and persecutions. The world is an enemy also in the things of it, in the men of it, in the rule of it. The law is an enemy to Christ and his kingdom, not absolutely, but accidentally, by reason of the consequences that attend it: it slays them, Rom. vii. 9, 10, 11, which is the work of an enemy: in a word, death, the grave, and hell, are Christ's enemies. Learn, 2. That all Christ's enemies shall, in Christ's time,

be made his footstool; they are conquering now initially and gradually, they shall be conquered ere long finally and perfectly; and all his people shall be made complete sharers in his victory and conquest. Learn, 3. That Christ's sitting at God's right hand, in a certain and assured expectation of having his foes become his footstool, is an undoubted proof of the divinity of his person, and that he is essentially and really God. To none of the angels, or any of the creatures, said he, at any time, sit on my right hand; but to the Son he said, *sit on my right hand, &c.*

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

This is the last testimony produced by the apostle to prove Christ's pre-eminency above the angels: he is a Son, they are but servants; not only servants to Christ, but servants to believers, to the church of Christ, to the heirs of salvation. Observe here, 1. The nature of angels declared; they are spirits, without any thing material or corporeal belonging to them, yet having a power to assume a body, and appear in human shape, when they pleased. The scripture describes them as excelling in strength, purity and holiness, to be of great activity and swiftness, and gives intimation of several ranks and orders among them, distinguishing them by the names of principalities and powers, thrones and dominions; but what the difference of these names do import none can positively declare. Observe, 2. Their general office declared. They are *ministering spirits*, they are God's domestic servants, they attend upon his throne, they expect his commands, they execute his pleasure, and are in a constant readiness to do his will. The angels are the great instruments of providence in the world; not that God needs them, or cannot manage without them: for he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. God can steer all human affairs with the least nod and beck of his will, without any instrument at all: but his wisdom and goodness thinks fit to honor his creatures with his commands, that so they may be capable of his favor and rewards. Observe, 3. The special office and employment of good angels, with reference to good men: they are sent forth, there is their designation and appointment, *to ministers*, that is their general end and employment, *for the heirs of salvation*, that is, their more special and peculiar business; they have a charge of the bodies and souls of the saints whilst alive: a special charge of their souls at death, to conduct them to blessedness, and probably a care and charge of their bodies after death, as may be gathered from St. Jude, ver. 9. Learn hence, 1. That the highest honor of the most glorious angels in heaven, is to minister to the saints by God's appointment here on earth. Learn 2. That such is the love and care of God towards his saints, that he sends the most glorious attendants upon his own throne, to minister unto them, and to take care of them. Behold then the astonishing regard which the great God has for good men, in that he appoints all his angels to minister to them, for the safeguard of their persons, for the success of their affairs, and for the security of their eternal salvation. Lord! what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him; that when thou madest him lower than the angels, thou shouldst yet make the angels ministers unto him? Behold also the impiety of the church of

Rome, in worshipping of angels: surely if they are our fellow servants, and minister unto us, we are by no means to worship them. See Rev. xix. 10.

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle having, by an irresistible strength, and force of argument proved his proposition laid down in the foregoing chapter, namely, that Christ the dispenser of the gospel, was not only above Moses, the deliverer of the law, but far superior to the angels themselves; he comes, in the beginning of this chapter, to draw an inference from his foregoing discourse, as appears by the illative particle. Therefore, at the head of the first verse, which runs thus:

THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

As if our apostle had said, seeing Christ is so excellent in his person, and seeing the gospel has such a glorious author as the blessed Jesus, let us take great heed that we esteem his person, revere his authority, reverence his ministry and his message, and that our memories be not like leaking vessels, suffering the word at any time to slip and run from us. Learn hence, 1. That the consideration of the revelation of the gospel by the Son of God, is a powerful motive to an high estimation of it, and diligent attendance on it. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed;" that is, knowing the excellency of his person, and sublimity of his doctrine. Learn; 2. That the true and only way of honoring our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is by diligent attendance, and obedience to his word: where there is no obedience to the gospel, there is no faith in, nor love unto Jesus Christ, the author and dispenser of the gospel. Learn, 3. That there are sundry times and seasons wherein, and several ways and means whereby men are in great danger of losing the word, if they attend not diligently to its preservation; *Lest at any time*, some lose the word in a time of prosperity, others in a time of persecution, some in a time of temptation. Learn, 4. That the word heard is not lost without great sin, as well as with the inevitable ruin of the souls of men; if we suffer the word to slip out of our memories, that we forget it; out of our hearts, that we despise it; out of our lives, that we are disobedient to it; it is lost as to us, and will end in our loss, yea in our ruin at the last. Learn, 5. That the only way to prevent this sin and danger, under the word, is by a very diligent attendance upon it, and giving more earnest heed to the things contained in it: we are to attend to the word before we hear, to bring us to it: to attend upon it in hearing, that it may be remembered by us; and after we have heard it, that it may be practised by us. This consideration, that it is the word of Christ, the great and mighty God, the wisdom of the Father, that we are going forth to hear, will engage us to give the more earnest heed to the things we hear, "Lest at any time we should let them slip."

2 For if the word spoken by angels

was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward :

3 How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation,—

The apostle having set forth the transcendent dignity of Christ's person and office, and shown that he was a more excellent prophet than Moses, a more excellent priest than Aaron, a more excellent king than Melchisedec, hereupon he infers, that such as despise the gospel, the doctrine of this blessed Jesus, are far more inexcusable than those that were the transgressors of the law of Moses. *If the word spoken by angels was steadfast*; that is, if the law given by the ministry of angels was firm and inviolable, and all the transgressors of it were justly and severely punished; how can we escape perishing, if we neglect the gospel, which makes a discovery of that great salvation which was purchased by Christ for lost sinners? The apostle's argument is drawn (*a minori ad majus*) from the less to the greater. Thus, if Almighty God was so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, to wit, the law, given by the ministry and dispensation of angels, how can we escape that neglect to hear and obey the gospel, which makes a tender, yea, the only tender of salvation to a lost world? Note here, 1. The great care which Almighty God takes to make lost sinners happy; namely, by offering them a great salvation. Note, 2. The great care which every one of us ought to take in order to our own happiness and salvation, and that is, not to neglect it. Note, 3. The great guilt which they contract, and the inevitable punishment God will inflict on such as do neglect this great salvation, *How shall they escape?* Learn hence, 1. That there is salvation held forth and tendered by Christ to lost sinners, in the gospel. That this salvation thus held forth and tendered unto sinners, is a great salvation; great in its author Christ Jesus; great in the price paid for it, the blood of Jesus; great in the subject recipient of it, the whole man, soul and body; great in regard of the evils it saves us from, sin, Satan, the curse of the law, death and hell; great in respect of the gracious privileges it interests believers in. Learn, 2. That notwithstanding this salvation is so great, yet there are some that neglect it. 3. That it is impossible for such neglecters to escape. *Quest. 1. What shall they not escape?* *Ans.* The curse of the law, the wrath of God, the sentence of Christ denounced, and the sentence of Christ inflicted. *Quest. 2. Why shall they not escape?* *Ans.* Because such persons sin against the remedy, the only remedy which the wisdom of God hath found out for man's recovery; and accordingly, the mouth of God has spoken it, the hand of God has written it, and the oath of God has confirmed it, that such sinners shall not escape; such as sin against the remedy must perish without the remedy.

—Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers

miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Here we have a special reason assigned, why such as reject the gospel cannot escape divine wrath, because the gospel was first published and delivered by Jesus Christ; it was clearly, plainly, sweetly, and persuasively preached by himself first. The law was promulgated by angels, the gospel proclaimed by the Son of God, and afterwards by his apostles; and God confirmed their testimony by signs and wonders, by miraculous powers, and gifts of the Holy Ghost: all which did signify God's approbation of their doctrine, and gave the world a confirmation of the truth and excellency of it, and consequently gave credibility to it. Here note, That as the law of Moses was confirmed by miracles, so was the gospel of Jesus also: nay, herein this was superior to that. Moses wrought signs and wonders, but the gifts of the Holy Ghost were peculiar to the times of the Messiah, and were the proper confirmation of the gospel dispensation. Yet note farther, That though the apostles had a power to work miracles, yet it was according to God's will, and not at their own pleasure; they could not work miracles when they pleased, nor what they pleased: whence it was evident that not they, but God was the worker of them. And the more God's overruling will was seen in the miracles then, the greater confirmation have we of the doctrine now: "Which (gospel) was at first spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Still our apostle prosecutes his former design, which was to persuade the Hebrews, that more heed is to be given to the word of Christ, the doctrine of the gospel, than to the word or law delivered by angels, because God had given a greater authority to Christ than ever he did to the angels, as appears by putting the world to come in subjection to Christ, and not to angels; yea, inasmuch as angels themselves are to be in subjection unto Christ, as a part of his kingdom, "Unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come?" that is, the world of believers gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, is put under Christ's immediate power, and subject not to angels, but to Christ himself. Learn hence, That it is the great privilege of the gospel-church, that it depends upon Christ as its immediate and only head, and is not put in subjection to any other, either angels or men. The gospel church was not put in subjection to angels in its first erection or institution, nor was it put into subjection unto angels, as to the rule and government of it

when erected; but angels and saints are equally subjected unto Christ, who is both an head of vital influence, as also an head of authority, rule, and government to the whole church, and every member thereof. Observe next, The proof which the apostle brings for this out of the Psalms, Psal. vii. in which David breaks forth into admiration and wonder, at that glory and honor which God the Father put upon man at first in the work of creation, and next in the work of redemption: when the Son of God took the nature of man upon him, well might it then be said, *Lord! What is man that thou wert thus mindful of him, and the sons of men, that thy dear and only son did thus visit them?* Learn hence, 1. That such was the inexpressible love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, towards the sons of men, that he was free and willing to condescend unto any condition for their benefit and salvation: he that was the creator of angels, was willing, for our sakes, to be made lower than the angels, a little lower, that is, for a little time lower than the angels, namely, during the time of his humiliation. Learn, 2. That this wonderful condescension of Christ to take the nature of man, his respect and care, his love and grace towards mankind, is just matter of great and eternal admiration. O! what is man that thou art mindful of him, and crownest him with dignity and glory.

8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is not put under him.* But now we see not yet all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

We had an account of the depth of our Lord's humiliation before, of the height of his exaltation now, all things are and shall be put under him: for though God has given Christ dominion over all things, and all things are subject to his power, yet he hath not as yet exercised his complete power in ruining all his enemies, and reducing all his people to subjection; and this will not be seen until the last saint be converted, and until death, the last enemy, be destroyed. But yet, in the mean time, Christ is exalted with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven, and there crowned with dignity and honor, and glory in heaven. It is easy to believe, that every thing shall be put under him that riseth up against him, in his own appointed time.

—But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Observe here, 1. The wonderful humiliation and abasement, the exinanition and deep depression of the glorious Jesus; he was made for a little time *lower than the angels;*

that is, he was made man and mortal, and did suffer death. Observe, 2. The manner of our Lord's death. *He tasted it,* he did really taste of it, and but taste of it; he tasted death; that is, he died really and not in appearance only, he tasted it. 2. Implying, that he underwent the bitterness of it: he found out experimentally what death was by dying, as a man finds out the bitterness of a thing by tasting. Again, he did but taste of it, he was not finally overcome and vanquished by it: he continued but a short time under it, it was not possible that he should be long holden of it; the dignity of his person rendered a short continuance of him under the power of death sufficient for our redemption. Observe, 3. The persons for whom he tasted death, or died: for others, not for himself; that is, in their room or stead; he underwent that death in our stead, which we should have undergone in our own persons. Observe, 4. The extent of Christ's death, he tasted death *for every man;* that is, Christ by his death has made God propitious to every man, made sin remissible, and every man saveable: the death of Christ renders God willing to be reconciled unto all sinners; faith renders him actually reconciled. The reason why every man doth not obtain salvation, is not for want of a sufficient propitiation. Observe, 5. The moving cause which inclined God to deliver up Christ to death, and to transfer our punishment upon him, and that was his own grace, and free goodwill, "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Observe, 6. The glorious reward of our Lord's suffering with reference to himself, "We see Jesus, for suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." As Christ's meritorious sufferings for us, so shall our patient suffering for him be rewarded with the highest glory in heaven, 1 Pet. v. 10. "The God of grace who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered awhile, make you perfect," &c.

10 For it became him for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Observe here, 1. The gracious title given to Christ, *the captain of our salvation;* because the whole work of salvation, from first to last, our guidance and conduct through sin and suffering, unto glory and happiness, is committed to him. As a captain he conducts with care, he leads on with power, he discharges his trust with tenderness and love: he goes before us in obedience; in suffering, through death, and into glory. Observe, 2. That God made Jesus Christ the captain of our salvation perfect through suffering; that is, he was consecrated and set apart for the office of a complete priest by his own blood, when he offered himself without spot to God. Every Levitical priest was consecrated by the blood of a beast sacrificed; Christ was consecrated by his own blood, for no other blood would be accepted. It is called the Father's act to consecrate and make him perfect; but indeed it was the Son's own immediate act; the Father's by designation and appointment, but his own by actual performance, offering himself through the eternal Spirit without spot. Observe, 3. That Christ being consecrated and perfected through sufferings, hath consecrated the way of suffering,

for all that follow him to pass through it into glory. Upon this consecration of the way of suffering by Christ Jesus, a believer's sufferings becomes, 1. Necessary and unavoidable; the head and the members must be made conformable to each other, Rom. viii. 29. They are thereby made, 2. Useful and profitable: Christ has taken the curse out of the cross, and sanctified the cross to a special end and purpose; hereby likewise all sufferings for the Gospel are, 3. Made honorable; no greater honor than to suffer for Christ, Acts v. 41. "The apostles rejoiced that they had the honor to suffer shame for his name." And lastly, sufferings hereby are made safe to the sons of God, yea, more safe than prosperity by far. Gold is not consumed, but improved and preserved in the furnace. Observe, 4. That such is the merit and desert of sin, and such the immutability and severity of the justice of God, that there was no way possible to bring sinners unto glory, but by the death and sufferings of the Son of God; or if possible, yet no other way so becoming God, it became him for whom are all things and so expressive of his love and goodness to a lost world; it would have been unbecoming God, the supreme Governor of the world, to have passed by the desert of sin, without a satisfaction; therefore his wisdom contrived that grace should be exercised, and justice satisfied, that sin should be punished, and mercy magnified: that sinners should be saved, and the glory of all God's attributes secured.

11 For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13 And again I will put my trust in him. And again, behold, I, and the children which God hath given me.

In these words, the union of Christ and us, by his participation of the same nature with us, is declared: he and we are all of one; that is of one and the same nature, of one stock and original; it was the product of the wise, merciful, and righteous counsel of God, that the Saviour of men should have communion with them in their nature, that he might have to redeem them by his propinquity and alliance with them; "Both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one." Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ was, and ought to be of the same nature and stock with those whom he did redeem, and sanctify unto God. Divine justice required, that the same nature which had sinned should suffer for sin. The wisdom of God was pleased to redeem man; man must be redeemed by man: God as God could not die, therefore God becomes man, that he might be in a capacity to die: he that as man will redeem man must be of the same nature with man. This Christ was, both by divine institution, and by a voluntary susception; "He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one." Learn, 2. That Christ having taken our nature upon him, accounts it no disgrace to acknowledge and own us for his brethren; Christ will be ashamed of none of his brethren, but such as are a shame unto him.

Learn, 3. That notwithstanding the union of nature which is betwixt Christ and us, yet, in respect of our persons, there is an inconceivable distance between him and us: so that it is a marvellous condescension in him to call us brethren. Here note, That though Christ calls us brethren, yet it becomes us to call him Lord; and as such to adore and worship him, to glorify and serve him, to honor and obey him.

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Observe here, 1. The reality of Christ's assuming the human nature asserted: "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Which is in effect the same he had asserted in the foregoing verse, that he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; that is, of one nature and original. Observe, 2. A twofold reason assigned, why Christ thus condescendingly assumed the human nature, namely, that he might destroy the devil, who had the power of death and deliver his people that were under the slavish fear of death. 1. That he might destroy him that had the power of death. Here note, 1. The devil described in a very formidable manner, as one that had the power of death: not the supreme, but a subordinate power of death; a power of death as God's executioner to inflict it; the devil has the power of death, just as the hangman has the power of the gallows, to put those to death whom the judge condemns only. Note, 2. Him that has thus the power of death has Christ destroyed, that is, disarmed and disabled, not destroyed his being, but disarmed him of his power and authority over the children of God. Note, 3. That Christ did this by his own death; through death, that is, by his own dying, he destroyed him that had the power of death: it was upon the cross that he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly; Christ by dying conquered death. The second reason of Christ's appearing in our flesh and nature, was to deliver his people from the slavery and bondage of the sinful and servile fears of death. Here note, 1. That there is a natural fear of death which is not sinful: art thou afraid of death? Thou wert not a man, if thou didst not fear it: there cannot but be in nature an aversion to its own dissolution; and nature will always act like itself. Note, 2. That there is a servile slavish fear of death, which hath both sin and torment in it; a fear of death as penal, and drawing after it everlasting punishment. Note, 3. That unregenerate men, if a senseless stupidity has not benumbed them, and a spirit of slumber fallen upon them, are in bondage under the servile and slavish fear of death: it will daunt the stoutest man that ever lived to look upon death, when he can see nothing but hell beyond it. Note, 4. That Jesus Christ, by dying has freed all his children from this servile and tormenting fear of death. 1. Christ has

taken away the true reason of the fear of death, namely, the curse and condemnation of the law of God. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" death has its wounding power from sin, and sin hath its condemning power from the law. 2. Christ has assured believers that they shall not be losers, but gainers, yea, great gainers by death, considering the private evils freed from, and the positive good they shall rest in.

16 For verily he took not on him *the nature of angels*; but he took on him *the seed of Abraham*.

It may be rendered from the original thus: "He caught not hold on angels, but on man he caught hold." A metaphor taken from a person that catches hold of another, who is falling down some deep and dangerous precipice, to his inevitable destruction: such a good and kind office did the Son of God for us, when he suffered angels to fall headlong from that state of happiness in which they were created, into that abyss and gulph of misery into which they had plunged themselves by their voluntary transgression; the like unto which man had also done, had he not been seasonably caught by the Son of God in the arms of preventing grace and mercy. Learn, That was not the angelical, but the human nature: it was the nature of fallen man, and not of lapsed angels, which the Son of God did vouchsafe to assume, and take into a personal union with his Godhead. *Quest.* Why would not Christ take upon himself the nature of angels? Probably, because they were the first transgressors, and God might judge it decent that the first breach of the divine law should be punished with death, to secure obedience for the future; or, 2. Because the angels sinned without a tempter, they had no superior rank of creatures already fallen, as man had, to seduce and draw them from their obedience to their Creator's will: or, 3. Because the angels sinned against more clear and convictive light and knowledge: there was nothing of weakness, deceit, or ignorance, to lessen the malignity of their sin; they did not sin by mis-persuasion, but of purposed malice. But, after all, the reason why Christ took not hold on angels, but on man, the seed of Abraham, must be ultimately resolved into the sovereignty of God's will, who will be merciful to whom he will be merciful. Lord! why mercy, thy milder attribute, should be exercised towards man, and justice, thy severer attribute, be executed upon angels! Why vessels of clay are chosen, and vessels of gold rejected, must be resolved into that love which passes knowledge! And we shall never fully understand the riches of this discriminating grace, until thy dear Son shall appear at the great day as their Judge, and our Justifier: then shall we feel the comfort of these words, that "Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham."

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful highpriest in things *pertaining to God*, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered,

being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

In these two verses our apostle illustrates what he had taught before, and confirms his foregoing proposition concerning Christ's participating of flesh and blood, and acquaints us here with one special end of it, namely, to be such an High-Priest as our exigencies and necessities did require: for we being persons obnoxious to temptations and sufferings of all sorts, the wisdom of God, and the nature of the thing required it, that Christ our Great High-Priest, should in a special manner be able to relieve and help us: in order to this, Observe, 1. How our apostle reports and re-asserts, that Christ was in all things, or every manner of way, made like unto his brethren; that is, he assumed the human nature with all its essential proprieties, subjected to temptations and sufferings, but not to sin, for that would have been so far from conducting to the end aimed at, that it would have been utterly destructive of it. Had he been himself a sinner, he could never have satisfied the justice of God for our sins. Observe, 2. The general end of Christ's conformity to his brethren; namely, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest. That he might be our Priest, it was necessary that he should partake of our nature; for every highpriest for men must be taken from among men; this is not work for an angel, nor for God himself as such: and that he might be our merciful and faithful High-Priest, he was subject to sufferings and temptations. With what condolency and tender sympathy doth he exercise acts of mercy and compassion towards the human nature; and thus he was merciful, and with great condescension and care doth he take notice of all the concerns of his brethren under wants and sorrows, under all their temptation and sufferings: and thus he is our faithful as well as merciful High-Priest. Learn hence, That such was the unspeakable love of Christ towards his brethren, that he would refuse no condition of life, neither sufferings nor temptations, to fit him for the discharge of his office, which he had undertaken for them. Christ suffered, and was tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted: he suffered under all his temptations, but sinned in none: he suffered being tempted, but sinned not being tempted. Observe, 3. The special design and end of Christ's being our great High Priest; namely, *To make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. From whence learn, That the principal work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our great High-Priest, and from which all other actings of his in that office, do flow, was to make reconciliation or atonement for sin; his intercession in heaven is founded on earth. The Socinians, therefore, who deny the satisfaction of Christ, and his dying as a propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice for sin, taking from us our hopes and happiness; from Christ, his office and honor; from God, his grace and glory; they do indeed allow of a reconciliation in words, but it is of men to God, and not of God to men: they plead the expediency of our being reconciled to God by faith and obedience, but deny the necessity of God's being reconciled to us by sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement; so resolved are these men to be as little as may be beholden to Jesus Christ, that rather than grant that he has made any reconciliation for us by his blood, they deny that there was any need of such a reconciliation at all, never considering the inflexibility of God's justice, or the impartiality of his indignation against sin. Oh! the depths of satan; and

Oh! the stupidity and blindness of those men that are taken captive by him at his pleasure.

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, asserted the doctrine of our Saviour's priesthood, according to his constant method, he comes in this chapter to make application to that doctrine which he had declared and confirmed, that seeing Christ was so highly dignified and exalted, being the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, we should diligently consider him, both what he is in himself, and what he is to us: this teaches us, that all the doctrines of the gospel, especially those concerning the persons and offices of Jesus Christ, ought to be improved by us unto practice and obedience.

WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

These words are an exhortation to the believing Hebrews, to consider and ponder in their hearts the high dignity and excellency of Christ, as the great Prophet and Apostle of his church; and in them. Observe, 1. The title given to the Hebrews, unto whom the exhortation is directed; he styles them, 1. Holy brethren, so they were all by external profession, and many of them, no doubt, by internal sanctification. Learn hence, that all the professors of the gospel are obliged to be holy, and such as are real professors of it, are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and made truly and really holy. 2. Partakers of the heavenly calling; that is, of that calling from heaven which makes you heirs of heaven, implying, that the only way to attain the saving knowledge of Christ in the gospel, is by means of an effectual heavenly calling. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, and that is diligent consideration, *Consider Christ Jesus*; that is, rationally attend unto, and with great attention of mind ponder upon the undertaking of the Son of God: for if you consider him in his person and offices, you will firmly adhere to him and his most holy and excellent religion, without entanglements unto Judaism. Learn thence, that the spiritual and deep mysteries of the gospel, especially those which concern the person and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, do require our deep and diligent, our most attentive and serious consideration. Observe, 3. The title given to Jesus Christ, the object of this consideration; he is styled the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession; that is, the first and chief apostle sent of God to be the prime preacher of the gospel, the first legate sent from heaven, and the great High-Priest that mediates between God and man. Here note, that the function of an apostle and highpriest were the greatest functions that ever God instituted in his church: none greater than an highpriest under the law, none greater than an apostle under the gospel, both of them never conjoined in one man but here. Learn hence, that the Lord Jesus Christ is all in all unto his church, the King, Priest, Prophet, and Apostle of it, all in one: *consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession*,

2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house.

Because the Jews had generally too high an opinion of Moses, our apostle here enters upon a comparison between Christ and Moses, thus; "as Moses was faithful, so was Christ in declaring the will, the whole will of God unto his church. Was Moses universally faithful, faithful in all his house? So did the faithfulness of Christ extend itself to all the church. Did Moses do every thing according to the institution and appointment of God? So was Christ faithful to him that appointed him, doing all that in and for the church, which God had commanded him, and nothing else." Learn hence, that the worship of God in his household and family, the church, is for the substance of it, no less perfectly and completely ordered and ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, than it was by Moses of old under the law; I say, as to the substance of it, not as to every particular circumstance. As, for example, the manner of celebrating the passover, in every minute circumstance of it, is set down by Moses; how it must be killed, and how eaten; but Christ has not so set down for the sacrament; a general command we have to do this in remembrance of him; but neither the time when, nor place where, nor gestures in which, is particularly and expressively mentioned. The gospel, which teaches us a more spiritual way of serving God, is not so particular in the circumstances or worship as the law was, and yet "Christ was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was faithful in all his house."

3 For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honor than the house.

4 For every house is builded by some man: but he that built all things is God.

5 And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

6 But Christ, as a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.—

Our apostle having, in the preceding verses, entered upon a comparison between Christ and Moses, and showed in general wherein they were alike and did agree; he proceeds now to evince the presence of Christ, and to show in sundry signal instances his exaltation above Moses; *this man*, meaning the Messiah, *was counted worthy of more glory than Moses*; &c. As if he had said, "Christ is as much more honorable than Moses, as the maker and master of the house is more honorable than the house: he that buildeth

the house hath more honor than the house; but Christ built the house, and Moses was only of the house, or a part of it; therefore Christ ought to have more honor than Moses, for all families or houses are founded by some man; but he that built the church is the same that made all things, namely, God." Another proposition, proving the same conclusion, we have in the next verses: thus, he that is a son over his own house, is of more honor than a servant in the house of another. But Christ is a Son over his own house; Moses was only a servant in the house of another; therefore more honor his due to Christ than is payable to Moses. Learn hence, 1. That the church is God's house, a building of God, a sacred building, his special temple, the place of his constant and fixed residence. Learn, 2. That the building of the church, is so great and glorious a work, as that it could not be effected by any but him who was truly and really God: such is the wisdom of its contrivance, that none but a God could build it, and such omnipotent power was required in the building of it, that we may admire its excellency, but cannot comprehend it. Learn, 3. That Christ, the builder of his church, the house of God, is worthy of all glory and honor, upon the account of that his building; he had indeed an essential glory from all eternity, the same with that of God the Father, which was clouded for a season, by his taking upon himself the form of a servant: but there is a farther honor and glory which he received in his exaltation as Head of the church, and as Lord and Heir of the whole creation, which renders him the object of religious adoration. Learn, 4. That although every one that is employed as an instrument in building the house of God, and is faithful in his work and trust, is with Moses worthy of great honor, yet the honor of all such instruments put together, is inferior and subordinate to the glory and honor of Jesus Christ, the chief builder of the church.

—Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

The apostle having thus confirmed his argument, returns (according to his usual manner) to make application of it unto the Hebrews, and improves it for enforcement of his exhortation unto constancy and perseverance. Whose house are we; that is, believers who worship him according to the gospel are so, upon this condition, *that we hold fast our confidence*; that is, the confident profession of our christian faith, and the joy and glorying in our hopes of the promised blessedness unto the end. Learn hence, That as it is an eminent privilege to be of the house of Christ, or a part of that house, so the greatness of the privilege requires an answerable duty; because we are the house of God, it becomes us to hold fast our confidence unto the end. Learn, 2. That as at all times, so especially in a time of trial and persecution, constancy in our christian profession, is and will be a good evidence, both to ourselves and others, that we are living stones in the house of God; *his house we are, if we hold fast our confidence unto the end.*

7 Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will hear his voice.

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the

provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, provoked me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in *their heart*; and they have not known my ways,

11 So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.

The apostle having proved our Lord Jesus Christ to be the great Prophet and Teacher of his church, doth in these words draw an inference from the foregoing conclusion: namely, that seeing Christ is the chief apostle and prophet of his church, seeing he was a teacher sent of God to instruct the world in the practice of their reasonable duty, that therefore it is our obliged duty to hearken to Christ's voice, and that now to comply with his call, and that presently: "wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, and that is Christ; his voice; that is, the voice of Christ our great Apostle, speaking in his gospel. Observe, 2. A duty required of us in reference to his person, and that is to hear and obey Christ's voice. Observe, 3. The circumstance of time, and the special season when this duty of hearing Christ's voice is to be performed, and that is presently; "to-day if ye will hear his voice." Observe, 4. A cautionary direction given to all those that sit under the dispensation of the gospel, and hear Christ's voice speaking to them therein; namely to take heed that they harden not their hearts. Learn hence, 1. that the voice which speaks unto us in and by the gospel, is Christ's voice, 2. That it is the great duty of all those that sit under the preaching of the gospel, to hear and obey Christ's voice. Learn, 3. That it is not only their duty to hear Christ's voice, and answer his call in the gospel, but to do it now, to do it presently, and without delay; "to-day if ye will hear his voice." Learn, 4. That it is the duty and ought to be the special care, of all those that sit under the dispensation of the gospel, and that hear Christ's voice speaking to them therein, to take heed that they harden not their hearts. Observe, lastly, from our apostle's drawing an instance out of the Old Testament, namely, that of the Jews in the wilderness, to instruct the Hebrews to make use of the present season for hearing the voice of Christ under the New Testament; we learn, that Old Testament examples are New Testament instructions. The examples of our forefathers are of use and concernment to us, and ought to be the objects of our deepest consideration: "Your fathers tempted me, and I was grieved with that generation."

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The apostle having propounded the example of the Israelites, in the foregoing verses, to the consideration of the Hebrews, here he advises them to take care that they do not

imitate the old Israelites in their unbelief, which will endanger our revolt from God now, as it did theirs then; "take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Where note, the nature of sin in general, and of unbelief in particular, declared; it is a departure from God, from the living God; the root of all apostasy is cursed infidelity: unbelief sets all the corrupt lusts and affections of the heart at liberty to act according to their own perverse nature and inclination; for it makes the soul negligent, careless, and slothful in opposing sin. Note farther, that there is need of great care and heedfulness, of circumspection and watchfulness, lest at any time, or by any means, there should be found in us an evil heart of unbelief, to occasion our backsliding from Christ, and the profession of our faith in him; "take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing, &c."

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

These words afford a special remedy against the fore-mentioned evil of apostasy, and that is mutual exhortation to constancy of religion: "exhort one another," ministers the people, and the people their ministers, and themselves mutually. Learn hence, that sedulous and mutual exhortation is a special means to preserve christians from the sin and danger of apostasy from Christ, and his holy religion; *exhort one another daily*. Observe next, how this duty is amplified by the properties of it, it must be frequent, exhort one another daily; and seasonably, whilst it is called to-day. We have but an uncertain season for the due performance of most certain duties; how long it will be called to-day, we know not; the day of life is uncertain, and so is the day of the gospel; a summer's day for clearness, a winter's day for shortness; our working day is a wasting day. Observe, lastly, the great peril and danger which attend the neglecters and neglecting of this duty, *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. Learn hence, that sin is very full of deceit, or exceedingly deceitful. 2. That the deceit which is in sin, and inseparable from it, tends exceedingly to the hardening of the sinner. There are three eminent evils in sin; pollution, by which it defiles; baseness, by which it dishonors; deceitfulness, by which it deludes us with a false expectation of what it is never able to perform.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

That is, hereby we shall declare ourselves to be made partakers of Christ and his saving benefits, if we persevere in the faith of the gospel, of which we have begun to make a profession; intimating, that such christians as do renounce the profession of christianity, either through fear or flattery, were never made partakers of Christ, nor savingly united to him: no better evidence of our interest in Christ, than what perseverance gives.

15 While it is said, to-day if ye will

hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

The intention of our apostle in these and the following verses, is to confirm his preceding exhortation, to hearken unto the voice of Christ, speaking in and by the gospel: and this he does by propounding the example of the Israelites, who came forth out of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and heard the voice of God in the wilderness; they all came out of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and all heard the voice of God in the wilderness; howbeit all did not provoke, but only some. Note here, 1. How the apostle again repeateth over the words of the Psalmist, which he had mentioned before, v. 7, 8. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." From whence we may learn, that the repetition, yea, frequent repetition of matters of moment, is very useful and necessary: we can never hear that too often, which we can never learn too well. Note farther, the privilege which the Israelites of old enjoyed in the wilderness, and which we now enjoy under the gospel: both theirs and ours is this, *to hear the voice of God*. This is a very great privilege, but privileges are as men use them; in themselves they are very valuable, but unto us they are no more than as they are prized and improved by us. Many, yea, most of them to whom Christ himself preached, finally perished; they got nothing by hearing his doctrine, through their unbelief, but an aggravation of their sin, and hastening of their ruin. Christ himself, in his whole ministry, was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel. Let not his minister then be discouraged at the smallness of his own success, knowing that they shall be a sweet savor unto God, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved. Note lastly, that although many, very many in the wilderness that heard the voice of God, provoked him, yet not all, ver. 16. Some when they heard, did provoke, howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt. Learn hence, that in the most general and visible apostasy of the church, God evermore reserves a remnant to himself to bear witness for himself by their faith and obedience; *they provoked, howbeit, not all*. God always has, and ever will reserve a remnant of faithful and undefiled souls unto himself, to maintain and keep up his own kingdom in the world, and to have a revenue of special glory from them, and by them, so long as the world continues.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Observe here, The party grieved, God; the parties grieving, *the people of Israel*: the time of both, *forty years*; the occasion of this grief, sin in general, unbelief in particular, hardness of heart, and final apostasy; the punishment of their sin, *their carcasses fell in the wilderness*. Learn, 1. That sin is the proper object of God's displeasure, the only thing he is displeased with for itself, and with the sinner for sin's sake. Learn, 2. That public sins, or the sins of societies, are great, very great provocations unto God: it was not for their personal and private sins that God was thus provoked, but for their confederacy in sinning. Learn, 3. From their exemplary punishment, *their carcasses fell in the wilderness*; that God sometimes makes men who have been wickedly exemplary in sin, to be righteously exemplary in punishment.

20 And to whom sware he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

The rest here spoken of is the land of Canaan, so called, because God promised it to Abraham, to plant and settle his posterity in it; and because it typified heaven, that eternal rest which God has promised for his saints; into this rest the rebellious and unbelieving Israelites must not enter; God sware the contrary, he sware by himself, he sware in his wrath, he sware to make his sentence irrevocable and immutable. Lord! thine oath stands as a bar against all unbelieving sinners at this day, as it did against the Israelites of old, and cuts off all hope of future entrance into thy eternal rest which they have eternally forfeited: "to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Learn hence, 1. That unbelief is the immediate root and cause of all provoking sins. Did men believe the happiness of heaven, they would not neglect it; did they believe the torments of hell, they would avoid them. Learn, 2. That the oath of God is engaged against all unbelief, and no unbeliever shall enter into the rest of God, ver. 19. "We see they could not enter in because of unbelief."

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter is of the same nature, and carrieth on the same design with the foregoing; both of them contain an exhortation to faith, obedience, and perseverance; and inasmuch as the earthly Canaan was a type and figure of the heavenly rest, the apostle exhorteth all christians to take heed lest by unbelief they miss of the latter, as the Israelites did of the former.

LET us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

As if the apostle had said, "seeing you have so dreadful an example of God's wrath executed upon your fathers in the wilderness for their unbelief, take heed of their sin, lest ye suffer the like punishment." Here note, 1. The manner of the exhortation, and how the apostle includes himself in the admonition, *Let us fear*; it is wise and safe for the ministers of God to include themselves in the exhortations

and admonitions which they give to others; for they need excitement, and the means of establishment, as well as others. Note, 2. The affection of fear, which our apostle recommends for their preservation from falling; by which he means a fear of care, diligence and circumspection. Let us fear lest we come short and fail. Fear is a good monitor, and the best preservative from sin. Note, 2. The duty exhorted to, lest a promise of rest being made, we should fall short of attaining it, as the Israelites did that fell in the wilderness. Learn hence, 1. That it is matter of great and tremendous consequence, to have the promises of God propounded to us; they are either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death; one of these two will certainly be the consequent of their proposal. God will demand a strict account of his sons of men, of the entertainment given to his promises and threatenings. Learn, 2. That they which mix not the promises of God with faith, shall utterly come short of entering into God's rest. Learn, 3. That the failing of men through unbelief, doth no way cause the promises of God to fail or cease; the veracity of God is engaged for the stability of the promise; so that though men, by their unbelief, may disappoint themselves of their expectations, yet they cannot bereave God of his faithfulness.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Observe here, 1. That the gospel is no new doctrine, no new law, but one and the same to all persons, and at all times, ever since the first publication of it in the original promises, Gen. iii. 15. It is the same for substance, though not for clearness of revelation; the same gospel was preached to Adam, to Abraham, to the Israelites in the wilderness, which was preached by Christ and his apostles, but with clearer light, evidence, and power in the administration of it: *Unto us, was the gospel, the same gospel preached as well as unto them*. Observe, 2. That the generality of persons who have sat under the preaching of the gospel in all ages, have not savingly profited by it, *the word preached did not profit*; from the beginning it has been so, partly through carelessness, and want of due attention, in the hearers, and partly for want of meditation upon, and particular application of the word unto themselves after they have heard it; partly through the neglect of prayer for a blessing upon the word they hear: for these and the like causes, the word preached did not, nor does not profit. Observe, 3. That unbelief in man's heart is the great cause of that unprofitableness which is found in the word preached; unbelief hinders the efficacy of the word preached, by withholding men from yielding their assent to the truths they hear, by hindering them from applying, from a particular and close applying of the word they hear, to their own consciences: and unbelief hinders men from calling upon God, by prayer, for a blessing upon the word they hear. Observe, 4. That the word preached then profits, and only then, when it is a mixed word: the original word is a metaphor, taken either from seed, from meat, or from physic. As seed must be mixed with the soil, and with the dew and rain of heaven, or it will never spring and grow; or as

meat must be mixed with the stomach, or it will not nourish; and as physic must meet and mix with the humor, gripe and put the patient to some pain, or it will never cure: so must the word be rooted in the heart, or it will never fructify in the life; it must be mixed with faith, with love, with humility, with patience, or it will never bring forth fruit with joy.

3 For we which have believed, do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.—

As if the apostle had said, there is a rest promised to us believers, as well as the typical rest Canaan was promised to the Israelites. Learn thence, that the state of believers under the gospel, is a state of blessed rest. There is a spiritual rest which believers obtain entrance into by Jesus Christ, in the faith and worship of the gospel, besides their eternal rest in heaven. This spiritual rest consists in peace with God, in satisfaction and acquiescence in God, and in means of communion with God. Learn, 2. That it is faith alone which is the only way and means of entering into this blessed state of rest: *we who have believed do enter into rest*; as unbelief cuts off from, so faith gives an entrance into the rest of God. It follows,

—As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest:—

Observe, here is a threatening, confirmed by the oath of God, that they who believe not should never enter into his rest; and promise that such as do believe shall certainly enter. Learn thence, that there is a mutual in-being of promises and threatenings in the covenant, which must be considered together, and cannot be separated from each other. Where there is a promise expressed, there a threatening is tacitly understood; and where there is a threatening expressed, be it ever so severe, yet there is a gracious promise included: nay, sometimes God gives out a threatening for no other end, but that men may lay hold upon the promise. Thus the threatening that Nineveh should perish, was given out mercifully that Nineveh might not be destroyed. It follows.

—Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

That is, Almighty God, when he had perfected and finished the works of creation in six days, rested on the seventh day from his labor; showing us, by his own example, that work and labor must precede our rest: after God had finished the glorious work of creation, he returns as it were into his own eternal rest, and directs us to seek rest in himself; and, by his own example teaches us, that our days of labor must go before our day of rest.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God

did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this *place* again, if they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing, therefore, it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached, entered not in because of unbelief.

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day, after so long a time; as it is said, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

For the clearer understanding of these words, we must know, that there is a threefold rest spoken of in scripture, all which are called *His*; that is, God's rest, being all of his appointing and providing; namely, 1. The rest of the sabbath-day, in remembrance of God's resting from the work of creation. 2. The typical rest in the land of Canaan. 3. An eternal rest with God in heaven, of which the sabbath and the Israelites' rest in Canaan were a type and figure. Now the apostle's design is to prove that the rest which God principally intends for his people is this last rest, namely, an everlasting rest with himself in heaven; and this he evidently proves, because if that rest which they had obtained in the land of Canaan, under the conduct of Joshua, (called in Syriac, Jesus) had been all the rest which Almighty God intended for them, then it had been needless for David in the xivth Psalm, which was penned a long time after, even some thousands of years, to make mention of any other rest. But this he does; and therefore infers, that there is a third rest yet to come, which, by the preaching of the gospel, was now proposed to them, and that under the same promises and threatenings with the former. If Jesus or Joshua had given them the true spiritual and eternal rest here spoken of, in Canaan, then would not David afterward have spoken of another rest after their rest in Canaan; which seeing he has done, the apostle concludes, there must yet remain a farther rest to be enjoyed by the people of God. From the whole note, that God has, by promise, given his people a full assurance of enjoying a rest upon condition of faith; and this another manner of rest than that of Canaan, which the Israelites of old did enjoy.

9 There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God.

From the foregoing premises the apostle draws this conclusion. That there remaineth yet a more glorious, perfect, and complete rest for the people of God. Observe here, 1. Something implied, namely, that the people of God, whilst here on earth, have work to do, and labor incumbent upon them. Rest and labor are correlates, the one supposes the other; the apostle affirming, that there is rest remaining for them,

strongly supposes that there is labor at present belonging to them. God's people are an industrious working people: Christ's present call is to service and duty. Observe, 2. That God has already given his people a foretaste of, and some entrance into rest, during their present state of work and labor; the better to enable them for that, and the more to sweeten that to them. The state of sin is a state of all labor and no rest; the state of glory is all rest and no labor; but the state of grace is a mixed state, partly of labor, and partly of rest; of labor in respect of ourselves, in respect of the world, against sin, under affliction and persecution: but of rest in Christ, in his love, in his favor, and grace; and thus our labor makes our rest sweet, and our rest makes our labor easy. Observe, 3. That there is reserved and laid up in heaven, for all the people of God that serve him laboriously and faithfully here on earth, a sure and certain, a complete and perfect, a glorious and everlasting rest; for its quantity, it is full of rest; for its quality, it is unmixed rest; rest, and nothing but rest: for its duration, it is an eternal rest; the least fear of losing or leaving it, would imbitter all the joy which the saints taste in the fruition and enjoyment of it: *there remaineth, or there is laid up and reserved, a rest for the people of God.*

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

Into the spiritual heavenly rest, mentioned in the foregoing verse, the believer is said to have entered into this verse; and this is done two ways, initially, inchoatively, and imperfectly in this life; fully, finally, perfectly and completely in the next. They have now a present title and right to enter into this rest, the actual enjoyment and full possession of it is to come. Observe, 1. Believers have already entered initially into this rest whilst here on earth, and accordingly *have ceased from their own works*; that is, the works of the flesh, the service of sin; these they have discarded by repentance and mortification. Here note, that before conversion a person is doing his own works, fulfilling his own will, and not God's; but after he ceases from all sinful works, inchoatively, though not perfectly; "he that hath entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own works." Observe, 2. That when believers have finished all their works of evangelical obedience, they shall then, and not till then, fully and finally enter into God's rest, and be for ever happy in the enjoyment of it. All men desire rest, but it is not to be found on earth, but in heaven, not in the creature, but in God. O happy they, which, believing the excellency and glory of this rest, do work, wait, and wish for it, and with diligence and constancy, use all holy endeavours for the attaining and securing of it.

11 Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

As if our apostle had said, "seeing there is such an eternal glorious rest prepared for, and promised to believers, then it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour of every one of us to secure our title to it, and our interest in it, by a steadfast faith, and persevering obedience, lest, following the example of our fathers in the wilderness, we fall and

perish as they did. Learn hence, 1. That there is a rest promised to us under the gospel, as there was to the Jews of old under the dispensation of the law. Learn, 2. That the Jews heretofore, by the sin in general, by unbelief and disobedience in particular, did fall short of the rest proposed to them, and never entered in to it, but were destroyed by the just indignation of God. Learn, 3. That in the Israelites' sin and God's displeasure, in the event of the one, and in the effects of the other, that there was an example set forth, of what would be our own lot and portion, if through unbelief we fall short of the rest which the gospel proposes to us: "Let us labor to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." It is our duty, to improve examples, lest we be made examples of divine displeasure. Learn, 4. That we cannot rationally have the least expectation of escaping vengeance under the guilt of those sins, which others, in like manner, being guilty of, have not escaped; for with God there is no respect of persons. Did the Israelites miss of the earthly Canaan? So shall we of the heavenly through unbelief.

12 For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

As if the apostle had said, "take heed especially of unbelief: for the word of God, or doctrine of the gospel, will quickly find you out, if you be guilty of it. There is a piercing power in the word of God, through the energy and efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit; it is here compared to a sword, because it does divide things most nearly united, and discover things most inward and secret, or rather God by the word doth this; he by the word pierces, "even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit; that is, the actings of the understanding, and the motions of the will and affections, it cuts asunder the most resolute and compact purposes of the will: yea, it pierces to the marrow, that is, the most secret and close contrivances of the soul, the thoughts and intents of the heart. O mighty power of the word; and of God in and by the word, to convey strength to the weak, wisdom to the simple, comfort to the sorrowful, light to the blind, and life to the dead; it brings souls out of the captivity of sin into the blessed liberty of faith in Christ.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

There is not any one place of scripture, I think, which more fully informs us of the perfect and exact knowledge of Almighty God, as to our persons and things, than this before us. Observe, 1. The object, all and every thing, our persons, our actions, the manner of our actions, the design and end of our actions: he knows what we have been and done, and what we will be and do. Observe, 2. The full manifestation and clear representation of all persons and things

unto God. 1. All things are here said to be naked, unclothed, their dress and paint taken off; these words are an allusion to bodies, which being stripped and unclothed, all see what they are; there may be many deformities, blemishes, yea, ulcers, upon a body undiscovered, while it is clothed and covered; but when naked, every scar appears, and nothing is hid; *all things are naked in his sight*; that is, he as plainly discerns what they are, as we discern what a body is that stands naked before us. The knowledge which God has of persons and things, is a clear and distinct knowledge. 2. All things are here said to be open as well as naked, unto God; a metaphor taken, says St. Chrysostom, from the sacrificed beasts, which being excoriated, their skins plucked off, they were cut down from the neck to the rump, so that all the inwards of the beast lay bare, and every part might be clearly seen: it is one thing to see a sheep alive, with its skin and fleece on, and another thing to see it naked and flayed; but a farther thing to see it opened and embowelled, with all its intestines and inwards exposed to the eye. Others think there is in the original word an allusion to anatomists, who open and dissect human bodies, the heart, the liver, the lungs, the bowels, all exactly appear whether sound or decayed: such a kind of anatomy doth God make upon man's heart: his piercing eye sees and discerns what is flesh, and what is spirit in us, what is faith, what is fancy, what is grace in reality, and what in appearance only. Doubtless the phrase doth signify a most intimate, full, and thorough knowledge of all persons, and all things, which is found in that God with whom we have to do, and to whom we must give an account for all that we have done.

14 Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Our apostle comes now to assert the priesthood of Christ, and to set forth the dignity and excellency of his office; from whence he encourages the believing Hebrews to perseverance and steadfastness in the profession of their faith in him. Here note, 1. The eminency of the person, *Jesus the Son of God*; not by supernatural conception only, but by eternal generation also: this is the eminency of that person who is superior to men and angels. Note, 2. The excellency of his office, a Priest, an High-Priest, a great High-Priest: not barely equal with Aaron, but superior to him, and infinitely above him: the universal supreme Pontiff of heaven and earth, in comparison of whom all other priests, even the highest of them, were but shadows. Note, 3. His relation to us, *we have him*; that is, special interest in him, making profession of obedience to him; and he is passed into the heavens, to open heaven to us, and to make intercession with the Father for us. This entrance of Christ's into heaven, was shadowed forth by the highpriest's entrance into the holy of holies here on earth. Note, 4. Our obligation to him, *let us hold fast our profession*; that is, the profession of our faith in him; without wavering, with constancy and perseverance. Learn, hence, 1. That the great opposition, ever has been, and always will be made unto the steadfastness of believers in their holy profession. The apostle's exhortation plainly supposes opposition. Learn, 2. That it is our duty, in the midst of all opposition, to hold

fast our holy profession, without either apostatizing in the whole or declining in parts of it. The glory of God is in the highest manner concerned in it, and assured destruction attends the omission of it, and that in a peculiar, terrible, and dreadful manner, Chron. x. 29. Learn, 3. That believers have great encouragement unto, and assistance in the steadfastness and constancy of their holy profession, by and from the priesthood of Jesus Christ: for as he is our High-Priest, he knows our temptations, pities us under them, affords us actual help and belief against them, he interceding with the Father, that our faith may not fail, and that we may be kept by the almighty power of God, through faith unto salvation. Learn, 4. That Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, was the Son of God; and the necessity of his being so, did thus far appear; 1. Before the entrance of sin there was no need of the office of priesthood between God and man: for every one was then in his own name to go to God with his worship, which would have been accepted according to the law of creation. 2. Sin being entered into the world, there was no more worship to be performed immediately unto God; two cannot walk or converse together, except they be agreed. 3. That the worship of God might be again restored in and to the world, it was indispensably necessary that some one should interpose between sinners and the holy God: for should sinners approach him immediately in their own names, he would be unto them a consuming fire. 4. No creature could undertake the office of being a priest for the church of God, which now consisteth all of sinners: neither the nature of the office, which was to interpose between God and sinners, nor the quality of the work, which is to make atonement for sin, would admit of it. 5. Jesus Christ therefore undertaking to be a priest, for sinners, it was necessary he should be what he was, the very Son of God: which denotes his divine person and nature, and that our great High-priest was essentially and truly God: *seeing we have a great High-Priest, even Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

15 For we have not an highpriest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

These words contain a farther description of Christ our great High Priest, by his merciful disposition towards his people; he is said to be *touched*; that is, sensibly affected with the *infirmities*, that is, the miseries, sufferings and calamities, which the human nature is exercised with, and exposed to. Our Lord Jesus Christ, now in heaven, doth exercise a tender and compassionate spirit towards his suffering children and servants here on earth: he has an experimental knowledge of what his people suffer, either from God, or from man, for God's sake, as one that is interested in them, as one concerned for them, as one related to them, yea, as being one with them. This sympathy of Christ with, and towards his suffering people, is a tender sympathy, an extensive sympathy, it reaches all our infirmities, a proportionable sympathy, answerable to every occasion, a perpetual sympathy, as long as he continues High-Priest, and we remain subject to infirmities, so long will he be touched with the feeling of them. Observe, farther, the assigned reason why our great High-Priest is

so sensibly affected with our suffering condition: namely, because he was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. Christ, by assuming our nature, became humbly affectionate, and by suffering our infirmities, became experimentally compassionate. Here note, that temptations may be without sin; it is not our sin to be tempted, but to comply with the temptation. 2. That Christ was tempted, yea, in all points tempted like unto us: his temptations were in all points like ours; he was tempted to sin, yet without sin. There is a twofold temptation to sin, inward and outward; inwardly Christ was not tempted to sin, outwardly he was, and with greatest vehemency assaulted both by men and devils to the worst of sin that ever man was; but he always resisted, and always overcame. Oh, what a consolation is this unto us under all our temptations, that Christ was in all things tempted like unto us, but without sin!

16 Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

These words are an inference drawn from the apostle's foregoing discourse, "seeing we have such an High-Priest as is before described, let us come with boldness, with freedom and liberty to the throne of grace, &c." Note here, 1. There is a throne of grace which believers may come unto; God has a throne of justice, and a throne of grace: if he look upon man according to the law of works, he must needs sit upon the throne of justice as a severe Lord, and strict Judge, to condemn us; but being propitiated and atoned by the blood of Christ, his throne is a throne of grace and mercy, from which he represents himself to us as a God in Christ, as a God of forgiveness, as a God in covenant, and as a God that will have communion with us. Note, 2. That believers may come holdly, and with confidence to this throne of grace; they have liberty to do it, they have authority to do it, and may have confidence and assurance of audience in the doing of it. Note, 3. That all help, succour, and spiritual assistance in every time of need, is found with God, and proceeds from mere mercy and grace in God, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Note, 4. That the way to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need, is by a due application of our souls for it to the throne of grace; let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find help in time of need.

CHAPTER V.

Our apostle having in the foregoing chapter set forth the excellency of Christ's prophetic office, and proved him to have been a more excellent Prophet than Moses, yea, a person superior to angels, and thereupon exhorted to perseverance in the profession of the gospel, he comes now, in this, and in the following chapters, to discourse of the priesthood of Christ, as far more excellent than that of Aaron's, and consequently that there was all imaginable reason to persevere in christianity, in respect of this office likewise. In the chapter before us, the apostle informs us in the general, what an highpriest is; showing

none can be so who is not called of God; and then proves Christ to be so called. For thus he speaks:

FOR every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Observe here, The apostle describes an highpriest several ways. 1. By his original, *he is one taken from amongst men*: that is, of the same nature with themselves, otherwise, he had not been capable of those compassionate impressions which are required to the due discharge of his office. Thus Christ's participation of our nature was necessary to the discharge of his office as High-Priest, and a manifest evidence that he will be tender and compassionate towards them whose nature he sustains and bears. 2. He is described by the general nature of his office, he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God*; that is, he was to act and negotiate, for the good of sinful men, in things wherein they have to do more immediately with Almighty God; particularly to offer gifts, oblations, and sacrifices for their sins. Where note, that it was the entrance of sin that made the office of the priesthood necessary: had it not been for sin, every one might have gone to God in his own person, but now God will not be immediately treated with by any, but through the interposition of a Mediator; and he having first made an atonement for sin. 3. The high priest is here described by the exercise of his office, and the special discharge of his duty, which is, *to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins*, that is, to give satisfaction and make atonement for sins. Here note, that the light of nature dictates to us, that something ought to be offered unto God, in acknowledgment of his supreme dominion; and because men are guilty of sin, and God essentially just, sacrifices must be offered, and a priest ordained to offer those sacrifices for the averting of his wrath, and procuring of his favor: but by what sacrifices God will be atoned, and by whom, and in what manner they must be offered, not the law of nature, but the light of scripture, divine revelation must teach us. *Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men*; that is, instituted and appointed of God, for the service of men in things pertaining to God.

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way: for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity:

Our apostle proceeds in giving the character of the highpriest which God required under the law; he must have compassion for men, for sinful men, being compassed with sinful infirmities himself. Observe here, 1. A great and necessary qualification or endowment of an highpriest, he was, and is one able to have compassion; that is, able with all meekness and gentleness, with all patience and forbearance, to bear the infirmities, sins, and provocations of men, even as a nurse bears with the weakness and frowardness of a poor infant. Observe, 2. The peculiar object of his compassionate care and regard; namely, those that are ignorant, and do wander out of the way; in these two words does the apostle comprise all sorts of sinners.

whatsoever, with all sorts and kinds of sin. Observe, 3. A special reason rendered why the highpriest was thus compassionate, because *he himself is compassed with infirmities*; his own condition will mind him of his duty in this matter, being beset on every hand with infirmities of his own. Learn hence, 1. That it is a mighty privilege to us, that our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High-Priest, was encompassed with the sinless infirmities of our nature. 2. That no sort of sinners are excluded from an interest in the care and love of our compassionate High-Priest; such as are ignorant, and such as are *out of the way*, he has compassion upon both; none are excluded, but those who by unbelief do exclude themselves, and cause the blood of the reconciling sacrifices to cry against them.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

That is by reason of which infirmities he ought, both by God's command, and also from the reason and nature of the thing, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. Note here, That this is a description of the highpriest under the law, not of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High-Priest under the gospel, because Christ had actually no sin of his own to offer for, being holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. This expression therefore of offering for his own sins belongs to the weakness and imperfection of the legal highpriest. Learn hence, That it was a part of the darkness and bondage of the church under the Old Testament, that their highpriests had need to offer sacrifices for themselves, and their own sins: this they did in the view of the people. They first took care to offer for their own sins, and then for the sins of others: whosoever dealeth with God about the sins of others, ought to look well in the first place, unto his own: it is a great evidence of hypocrisy for men to be severe towards the sins of others, and careless about their own sins. Learn, 2. That such was the absolute holiness and spotless innocency of the Lord Jesus Christ our Great High-Priest, that what he offered was not for himself, but for his people. Atonement for sinners was made by him who had no sin of his own to atone for.

4 And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec:

The foregoing verses declare the personal qualifications of the highpriest: here we have his call and commission to this office and function: the former made him meet for it, the latter gave him right unto it. *No man taketh this honor*: that is, the honor of priesthood to himself, but only he that

is called of God, as was Aaron, and his posterity. Note here, 1. That it is an act of sovereignty in God, to call whom he pleases to his work and service. 2. That as it is an act of sovereignty in God, so it is a special dignity and honor to us to be duly called to, as well as qualified for, his work and service. Learn, 3. That the highest excellency, and utmost necessity of any work or service to be here done for God, will, by no means warrant our undertaking of it, and engaging in it, without a lawful call unto it. Learn, 4. That the more excellent any work of God is, the more express ought to be our calling to it. *No man taketh this honor upon him, but he that is called of God*: it were well if our lay preachers considered this. Observe next, How the apostle applies all this to Christ: *So also Christ our great High-Priest, glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest, uncalled, but he dignified him who said unto him, Thou art my Son; and thou art a priest for ever; without succession after the order, similitude, and manner of Melchisedec.* Learn hence, That the office of the high priesthood over the church of God, was an honor and glory to Jesus Christ; it was so to his human nature, even as it was united to his divine nature. *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest*, implying that it was a glory and honor, though not assumed, but conferred: and that as Aaron was called of God, so was Christ, but in a more excellent and glorious manner. By this we understand the intolerable pride, and bold presumption of many in these times, who take upon them to officiate in matters of religion, though neither qualified for, nor called to this work: if ever any man or angel, then surely Christ might have taken this honor to himself, yet he did not uncalled: verily, this will be the eternal condemnation of all such usurpers, who, without any commission from God or man, undertake what they do not understand.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Observe here, 1. A special act of Christ's priesthood or priestly office. *He offered up.* 2. The subject matter of his offering, *supplications and prayers.* 3. The intense manner of his offering, *with strong cries and tears.* 4. The person to whom he offered, unto God, *who was able to save him from death.* 5. The time of his offering; *in the days of his flesh*; that is, in the time of this mortal life, when clothed with our frail nature. 6. The issue and success of all this, *he was heard in that he feared.* Learn hence, 1. That the holy Jesus did not only take upon him our human nature, but the infirmities of our nature also. Christ had in this world a time of infirmities as well as ourselves. True, his infirmities were sinless, but sorrowful and grievous, which exposed him to all sorts of temptations and sufferings. Learn, 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, offered up most ardent prayers and supplications to Almighty God, in the days of his flesh upon his own and our behalf. The text mentions *prayers and supplications, with strong cries.* Learn, 3. That Christ shed tears as well as blood for a lost world;

he offered up strong cries and tears: by this he showed the truth of his humanity, and that he did not accept only the human nature, but did also assume human affections. Learn, 4. That Christ's prayers were always heard, either in kind or in equivalency: he was not specifically heard as to the passing of the cup from him, when he prayed in the garden; but he was equivalently heard as to the support of his spirit, and as to the supplies of strength, to enable him to drink the bitter cup with silence and submission; *he was heard in that he feared*, by being delivered, not from death, but out of death, as his followers must expect to be delivered.

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Observe here, 1. Christ's eminent dignity; he was a Son, that is, the Son of God, and God himself; *the word was God*, John i. 1. And as the word was made flesh, so he was nearer to God than any other person; he was a Son, a sinless Son, yet a suffering Son; and he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Observe, 2. As Christ's eminent dignity, so his exemplary obedience; he learned obedience: not by personal speculation, but by real experience; he experimentally understood what obedience was. Note here, That there are two ways of learning obedience. 1. By the comprehension of the mind. 2. By the experience of sense. Christ as God was perfect in knowledge, nothing could be added to him, but when he became man, then he came to understand and learn by sufferings, which was a new method and way of knowing. And the obedience which Christ learned, was free and voluntary, universal and complete, sincere and pure, persevering and constant. Christ learned this lesson of obedience, not barely to know it, but to do it: to learn to obey, is to obey by the things which he suffered; he did perfectly learn, and experimentally understand, what obedience was. O blessed Jesus! As didst thou, so may we learn practical obedience by the things which we suffer.

9 And, being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Observe here, 1. A choice and singular blessing and benefit spoken of, and that is, eternal salvation; which implies not only deliverance from hell, and redemption from eternal misery, but the obtaining of eternal life and happiness. Observe, 2. The author of this great blessing and benefit to mankind, namely, Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, who, by making atonement for us, and reconciling us to God, is said to be the author of eternal salvation to mankind. Observe, 3. The way and means whereby he became the author of our salvation, and that was by *being made perfect*; the original word is an allusion to one that runs in a race, where he that wins receives the crown. Thus Christ having finished his course of sufferings; and received the reward of them, by being raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, he is said to be made perfect. Observe, 4. The qualification of the persons who are made partakers of this great benefit, or the condition upon which it is offered and tendered, and that is obedience. *He became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.*

Quest. 1. How does Christ become the author of eternal salvation? Ans. As a rule and pattern, as a price and propitiation, and as an advocate and patron: by the purity of his doctrine, as a rule; by the piety of his example as a pattern; by the merit of his obedience and sufferings, as a propitiation; and by his prevailing intercession, as our Advocate now in heaven. Where note, That the virtue of his intercession in heaven is founded on his satisfaction here on earth, in shedding of his blood for us. Quest. 2. What obedience does the gospel require as a condition, and is pleased to accept as a qualification, in those who hope for eternal salvation? Ans. Negatively, not a bare external profession of obedience, though accompanied with prophesying and working miracles, but an hearty and universal conformity, to the precepts of the gospel in sincerity and uprightness; allowing ourselves in the neglect of no known duty, nor in the practice of any known sin. Quest. 3. But is fallen man under a possibility now of performing this obedience? Ans. We are no more sufficient of ourselves, and by any power of our own, to perform the conditions of the gospel, than we are able to answer the demands of the law. But the grace of God is offered to us, and stands ready to assist us to perform the conditions which the gospel requires. Consequently, what the grace of God stands ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves, that may properly be said to be possible to us, and in some sense in our power to perform. Quest. 4. But is not making our obedience the condition of our salvation prejudicial to the freeness of God's grace, and the law of faith? Ans. In no wise; seeing it is acknowledged, that faith is the root of all true holiness and evangelical obedience; that we stand continually in need of the assistance of God's grace, to enable us to perform that obedience which the gospel requires, and is pleased to accept; and that God confers eternal life upon us, not for the merit of our obedience, but only for the sake of Christ. The sum of all is this, That it is indispensably necessary for a man to be a good man, that he may get to heaven; and that it is the greatest presumption in the world for any man to hope to attain salvation without obedience, and an holy life: for though our obedience cannot merit heaven; yet it does qualify and fit us for heaven; though it doth not make us worthy, yet doth it make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And whosoever finds fault with this doctrine, finds fault with the gospel itself.

10 Called of God an high-priest, after the order of Melchisedec.

These words may be looked upon as an evidence and testimony, that the Lord Jesus Christ was, and is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, because he is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec; that is, because his priesthood is eternal. Note here, 1. That God was pleased to put a signal honor upon the person and office of Melchisedec, that in him there should be an early and excellent representation made of the person and priesthood of Jesus Christ. Melchisedec was an illustrious type of Christ; he was the first personal type of Christ that ever was in the world; after him, there were many others, and he was the only type of the person of Christ that ever was in the world. Others were types of Christ in the execution of his office, but none but Melchisedec were ever types of his person for being introduced without father, without mother, without

beginning of days, nor end of life, he was made like to the Son of God, of whom it is said, *who can declare his generation?* And farther, Melchisedec was a type of Christ in these two great offices of a King and a Priest, which none but he ever was. Note, 2. That the priesthood of Christ was not after the order of Aaron, which was to expire, and not to last long, but after the order of Melchisedec, which was to continue and last for ever: *thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* The priesthood of Christ is an eternal priesthood, *he ever liveth to make intercession for us.*

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing.

That is, of which priesthood of Christ, as compared with Melchisedec, we have much to say, which is not easy to make intelligible by words, to those that are ignorant and dull of understanding. Learn hence, 1. That all scripture truths are not equally easy to be understood, but require a peculiar diligence in our attendance upon them, that they may be understood. Learn, 2. That it is the incapacity of hearers, through dulness and slothfulness, and want of preparatory knowledge, which makes scripture teaching no more and no better understood: all our miscarriages under the word, are to be resolved into our sloth, negligence, and depraved affections; *we have many things to say, but ye are dull of hearing.*

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

As if the apostle had said, "when for the time that you have professed the christian faith, you ought to have been able to be teachers of it to others, you had need yourselves to be instructed in the first rudiments of the christian religion, and are become such as have need of milk, the food of babes, and not of strong meat, the food of men." Learn hence, 1. That the time when, and how long we enjoy the dispensation of the gospel, is a circumstance which must, in particular, be accounted for; whereas for the time, all have time, but all have not time alike: the day of the gospel is not of the same length to all nations, churches and persons. Learn, 2. That it is reasonably expected by God that persons should thrive and grow in knowledge and holiness, proportionably to their time and means; and not doing so, is charged upon them as a great aggravation of their guilt: *for the time ye ought to have been teachers*: that is of ability sufficient for the teachers of others. They had not learned of their teachers, when the apostle had reason to hope they had been able to teach their learners. Many, after long teaching, are ignorant, and ought to be taught again the same things which they long ago heard. Learn 3. That the holy scriptures are to be looked upon, consulted with, and submitted to, *as the oracles of God*; they are sometimes called the living, sometimes the lively oracles of God; because they are the oracles of the living God, and also life-giving oracles to them that obey them. Learn, 4. That there are, in the scripture, truths suitable to the spiritual instruction

and edification of all sorts of persons; there is in it both milk and strong meat, plain doctrine and first principles necessary for all, and truths of a deeper search that are profitable to some. "In the scripture, said one, there are shallows and there are depths; fords where the lambs may wade, and depths where the elephants may swim."

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them, that are of full age, *even* those, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Our apostle here speaks of the difference of doctrines under the metaphor of meats: from whence we may gather, 1. That the word of God in the dispensation of it, is food provided for the souls of men. 2. That the word, as food, will not profit the soul until it be eaten, and digested: it is not food prepared, but food received, that nourishes. When manna was gathered and eaten, it nourished the Israelites; but when gathered and laid by, it putrefied and bred worms. Lord! What pains do some take to gather manna, to hear the word, but alas! it lies by them, and is of no use. Learn, 3. That as the gospel is the word of righteousness, so God requires and expects that all those who live under the dispensation of the gospel should be skilful in the word of righteousness. The gospel is a word of righteousness; it is so declaratively, it is so efficiently: declaratively, as this severity of God against sin is hereby more fully revealed, and as the righteousness which God requireth, approveth, and accepteth for our justification, is therein declared: and the righteousness which God requireth in us, and expecteth from us, is hereby discovered also; and as it is the great instrument of working holiness in us, and making us inherently righteous, so it is the word of righteousness efficiently as well as declaratively: our justification is wrought in us thereby, John xvii. 17. Learn, 4. That the spiritual senses of believers, well exercised in the word of righteousness, are the best and most undeceiving helps in judging of what is good or evil, what is true or false, that is proposed to them: such by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

CHAPTER VI.

The holy apostle having in the foregoing chapters largely treated of the divinity of our Saviour's person, and the dignity of his priesthood; showing, that he was a more excellent priest than Aaron, even an eternal High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec, in whom both crown and mitre, kingdom and priesthood did concentre.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, he gave the Hebrews a very smart reproof for their dulness and ignorance, comparing them to children, yea, to babes that must be fed with the milk, that is, plain, and easy doctrines, the first principles and rudiments of christianity, as being incapable of strong meats, that is, the harder and higher mysteries of religion.

He begins this chapter with an exhortation to them, to increase both in knowledge and obedience; exciting them to advance to an higher and more perfect degree of knowledge in the christian religion, than the first principles and ground work of it. And accordingly he thus bespeaks them, ver. 1.

THEREFORE, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;—

In these words of the apostle, he seems to allude to the building of an house; as in that, we first lay a good and sure foundation, but do not rest there, but proceed in raising up the fabric; in like manner, it is neither satisfactory nor sufficient to advance no further in the christian religion, than the knowledge of the first principles of it; but endeavours must be used to attain a more perfect degree and measure of knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel. *Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, he means not leaving them so as to forget them, and lay them aside, but to leave them by going beyond them, and advancing further and higher in the knowledge of christianity. Learn hence, 1. That in christianity, and other sciences, there are certain rudiments and fundamental principles, which must and ought to be carefully taught. 2. That it is a necessary and useful practice, in the church of God, to teach the doctrine of christianity, in the first principles of it, plainly and summarily to young beginners. Learn, 3. That when the ministers of the gospel have laid a good foundation of scripture knowledge in the understanding of their hearers, they must excite them by their pressing considerations to make a further progress in their knowledge, and leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, go on unto perfection.

—Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

Still our apostle pursues his metaphor, in comparing christianity to a building, and the first rudiments or principles of the christian religion to a foundation which supports the superstructure. Next he summarily declares what these fundamental doctrines and first principles of the christian religion are, namely, these six. 1. *Repentance*, or a turning from all sinful works, called *dead works*, because they end in death; dead, because deadly; they proceed from death spiritual, and end in death eternal. 2. *Faith towards God*, or faith in God; that is, in the whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Particularly, faith in the first original promise of God, to send Christ into the world to save us from our sins, and granting remission of sins by him. Here note, How closely repentance and faith are united and knit together; where the one is, there is the other; and where either is not, there is neither. He repenteth not, who hath

not faith towards God, and he hath not faith towards God, who repenteth not. 3. *The doctrine of baptisms*: that is, of both the christian sacraments, as also of the covenant of grace of which the sacraments are seals. Persons admitted into the church by baptism, ought to be well instructed, as soon as capable of it, in the nature, use, and end of the sacraments; acquainting them not only with the nature of the outward sin, but with the necessity of the inward grace. 4. *The doctrine of laying on of hands*, to confirm the baptized persons in the faith, and to oblige and enable them to keep the covenant they entered into with God, when they were baptized; which was done before their admission to the Lord's table. Imposition, or laying on of hands, was an ancient and venerable rite, used in the primitive church upon several occasions; particularly, in ordination, in absolution of penitents, in healing the sick, in conferring the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 17. And, lastly, in confirmation, when baptized persons were brought before the church, to acknowledge, confirm, and renew their baptismal covenant with God; and to receive the benefit of public prayer and episcopal benediction, in order to the further endowments of grace to perform their vows, adorn their profession, and be admitted to the Lord's table, as complete members of the visible church of Christ. 5. *The resurrection of the dead*, a doctrine denied by the sadducees, derided by the Athenian philosophers, and perverted by heretics; but is a fundamental principle of the gospel; the faith whereof is indispensably necessary unto our consolation, and has a peculiar influence upon our obedience. This is the animating principle of gospel-obedience, because we are assured that our services shall not only be remembered, but rewarded also. 6. *The eternal judgment*, which will doom men to everlasting rewards and punishments in a future state. The ministers of the gospel ought to dwell much upon this fundamental principle of religion, to represent the dread and terror of that eternal day to all men, to the intent they may be excited and stirred up to take effectual care that they fail not under the vengeance of that fatal day. These six principles being laid down by the apostle, he tells them his resolution, to endeavour the carrying of them on to a more perfect degree and measure of knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel; in order to their becoming skilful in the word of righteousness; "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; which we will do, if God permit."

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

By the *enlightened*, here understand those that were baptized, and embraced christianity; the ancients called bap-

tism illumination, and baptized persons *the enlightened*; because of that divine illumination which was conveyed to the minds of men by the knowledge of christianity. *By tasting the heavenly gift*, and being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, understand such as had not only heard of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but had some experience of them themselves; as also of the spiritual benefits conferred upon them in baptism, by the Holy Spirit. *By tasting the good word of God*, understand some relish of the truth and goodness of the gospel, some pleasure in entertaining it, by reason of the gracious promises of eternal life and happiness contained in it. The gospel that proclaimed remission of sins, was a *good word*; this good word they saw confirmed by miracles, tongues, and prophecy, and so could not but be convinced of the truth of it, which is here called a *tasting* it; who have *tasted the good word of God*: it follows, *and the powers of the world to come*; that is, the powers of the gospel age; for the world to come, in the language of the prophets, doth signify the times of the Messiah. And thus, *the powers of the world to come*, are the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon men, in order to the propagation of the gospel; such were the gifts of healing, casting out devils, working miracles. Others, by *tasting the powers of the world to come*, understand some apprehensions of the resurrection and future judgment, with affections suitable thereunto. Now concerning these, says our apostle, *if they fall away*; that is, if they shall, after all this apostatize from this profession, out of love to this present world, or from fear of persecution and sufferings, if they shall relapse either to Heathenism, or Judaism, *it is impossible to renew them again to repentance*; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that such wilful apostates should be restored again by repentance: "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;" that is, they virtually, and in effect crucify him over again, and as much as in them lies: for, by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an impostor, and consequently worthy of death. So that the plain sense of the words seems to be this: "if those that are baptized, and have received the doctrine of the gospel, and are endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, shall yet, after this, apostatize from christianity, it is very difficult, and next to an impossibility, to recover such again by repentance; seeing they are guilty of as great a crime, as if, in their own persons, they had put to death, and ignominiously used the Son of God." Here note, that it is not impartial apostasy from the christian religion, by any particular vicious practice, but a total apostasy from christianity, and more especially to the heathen idolatry, which is here intended. From the whole, learn, 1. That they which have been enlightened, awakened, and made partakers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in some measure, and tasted the sweetness of the word and ways of God in some degree, may yet fall away. 2. That if such do fall away, it is very difficult, though not altogether impossible, to renew them again to repentance: and that for these reasons; 1. Because of the greatness and heinous nature of the sin, it being a downright apostasy from God, against the clearest light and knowledge, and fullest conviction of a man's mind; and the highest affront to the Son of God, who revealed the christian religion to the world, and sealed it with his blood. 2. Because those who are guilty of this sin, do renounce and cast off the means of

their recovery, and therefore it becomes extremely difficult to renew them again to repentance: they reject Christ and his holy gospel, and refuse the only remedy appointed for their recovery. 4. Because it is so high a provocation to God, to withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from such persons by the power and efficacy whereof they should be brought to repentance: God justly leaving those who so unworthily leave him. Lord! how fearful and fatal a condition is it, to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; to decay in religion, and apostatize from grace; to have had some work of the Spirit and word upon our hearts, so as to have light and love, some taste and savor of religion, some desires after, and hopes of heaven; and, after all, to cool and give over, to revolt and backslide, and have our latter end worse than our beginning?

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God;

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

The design and scope of our apostle in these words is threefold. 1. To set forth the excellency and necessity of the gospel, dispensed to us in the ministry of the word; he compares it to rain, which doth soften, refresh, and fructify the earth. 2. He discovers the different effect which the word of God, or the doctrine of the gospel, has upon different persons that sit under the preaching and dispensation of it; the sincere christian becomes fruitful under the dews and showers of divine grace, and receives a blessing; but the barren and fruitless professor is like an howling wilderness, or dry desert, which, after innumerable refreshing showers, brings forth nothing but briers and thorns. 3. He declares the different state and condition of such persons. A people that answers God's care and cost, is like a field that drinks in the rain, bringeth forth herbs, and receives a blessing. But such a people, as, after all the refreshing showers from heaven, and after all the culture and labor of God's husbandmen on earth, shall remain bushes and briers, barren and unfruitful under all, or worse than such; they are *nigh unto cursing* and their *end is to be burned*. Blessing attends the one, burning awaits the other. Note, 1. That what the rain is to the earth, that is the word of God, and the doctrine of the gospel to the souls of men. Is the rain of heavenly extraction? So is the word of God. Does the rain fall by divine direction? So does the word preached. Does the rain distil down gradually and successively, not all at once? So does the word fall, here a little, and there a little. Does the rain mollify and soften, revive and refresh, fructify and make fruitful where it falls? So does the word preached: Col. i. 6. The word of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit; since the day you heard of it. In a word, as after plenty of rain there follows a great drought, and want of rain, so after a long and plentiful enjoyment of the gospel, if people do not prize and improve their mercies, God will cut them short, and deprive them of them. Note, 2. That it is possible for a people to sit long

under the ministry of the word, that spiritual rain, that celestial dew may be daily dropping and distilling down upon them, and yet that people may be bush and brier after all; barren and unfruitful in the account of God. Note, 3. That a people so remaining, and under such advantages, are *nigh unto cursing, and their end is to be burned*. Barrenness under the dispensation of the gospel, is always accompanied with an increase of sin, and of condemnation also: those that are not, because they will not be healed and reformed by the preaching of the gospel, are righteously given up by God to extreme obstinacy, and final obduration.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Observe here, 1. The holy wisdom of our apostle in mollifying the severity of the foregoing commination and prediction; and the good hope, and firm persuasion he had of the Hebrews' perseverance in grace unto salvation, notwithstanding all the cautions and warnings he gave them of apostasy and apostates: "I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak." We may represent the ugly and filthy face of sin to our best friends, to the end that they may hate it, and escape it: we may be confident of another's sincerity, and, as occasion requires, publicly testify that confidence to themselves; "we are persuaded better things of you." Observe, 2. The ground of this confidence declared, and that is twofold: 1. The graces of God's Spirit found operative to them; their faith in Christ, and love to all his members; it was a working faith, and laborious love that was found with them, "they have administered to the saints, and do minister." Behold the nature of christian love, it is an immortal fire, ever burning, never dying. 2. Another ground of this persuasion, was the knowledge of God's faithfulness in remembering and rewarding this their labor of love: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love;" that is, God is righteous, and will certainly remember and reward your faith, your charity, and good works; for he has promised so to do, and he is faithful that has promised. Learn hence, 1. That faith, if it be a living faith, will be a working faith. Obedience is the fruit of faith, and we ought to look on obedience as our work. Learn, 2. That it is the will and pleasure of God, that many of the saints and servants in this world be in such a condition, wherein they stand in need of being ministered unto. Learn, 3. That the best evidence we can have of the sincerity of our love, is its readiness to minister to the saints in all distresses. Learn, 4. That both the labor of our sufferings, and the labor of our services, shall be remembered, and rewarded by a righteous God: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labor of love, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister."

11 And we desire that every one of you

do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Note here, 1. That although the apostle had a firm persuasion, that they were sincere and upright, and would hold on their way, yet he exhorts them to show the same diligence which they had done, and to persevere to the end, as they had begun. Learn hence, That ministerial exhortation unto duty is needful, even unto them that are sincere in the practice of it, that they may abide and continue therein: "we desire that you show diligence unto the end." Note, 2. The special duty he exhorts them to, and that is, to attain a full assurance of hope. Hope is a certain and assured expectation of good things promised, accompanied with love, and a longing desire to enjoy them. A full assurance of hope, is such a fixed, constant, and prevailing persuasion, concerning the good things promised, and our certain enjoyment of them, as will support us under, and carry us through all the difficulties and troubles that we conflict with. Learn hence, That a good man may, in this life, arrive at an assurance of faith and hope, as touching the goodness of his condition in the life to come. The original word signifies a full gale of hope, a metaphor taken from sailors, who enter the harbour with a full gale of wind, both with facility and safety. The christian's soul is a ship sailing in a tempestuous sea: faith represents the pilot, love the sail, hope the wind that must fill the sail: be the pilot ever so confident, the sail spread to the utmost, yet without a gale of wind the ship lies becalmed, moves not towards the harbour. A christian on earth without hope, is as a ship at sea without wind. Note, 3. The special means directed to, in order to the attaining of this full assurance of hope, and that is, to show diligence, the same diligence, and that to the end. Learn thence, that christians ought by no means to wax secure, but to use all diligence to the end of their lives, for the heightening of their hope to a full assurance; "we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end."

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Our apostle having exhorted the Hebrews to great diligence in good works in the former verse, in this verse endeavours to excite and provoke them to it by the examples of deceased saints, who are now reaping the reward of their former pains, and inheriting the promises. Here note, 1. A cautionary direction given, *that ye be not slothful*, either timorous and fainthearted, or remiss and negligent. God having engaged so firmly on his part, to let nothing be wanting which is requisite to enable us to persevere; if we miss of the promise, that is, of heaven the good promised, we must thank our own sloth for it. Note, 2. The great duty exhorted to, and that is, to be followers of the saints: *be followers of them*; that is, vigorously and constantly imitate them in their graces and gracious conversations. The graces of the saints (whether living or dead) are patterns presented to our imitation. Note, the particular and special graces in the saints, which we are to imitate and follow, namely, their faith and patience: their faith, that is, their firm trust in God, and belief of his promises, relying on his word under all trials: and their patience, that is,

their perseverance in well doing, and patient expectation under all delays, and constant adherence to him under all difficulties. Learn hence, 1. That heaven is not ours by purchase, but by promise. 2. That heaven is a promised inheritance, which saints, by faith and patience, have possessed. 3. That by being followers of them in their faith and patience, he may also come with them to inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

The apostle having told us in general, that the saints by faith and patience do inherit the promises; instances here particularly in Abraham, unto whom God made a promise of multiplying his seed greatly to him, and confirmed that promise by an oath; but Abraham waited long by faith and patience for the complete fulfilling of the promise; and so must we. God delights to be trusted by his people upon his word and oath; and when they do not live to see the promise of God fulfilled, they glorify him exceedingly, by dying in the faith and firm belief, that it shall be fulfilled in God's own appointed time. Note here, the wonderful condescension of God towards the infirmity of men, he swears, he swears by himself, he pawns and pledges his Godhead, and if he performs not what he promises and swears, is willing to forfeit it. *O felices nos? Quorum causâ Deus jurat! O miserimi! Si nec juranti credamus.* "O happy man! For whose sake God condescends to swear, O miserable men! if we doubt of God's promise confirmed by his oath in which he hath lain down his Godhead as a stake and pawn, never to take it up again, if he fails in the least jot, in the punctual performance of it."

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

These words contain a reason, why God, in gracious condescension to man's infirmity, is pleased to confirm his promise with an oath; it is to determine a controversy, and put an end to a strife depending between God and the fallen creature; and this is the general reason for an oath amongst men, it is to put bounds and limits to the contentions and contradictions of men; to make an end of all strife between them, which otherwise would be perpetuated, and to bring them to a mutual acquiescence: *an oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife.* Learn hence, 1. That there is, as we are in a state of nature, a strife and difference between God and us. 2. That the promises of the gospel are gracious proposals of the only way and means for the ending of that strife. 3. That the oath of God interposed for the confirmation of these promises, is every way sufficient on God's part, to put a period to this strife, and to establish a firm peace with us through the blood of Christ, "Men verily

swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife."

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.—

Here the apostle acquaints us with the design of God in confirming his promise, namely, to manifest the immutability of his counsel to us; that is, his decree and purpose for our salvation; to the intent, that by his word and oath we might have strong consolation. So unspeakable is the weakness of our faith, that we stand in need of the utmost condescension of God for its confirmation. Note here, that God has made many promises for the confirmation of his people's faith. God's oath is a surety for his promises; and that God's end, both in his promise and his oath is to give his people the highest assurance, and strongest consolation.

Quest. Why are we so hard to believe God upon his single word; yea, can scarce trust him upon his oath? *Ans.* Because of our guilt; now guilt is always full of fear, and fear full of suspicion and distrust; and because the way of reconciliation is so rare and wonderful, that we can scarce conceive it, much less believe it, also the privileges of the gospel are so glorious, that they exceed our beliefs; and because we ourselves are so false and fickle, both with God and one another, that promises, vows, and oaths, are all little enough to hold us. Now we are apt to measure God by ourselves, therefore he gives us his oath. Inference, 1. How ought we to bind ourselves to God by oath, seeing he condescends thus to bind himself to us? 2. How unreasonable is it for the believer to distrust God upon his oath? This is not only to accuse God of a lie, but to impeach him of perjury. 3. How absurd is it for the impenitent sinner not to tremble at the threatenings of God, which are confirmed by an oath, as well as his promises? "I have sworn in my wrath, they shall never enter into my rest."

—Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

In these words there is an allusion to the cities of refuge spoken of under the law; God appointed six of them for those to fly unto, who were guilty of casual homicide, or killing a man by chance, that so they might avoid the fury of the avenger of blood. Now these cities of refuge were an illustrious type of Christ. Note here, 1. Christ is the believer's city of refuge, the only sanctuary for distressed souls. 2. That believers do by faith fly unto him for refuge, when the guilt of sin, and the wrath of God for sin, do pursue and follow them. This flying for refuge doth imply diligence and earnestness, as in the case of life and death, yea, unwearied diligence; and it implies continuance in this refuge, when once got into it, not to stir out of it for all the world. Lord! open the eyes, and awaken the consciences of all impenitent sinners, make them sensible that the avenger of blood is at their heels, and that their damnation slumbers not

if they do not presently fly from the wrath to come, and take sanctuary in thy Son.

19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

In these words we have the nature of a christian's hope described. 1. By a metaphorical; 2. By a typical similitude. 1. Observe the metaphor made use of, to set forth the nature and office of hope, it is compared to an anchor; *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.* Doth the anchor hold fast the ship, and keep it steady, both in storms and tempests, and in the midst of the most tumultuous waves? In like manner, the hope of eternal glory quiets, stays, and strengthens the christian's spirit, when tossed upon the waves of this troublesome world. Learn hence, 1. That believers are exposed to many storms and tempests here in this world: their afflictions, persecutions, temptations, fears, &c. are compared fitly to storms, because of their fierceness and violence, and because of their tendency to ruin and destruction. Learn, 2. That these storms would prove ruinous to the souls of believers, did not hope, the anchor of the soul, take fast hold upon the promises of the gospel, which keeps the christian firm and invincible against all oppositions; "*which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.*" Observe, 2. Hope is described by a typical similitude, it *entereth into that within the veil.* The veil here alluded to, is that which parted the holy of holies from the body of the temple, a type of heaven. The heavens are as a veil to the sense and reason of man, there their sight and their thoughts are bounded, they can neither discern nor judge of any thing that is above or within that veil: but faith and hope pierceth through it; no created thing can keep them at a distance from God himself. As the anchor stays not in the waves of the sea, but pierces through them all till it comes to the solid bottom: so the christian's hope fixes on nothing under heaven; but pierces through all, till it *entereth into that within the veil:* that is, till it fixes on God as the author, on Christ as the purchaser, on the Spirit as the insurer, on the covenant as the conveyer of all grace, mercy and peace. Here hope fixes itself, to hold the soul firm and steadfast in all the storms that may befall it. Learn hence, 1. That the hope and faith of believers are invisible unto the world; they *enter within the veil*, where the world's eye can never follow them. Learn, 2. That hope firmly fixed on God in Christ by the promise, will hold the soul steady, and keep the christian tight, in all the storms that may befall it. "*It is an anchor both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*"

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an highpriest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Observe here, The person spoken of, Christ; the subject matter spoken of him, his entering into heaven; and the quality in which he entered heaven; namely, as our forerunner. This denotes, 1. His public capacity, that he entered heaven in our name, and to negotiate our affairs. 2. His absolute precedency, he is our forerunner, but he himself had no forerunner, none entered before him in their own names, but in his, and upon his account through the virtue

of his merits, and by the prevalency of his mediation. Learn hence, 1. That there is a place and state of happiness above, prepared for pious souls, which Christ is already entered into, and has taken possession of: this place may be considered in its amplitude and largeness, in its stability and firmness, in its sanctity and holiness, in its pleasure and delightfulness, in its glory and blessedness, in its eternity and everlastingness: and this place is by Christ prepared for believers; namely, by his death and satisfaction, by his resurrection and ascension, by his mediation and intercession. Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus Christ is not only entered into heaven, but entered as our forerunner, to take and keep possession of it in the name and stead of all believers. To enter heaven as our forerunner, implies, that he entered in our natures, that he keeps possession of it in our names: as sure as the Head is gone before the members, so certainly shall the members follow their head; as a forerunner supposes others to follow after; and it implies that Christ will put us into the actual possession of heaven in his own time. Inference, 1. Is Christ gone before to heaven, then let us be willing to follow him in the way of obedience, and in the way of suffering as well as to meet him in the end. 2. To make haste after him. Did he fly as an eagle towards heaven, and shall we creep like a snail; Is not the bosom of Christ more desirable than the arms of our dearest friends? Shall not we enjoy all comforts in the enjoyment of our Comforter? 3. Let our hearts at present be with him. O! Where should our hearts be, but where our Head is?

CHAPTER VII.

Our apostle in this chapter returns to his discourse concerning the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, from which he had digressed in the former chapter, and shows us in this, wherein Melchisedec was a type of Christ, to wit, in his name, king of righteousness; in his title, king of Salem, or peace: in the original, without pedigree, or descent; in the excellency of his person, to be preferred before Abraham, and all the Levites that descended from him, in the eminency of his priesthood which could and did make a perfect expiation for sin, which the Levitical priesthood never did, nor never could do; and accordingly thus he speaks, ver. 1.

FOR this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first, being by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also, King of Salem, which is, king of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.

Here observe, 1. The person spoken of described by his name, Melchisedec. Some take this Melchisedec to be Shem the son of Noah; but this cannot be because his genealogy is exactly set down by Moses. Others take him to be one of the posterity of Japhet, the father of the Gentiles: in the midst of these sinners above others, was Melchisedec raised up, as an illustrious type of Christ the promised Messiah. See here, how God can raise up instruments for his service, and unto his glory, when, where, and how he pleaseth. And learn hence, that this signal prefiguration of Christ in the nations of the world, at the same time when Abraham received the promises for himself and his posterity, gave a pledge and assurance of the certain future call of the Gentiles unto an interest in him and participation of him. Observe, 2. Melchisedec is here described by his office; he was *king of Salem*, and a priest of the Most High God; yes, the first that was so by special institution, and separated to the office by God's approbation? None went before him, and none succeeded him in his office. Here note, that the first personal instituted type of Christ, was Melchisedec, as priest: for in his kingly office he was not so directly typical of Christ. There were moral types of Christ's person before Melchisedec, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things: but the first person, who was solemnly designed to represent Christ by what he was and did, was Melchisedec the priest; teaching us that the foundation of all that the Lord Jesus Christ had to do in and for the church was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement, and reconciliation for sin: "Melchisedec, king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God." Observe, 3. He is described by several actions and circumstances: 1. "He met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings;" this meeting of Melchisedec and Abraham, after Abraham had gotten the victory over all his adversaries, was a type and representation of his glorious meeting of Christ and his church, at the last day; when he will bring out his stores in heaven for their eternal refreshment, as Melchisedec brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. 2. He blessed him, Gen. xiv. 19. "And Melchisedec said, blessed be Abraham of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth." Sacramental blessings were authoritative, and that by special institution. In this blessing of Abraham by Melchisedec, all believers are virtually blessed by Jesus Christ: Melchisedec represented Christ in what he then did, and Abraham represented all his believing posterity in what he then received. 3. Another sacramental act, or exercise of priestly power ascribed to Melchisedec is, that he received of Abraham tithes of all; the one paid them in a way of duty, the other received them in a way of office. Note here, the antiquity of tithes, and how very ancient they were: they were paid in Abraham's time, long before the ceremonial law, and therefore cannot be said to be Jewish and Levitical. The patriarchs before the law, the Jews under the law, and the Christians in times of the gospel, have all paid this proportion: from whence some have concluded, that as the seventh part of our time, so the tenth part of our goods and estate were given to God from the beginning, as Lord of all our time, and proprietor of all our estate. Whatsoever we receive signally from God, in a way of mercy, we ought to return a portion of it to him in a way of duty. It is a certain sign that a man has not engaged God in getting an estate, when he will not intitle him to any portion of it when it is gotten. Observe, 4.

The apostle proceeds unto other instances in the description of Melchisedec, wherein he was made like unto the Son of God, ver. 3. "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life:" which expressions must not be understood absolutely, but tropically, not of Melchisedec as a man, but as a priest; for as a man, he had certainly both father and mother, though not recorded in scripture; he was assuredly born, and did not less certainly die than other men; but neither his beginning of days, nor end of life, are registered and rehearsed, that he might be the fitter type of Christ, concerning whom it is said, *who can declare his generation?* But though Melchisedec, as a man, had father and mother, yet as a priest, he had no predecessor nor successor; no predecessor from whom he might by birth receive his sacerdotal power; no successor who derived his priesthood from him: now herein also was Melchisedec an illustrious type of Christ, who derived his priesthood from no mortal predecessor, but immediately from his heavenly Father; neither will he transmit it to any successor, but when all enemies are subdued, he shall resign his priesthood, together with his kingdom, to God the Father who gave him both. Observe, 5. What is here asserted concerning Melchisedec; namely, that he abideth *a priest for ever*; that is, things are so related concerning him in scripture, as that there is no mention of the ending of the priesthood of his order. We read of no resignation of his office, or of the succession of any person to him therein: and thus he remaineth a priest for ever. This was that which our apostle did principally design to confirm from hence, namely, that there was in the scripture, before the institution of the Aaronical priesthood, a representation of an eternal, unchangeable priesthood, to be introduced into the church, which he demonstrated to be that of Jesus Christ, of which Melchisedec's priesthood was a type.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

These words are the apostle's application of what was before discoursed; by comparing Melchisedec's excellency with Abraham's; he shows Christ's excellency above Melchisedec's, and he calls upon them to consider this, *consider how great this man was*. It will be fruitless and to no advantage, to propose and declare the most important truths of the gospel, if those unto whom they are proposed do not diligently inquire into them, and duly ponder and consider of them. The Hebrews are here called upon to consider: but what? and whom? Why, who Melchisedec was, and how great a man he was? Note here, that the greatness of Melchisedec did not respect either the endowments of his person, or the largeness of his dominion, or his riches and wealth, in which sense some are said to be great in scripture: but he is pronounced great with respect to his office, and in regard to his nearness to God on that account; as also in his representing our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe farther, the proof here given of the greatness of Melchisedec, in that no meaner person than Abraham, than Abraham the patriarch, did give the tenth part of the spoils unto him. Here remark, that notwithstanding the highest advantages and privileges which Abraham was possessed of, which rendered him almost adored by his posterity, yet when the meanest duty was presented to him, he readily

complied with it. The highest privileges neither can nor ought to exempt any person from the performance of the meanest duty. Duty is our highest honor, and chiefest advantage; but privileges, promotions, dignities, and exaltations, may become snares, and end in the ruin of men's souls. When a person is dignified and advanced in the church, if thereby he thinks himself exempted from the ordinary service of the ministry, he is guilty of horrid pride and ingratitude: but if he farther indulges himself in a course of idleness, sloth, sensuality, and worldliness, these are crimes unpardonable, and want a name to express them.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham;

6 But he, whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And, without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.

Still the apostle goes on to give Melchisedec the preference above Abraham, and from thence to infer, that Christ, whom Melchisedec typified was much more excellent than Abraham, and all the Levitical priests which sprang from him. The argument lies thus: "the law allowed Aaron and the other priests to take tithes of their brethren that sprung from Abraham; but Melchisedec received tithes of Abraham, who was none of his people, yea, and blessed Abraham also, which is a demonstration that he was greater than Abraham; and consequently it is evident, that Christ is greater than the Jewish priests; to bless authoritatively is an act of superiority; now Melchisedec blessed Abraham, he is therefore greater than Abraham: because he that blessed is greater than he whom he blessed. Behold here the excellency of the office of God's ministers, namely, to bless the people in God's name: they bless authoritatively, they bless declaratively, they bless optatively. God help them to take heed, lest by their miscarriages, they prove a snare and a curse unto them whom they ought to bless.

8 And here men that die receive tithes: but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he *liveth*.

Our apostle still carrieth on the same argument, proving Melchisedec's priesthood to surpass and excel the Aaronical and Levitical priesthood in the immortality of it: as the less is blessed of the greater, so is that which is immortal greater and better than what is mortal: but such is Melchisedec, and his order of priesthood. Indeed, in the Levitical order of priesthood, though the priests be superior to the people, and take tithes of them, yet they do die as well as the people: but we read not a word of Melchisedec's death, he is a priest for ever; that is, he did typically pre-

figure Christ, who doth properly and indeed live for ever. Melchisedec ever lives *secundum historiam*. Christ, *secundum veritatem*. Learn hence, that the life of the church depends upon the everlasting life of Jesus Christ: he liveth for ever, when ministers die, or have their mouths stopped. This great High-Priest lives, upon whom the life and preservation, the continuance and salvation of the church does depend: *here men that die receive tithes*. Note, from their mortality, that in the outward administration of God's worship, he is pleased to make use of the ministry of frail, mortal, and dying men. Zec. i. 5. "The prophets, do they live for ever?" Hereby it doth evidently appear, that it is the power of God, and nothing else, which gives efficacy and success to all gospel administration, 2. Cor. iv. 7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him,

By Levi here we are to understand the Levites, or the Levitical priesthood; they being in Abraham's loins, are said to pay tithes in Abraham to Melchisedec, which the apostle produces as an evidence, that Melchisedec is superior to the Levites, and greater than they; and consequently, that Christ, whom Melchisedec did typify, must needs be more excellent than they also. The argument runs thus: "they who receive tithes of others, are certainly superior to them of whom they do receive them; but Melchisedec received tithes of Abraham, and Levi in Abraham's loins; therefore he is superior to them, and of a more excellent order than they:" which is the great truth he hath been so industriously proving.

11 If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it, the people received the law,) what farther need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

If perfection, that is, a perfect expiation and remission of sin, could have been made by the sacrifice which the legal priests offered, there would then have been no need that God should institute a priest of another and more excellent order, namely, his own Son, to be a priest after Melchisedec's order, and not after the order of Aaron. Where note, that perfection is denied in the Levitical priesthood, and ascribed to the priesthood of Christ. To perfect sinful man, is to free him from the guilt of sin, and from the direful and dismal consequences of sin, and to make him righteous and holy, capable of communion with God, both here and hereafter. Now this the Levitical priesthood could not do. "But Jesus Christ has by one offering perfected for ever

them that are sanctified." chap. x. 14. Thus the apostle infers the necessity of changing the priesthood; and next he tells us, ver. 12. That the change of the Levitical priesthood necessarily draweth along with it a change of the Levitical law, and the legal dispensation of the covenant of grace; for the Levitical priesthood and the Levitical law do both stand and fall together: "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." By the changing of the priesthood, understand the abolition of it; by the change of the law, understand the abrogation of it; by the word necessity, understand that the change was not casual and contingent, but absolutely needful, in regard of the imperfection and inability of the Levitical priesthood to effect any such thing. Learn hence, that the promulgation of the gospel, and the institution of christianity, did abrogate the Levitical law, and make it of no force. This might be the reason why God did not only by the death and sacrifice of Christ, the great High-priest, abolish the Levitical priesthood, but also destroyed the temple itself, where he had put his name, and never suffered it to be rebuilt; denoting thereby the utter abolition of the Levitical priesthood, and the total abrogation of the ceremonial law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken, pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang up out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

In the foregoing verses, our apostle had asserted the change of the priesthood, and therewith the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the priesthood to another tribe; namely, from Levi to Judah. The Levitical priesthood was confined to one certain tribe, that of Levi, and to one certain family, that of Aaron: whence it follows, that the tribe being changed, and God having instituted a priest of another tribe, the priesthood must be changed also. Now it being evident, that Christ sprang not of the tribe of Levi, but out of Judah, the apostle, from the changing of the tribe, strongly infers the change of the priesthood. Note here, 1. How it was a fruit of the manifold wisdom of God, and a very great mercy and favor to give the law, but a far greater to take it away. 2. If under the law, the whole worship of God did so depend on the priesthood, that failing, the whole worship was to cease; as being no more acceptable to God, how much more will all worship under the New Testament be rejected by him, if there be not a due regard therein to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great and only High-Priest of his church.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.

That the Aaronical priesthood was to be changed, and consequently the whole law of ordinances that depended thereupon, and that the time was now come wherein this change was to be made, is the grand truth which our apostle here designs the confirmation of; it being indeed that truth, whereinto our faith of the acceptance of evangelical worship is resolved: and accordingly he gives a farther proof of the change of the priesthood from the different manner of the priest's consecration. Thus the Levitical priest was set apart to his office by a number of carnal rites and outward ceremonies, which the law prescribed to be used at the consecration of Aaron, and his sons, who were purified with water, anointed with oil, sprinkled with blood, clothed with priestly vestments, initiated with sacrifices, administered in an earthly tabernacle and temple. But, says our apostle, the evangelical or gospel High-Priest, Christ Jesus, was not constituted thus, or made a priest with such carnal rites and outward ceremonies, but with the power of an endless life: that is, he was consecrated a priest by the power of the Holy Ghost, having an immortal life suitable to his priesthood, an authority to give eternal life to as many as depend upon the benefit of sacrifice and satisfaction; "He was made, not after the law of a carnal commandment," (with corporeal ceremony and carnal duration,) "but after the spiritual power of an endless life." Learn, hence, that all the outward ceremony which seemed to be wanting unto Christ, in his entrance into his priestly office, was on the account of a greater glory. Aaron was made a priest with great outward solemnity, Christ with none at all; yet all Aaron's ceremonial glory was nothing in comparison of that excellent glory which accompanied those invisible acts of divine authority, wisdom, and grace, which communicated Christ's office unto him.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope, did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Now the apostle comes to declare, that the Levitical priesthood being abolished, and the ceremonial law abrogated, the whole state of the church, and of the solemn worship of God therein, must necessarily be changed also. This he foresaw would be a mighty surprisal to the generality of the Hebrews, to hear that they must quit all their concern and special interest in the law of Moses; and therefore he assigns a double reason for the abrogation and disannulling of that law; namely, the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, ver. 18. "There is a disannulling of the commandment, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." Not that the law was weak in itself, or unprofitable to the end for which God made it; namely, to lead them to Christ; but weak and unprofitable for justification and salvation. They expected expiation of sin, sanctification and holiness by it, without any regard to Christ and his sacrifice, by whom alone it

could be obtained. Those things the law could not effect in its best estate: how vain was it then for the Jews to expect them when it was abolished? Observe next, how the apostle proves the law to be weak and unprofitable; namely, because it made nothing perfect. The law, that is, the whole system of Mosaical ordinances, the legal covenant, made nothing perfect; that is, no person, how strictly soever he observed, could be justified and saved by it: it could not of itself cleanse from sin, reconcile us to God, justify our persons, sanctify our natures, and procure salvation for us. Observe, lastly, though the ceremonial law made nothing perfect, yet the gospel law, called here a better hope, because the promises of it are a good ground of hope, has efficacy, power, and virtue, to do all those things for us, and by it we have freedom of access to God. "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope, whereby we draw nigh to God." Learn hence, 1. That the law could not justify or sanctify any person, or make him perfect, by reconciling him to God, and procuring salvation for him. Learn, 2. That believers of old, who lived under the law, did not live upon the law, but upon the hope of Christ, or Christ hoped for: could justification and salvation have been had any other way, or by any other means, Christ's coming had been needless, and his death in vain. Learn, 3. That the introduction of a better hope of the gospel, after a sufficient discovery made of the weakness and insufficiency of the law, did make all things perfect, or bring the church to that state of consummation, which was designed unto it. Learn, 4. That when all mankind were at an inconceivable distance from God, it was infinite condescension and grace to appoint his own Son, who was the blessed hope of the saints under the Old Testament, to be the only way and means of our approaching unto him. When "the law made nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God."

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*;

21 For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, the Lord sware, and will not repent, thou *art* a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec:

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Our apostle has not yet done with his several arguments to prove the transcendent excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron's: his argument in the verses now before us lies thus: he that is made an unchangeable priest by the oath of God, is a better, greater, and more excellent priest, than any made so without it. But whereas the Levitical priests were made without an oath, by the law changeable at the will of the lawgiver; Jesus Christ was made a priest by the unchangeable oath of God. *The Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever.* Learn hence, That nothing was wanting on the part of God, that might either give eminency and glory, or stability and efficacy to the priesthood of Christ: this was both due to the glory of his person, and also needful to encourage and secure the faith of the church. Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ, our

great High-priest, being initiated into his office by the oath of God, his priesthood is liable to no alteration, succession, or substitution; but the church may continually draw nigh to God, in full assurance of his meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession, and receive from thence a solid foundation of peace and consolation; *by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.* Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel-covenant, it is here called a better testament: better not for substance, but for clearness; for substance, the old covenant dispensation and the new are the same: but the latter is made more clear, more free, more full, more surely ratified, by the death of Christ, and accompanied with a more mighty operation of the Spirit of God. Observe, 2. The title here given to Christ, he is the *surety of a better testament.* Our surety, because our sacrifice. The Socinians own Christ to be a surety of the covenant in respect of his holy life, and exemplary death, sealing it as a testimony of his blood, but deny him to be a surety in respect of his satisfaction, merit, and intercession. But alas! as our sinful condition requires a mediator of redemption, so our changeable condition requires a mediator of intercession; and, blessed be God, he has appointed one for both, even his own and only Son, who is the surety of a better testament. Learn thence, that the Lord Jesus was not only made a surety on God's part to us, to assure us, that the promise of the covenant on his part, should be performed, but was also a surety on our part, to furnish us with that grace and assistance which shall enable us to do, answer, and perform all that is required on our part, that we may enjoy the benefit of the covenant of grace here, and glory hereafter. Christ has undertaken, as surety of the covenant, first, to satisfy for sin, by offering himself a propitiatory sacrifice: and next to furnish forth a sufficiency of grace to enable for the fulfilling the conditions of the gospel-covenant. Thus was Jesus the *surety of this better covenant.*

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.

24 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Now our apostle is come to his last argument, by which he proves the excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron. The Levitical priests, he says, were many and mortal: their mortality was the cause of their multitude: they were cut off by death, and succeeded one another; but Christ is one and the same to his church, *yesterday, today, and for ever*; he had no partner, has no successor, but executes an everlasting, unchangeable priesthood in his own person. Note here, 1. That the multiplication of priests, particularly of highpriests under the legal dispensation, was a manifest evidence of the imperfection of it; from Aaron the first high-priest, unto Phineas the last, who was destroyed with the temple, are reckoned fourscore and three highpriests, who succeeded one another: of these, thirteen are said to live under the tabernacle, eighteen under the first temple built by Solomon, and all the rest under the second temple: the ground of which multiplication of priests was this, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of

death. Learn, 1. That the priesthood of Christ, as unchangeably exercised in his own person, is perpetual; and its perpetuity is a principal part of the glory of that office. *He continueth for ever, having an unchangeable priesthood.* Quest. But did not Christ, our great High-Priest, die as well as Aaron and other highpriests? Ans. Yes, he died as a priest, they died from being priests; he died as a priest, because he was also to be a sacrifice. The apostle doth not say, that he did not die, but that he always abideth: he abode a priest even in the state of death, and after his resurrection he became immortal, never to die more; he ever liveth, he dieth no more, death has no more dominion over him. See how he describes himself, Rev. i. 8. "I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold I am alive for evermore: and have the keys of hell and death."

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

These words are a comfortable inference and conclusion, which our apostle draws from his preceding discourse concerning the eternity and unchangeableness of Christ's priesthood; seeing he lives for ever, he is therefore able to save to the uttermost, and that for ever. Observe here, 1. The complete power and ability of Jesus Christ to save sinners asserted; *He is able to save, and that to the uttermost*; that is completely and everlastingly. Learn hence, That whatever difficulties lie in the way of salvation, and whatever oppositions do arise against it, either with respect to the guilt of sin, or to the power, and dominion of it, the Lord Jesus Christ is able, by virtue of his sacerdotal office, and in the exercise of it, to carry on the work through them all unto eternal perfection: such is the dignity of his person, such is the sufficiency of his satisfaction, that he expiates the guilt of sin universally and perpetually. Observe, 2. The character and description given of the persons whom Jesus Christ thus perfectly and eternally saves. *Such as come unto God by him*; those, all those, and only those, whom God will save, are such as come unto him for salvation by and through our Lord Jesus Christ as mediator. Oh how injurious then are they to their own souls, who sit down desponding, either under the guilt, or under the power of their sins, and conclude them either so great that they cannot be pardoned, or so strong that they can never be vanquished or overcome! Observe, 3. The reason of this power and ability in Christ to save sinners to the uttermost assigned, and that is, the eternity of his priesthood, the perpetuity and prevalency of his intercession; "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" Here note, 1. The state and condition of Christ as an High-Priest, he ever liveth. He is always living in heaven a threefold life. 1. The eternal life of God in his divine nature; this he liveth in himself. 2. A life of inconceivable glory in his human nature; this is a life which he liveth for himself. 2. A mediatory life in heaven; and this he lives for us. Note, 2. What he doth as an High-Priest in that state and condition: *He maketh intercession for us.* Learn, That the Lord Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession with his Father in heaven, on the behalf of all penitent believers here on earth. We are not to conceive of Christ as an intercessor with his Father in heaven, in such an humble supplicating manner as when

here upon earth, with knees bended down, and eyes lifted up to heaven, this is inconsistent with his glorified state. But it is such a pleading and petitioning with his Father as is in the nature of a claim and demand; and it is such a claim and demand made to his Father, as is accompanied with the presenting the memorials of his death unto him. Christ need not use his mouth to plead with his Father in heaven, the bare showing of his wounded body pleads prevalently and perpetually, and this intercession of Christ is a standing evidence of the continuance of his love and care, his pity and compassion to us. Blessed be God that our great High-Priest, who suffered for us, ever liveth in heaven to make intercession for us.

26 For such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Observe here, 1. Something supposed and necessarily implied, namely, That if we intend to come unto God, we had need of an highpriest to encourage and enable us thereunto; *Such an High-Priest became us*; implying, that without an highpriest in general we can do nothing in this matter. Observe, 2. The care and kindness of God in providing for us, not only an highpriest, but *such an High Priest* as our condition required, one that has made atonement for us, procured acceptance, given us assistance, preserved us in grace, and will preserve us unto glory: behold the infinite wisdom, love, grace, and goodness of God, in giving such an High-Priest, as in the qualifications of his person, the glory of his condition, and the discharge of his office, was every way suited to deliver us from a state of apostasy, sin, and misery, and to bring us to himself through a perfect salvation. Observe, 3. The double character given of this High-Priest in his purity. 1. "He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Thus he was in his conception, birth, life and death, never tainted or stained with the least sin, but both habitually and actually more pure and holy than any priest on earth, or angels in heaven. 2. In his dignity, *He is made higher than the heavens*; advanced above all the inhabitants of that glorious place, where he ever liveth, and keeps his residence, remaining a Priest for ever not to sacrifice, but to apply effectually his former sacrifice to all believers.

27 Who needeth not daily, as those highpriests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

That is, "As Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, had no sin of his own to expiate, like other highpriests, but his business was to offer for sins; so the oblation and offering he made upon that account, was not bullocks or rams, but himself in sacrifice, and that once, and but once, upon the cross, which once offered sacrifice was abundantly sufficient to take away sin; whereas other highpriests offered for their own sins, and for the people's sins, and that often, which was a token of their insufficiency and imperfection." Learn hence, That no sacrifice could bring us to God, and save us to perfection, but that wherein the Son of God himself was both priest and offering; such an High-Priest be-

came us who offered himself once for all. Learn, 2. That the perfection of Christ's sacrifice makes the repetition of it needless, and the often repeating of it would argue the imperfection both of priest and sacrifice: "He needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice, for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

28 For the law maketh men high-priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

That is, the Levitical law appointed men to be highpriests that labored under infirmities, were sinners, and subject to mortality; but the promise made to Christ, and confirmed by God's oath long since the law was given, maketh the Son, and none but the Son, (who is perfect, holy, and consecrated to this everlasting office) a priest for evermore. Learn hence, 1. That there never were any more than two sorts of priests in the church; the one made by the law, the other by the oath of God. Learn, 2. That the great foundation of our faith, and the main hinge whereon all our consolation depends, is this, that our High-Priest is the Son of God, and his everlasting continuance in his office is secured by the oath of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our apostle having proved the excellency of Christ's priesthood in the former chapter; he proceeds in this to show his faithful execution of that his priestly office, for the good and benefit of his church; proving, by sundry arguments, that his ministry as our great High-Priest, is to be preferred before the Levitical administration: partly with respect to the place where he ministers, which is heaven; partly in respect of the sacrifice which he presents in heaven, his body, his humanity, in which he suffered; and partly with respect to that new and better covenant, whereof he is mediator. Concerning which he thus speaks particularly in the chapter before us.

NOW of the things which we have spoken, *this is* the sum: We have such an High-Priest, who is set on the right-hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Observe here, 1. The apostle's preface in which he doth briefly recapitulate the sum and substance of his preceding arguments. "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. Learn hence, That when doctrines are important, and the matters treated of very weighty and momentous, we should endeavour by all means to make an impression of them upon the minds of our hearers, by a brief recapitulation of the things we have insisted on; thus doth

our apostle here. Observe, 2. A declaration of the first general pre-eminence of our High-Priest, and that is taken from his present state and eternal condition. "He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." A throne, a sceptre, a crown, are ensigns of majesty, and ornaments of sovereign power: to sit in the throne, is to possess sovereign power and dominion: this Christ now enjoys in heaven, as the reward of his deep humiliation, and as the highest degree of his exaltation. Learn, hence, That the principal glory of the priestly office of Christ depends on the glorious exaltation of his person. Observe, 3. Another pre-eminence of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our great High-Priest; he is called a minister of the sanctuary. A minister; this intimates to us, that our great High-Priest, in the height of his glory condescends to discharge the office of a public minister in the behalf of his church. Our thoughts sometimes dwell upon what Christ did for us on earth, but too seldom are they taken up with the contemplation of what he is still doing for us in heaven. And a minister of the sanctuary or true tabernacle; that is, not of a literary sanctuary and tabernacle here below, for Christ never entered into that, but of the sanctuary of heaven, in which dwelleth all that was represented in the sanctuary here below: Christ our great High-Priest abides in the sanctuary of heaven for us continually: always representing the efficacy of that blood whereby atonement was made for all our sins. O blessed Jesus! Thy being continually in heaven, will draw our hearts and minds continually thither, if so be we are really interested in thy holy administration.

3 For every highpriest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

4 For if we were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For, see, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

That the Lord Jesus Christ is our great High-Priest under the gospel, the apostle had sufficiently demonstrated and confirmed before. Observe here, How he next declares what is the nature, duty and office of Christ as our High-Priest; namely, *to offer gifts and sacrifices*. A priest that has nothing to offer is no priest at all; Christ therefore offered as well as other highpriests; but what? Bullocks and rams? In no wise; he offered himself, his whole human nature, soul and body. As to the typical sacrifices he did not, could not offer them, were he upon earth, because he was not of the tribe of Levi, whose proper office it was to

meddle with those offerings; therefore leaving the shadow to them, he offered the substance himself; that is, his own body, signified by those shadows. Learn hence, That there was no salvation to be had for us, no, not by Jesus Christ himself, without his sacrifice and oblation; "It was of necessity that he should have somewhat to offer," as well as those priests had of old, according to the law. No salvation without atonement for sin by sacrifice; no sacrifice sufficient for atonement but the death of Christ; and whoever looks for salvation otherwise than in the faith and virtue of that sacrifice, will be disappointed and deceived. But although the oblation was made by Christ on earth, yet the continual application of its efficacy to the souls of believers is made by Christ now in heaven; without which, neither their access to God, nor their peace with God could be maintained, ver. 3, 4. In the fifth verse the apostle asserts, that the Levitical priests here below did perform those administrations which were but shadows of heavenly things above. "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Where to serve, is to officiate as priests, in offering gifts and sacrifices: but this their service was not spiritual and heavenly, but carnal and earthly: Yet a shadow and imitation of heavenly things. Learn hence, That God alone limits the signification and use of all his own institutions. The ministry of the priests of old was only in and about earthly things, not having a resemblance and shadow of heavenly things. We must not take any thing out of God's institutions which he has put in them, nor must we put more in them than God has furnished them withal. To expect that from any ordinance or institution of God which he never intended or designed, is to make an idol of the ordinance, and the way to render it useless, yea, pernicious and perilous to us; to put that into an ordinance which God never put into it, and to expect more from an ordinance than God ever promised, is to overthrow it.

—As Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

The words imply, that divine institution is the only pure rule of religious worship: Moses did nothing of his own head when he built the tabernacle, but had his directions in every thing from God. If persons will carve out the worship of God according to their own fancies, they may please themselves perhaps, but they never can please their Maker; for nothing is pleasing to God, as to the substance of religious worship, but what is of his own prescribing; consequently all that theatrical pomp which is found in the church of Rome, and makes the worship of God a dead thing, is a mere fornication in religion, and an abomination in the sight of God. All their human inventions are intolerable presumptions: And as Moses was bound to give directions according to the pattern given him, so the priests, in their administrations, were bound to follow Moses' direction. Yet after all, the things which Moses was concerned about, were carnal things; the tabernacle was earthly, the offerings carnal, yet shadows of better things, even of heavenly; for the sanctuary was a shadow of a heavenly sanctuary; the priest,

of a better priest; the service of a far better service: this seems to be the intention of our apostle.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

Our apostle, in these words, proves the excellency of Christ's ministry or priesthood above that of Aaron and his sons, from the excellency of the new covenant (or the new dispensation of the covenant of grace) above the old, of which he was the mediator. Now the more excellent the covenant, the more excellent the ministry. Learn hence, 1. That the gospel covenant, or the new covenant, was the best covenant that ever God made with man; not but that the old and new covenant were the same for substance, though not for clearness; indeed temporal things were types and shadows of better things, even of heavenly things: and accordingly believers under the Old Testament were saved by a covenant of grace as well as we. Learn, 2. That the gospel-covenant is therefore a better covenant, because established upon better promises: their promises of old were chiefly temporal, though not only temporal promises. Ours are chiefly spiritual, yet are temporal things promised us also; but more rarely, and with the exception of the cross, or rather they are thrown in as additions to spiritual promises, Mat. vi. 33. But the promises of the covenant of grace are therefore better, because strength and assistance is engaged for, and graciously offered, in order to enable us to perform the conditions of them; the law required sinless obedience; the gospel accepts sincere obedience, and offers grace to perform it. Learn, 3. That Jesus Christ is the mediator of this better covenant: as there was a covenant made between God and man, so there was need of a mediator that the covenant might be effectual: for a mediator is necessary, both where there is a controversy and difference, and also where there is an imparity and distance between persons: in both respects Christ is mediator; and his mediation was needful, that he might bring us to God. God stood upon terms before he would pardon sin. Justice must be satisfied, and that by blood, and that blood of infinite value; therefore Christ is first a sponsor before a mediator; he first satisfies for a breach, before he goes about to make up the breach between God and the sinner: thus was he the mediator of a better covenant.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, (saith the Lord), when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day

when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Observe here, 1. What is charged on the first covenant, and that is faultiness: by which we are not to understand any sinful faultiness, but defectiveness and imperfection only: for it was not faulty in the matter and substance of it, as it was instituted and ordained by God, but therefore called faulty because it was obscure, was not so surely ratified, and not attended with that virtue, power, and efficacy, which the new covenant is accompanied with. Observe, 2. Wherein consisteth that defectiveness and imperfection of the first covenant which is here complained of; namely, 1. In its inability to justify and save us, because of our inability, through the weakness of the flesh, to answer the demands of it, Rom. viii. 3. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the flesh, &c." The law was not properly weak to us, but we were weak to that. 2. The legal covenant required exact obedience, but afforded no spiritual assistance for the performance of what it required: but the covenant of grace, the new covenant, is called a *ministration of the Spirit*: and under the gospel we are said not to *serve in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit*. Now, says the apostle, ver. 8. Almighty God finding fault with the Jews for the breach of the former covenant, declared by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 31. That the covenant he would make with all true Israelites for time to come, should not be like that which he made with their fathers in Egypt, which they continued not in the observation of, (wanting those assistances from the Holy Spirit to enable them thereunto, which are procured for us by Christ;) and accordingly, *I regarded them not, saith the Lord*, but gave them up for their sins, into the hands of their enemies. Observe lastly, How Almighty God makes the imperfections of the old covenant, and the Israelites' instability therein, the reason of his making a new covenant with us, in which grace and assistance is offered to enable us to obey and persevere in obedience: *Finding fault with them*; that is, for the breach of the former, he saith, "Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant with them." From the whole note, 1. That the grace and glory of the new covenant are much set off and manifested by comparing it with the old. Note, 2. That nothing but effectual grace from Christ will secure our covenant-obedience one moment: what greater motives, or stronger outward obligations to obedience could any people under heaven have, than the Israelites had? But they quickly turned out of the way: therefore, in the new covenant, is this grace promised, in a peculiar manner, as we shall see in the next verse.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Observe here, 1. The persons with whom this covenant is made, the house of Israel, and the house of Judah; not

made with them as a political body, because their policy was to be dissolved, but as a part of the universal church. Observe, 2. The author of this covenant, and that is God himself, *I will make it saith the Lord*. Note, That the abolishing of the old covenant and establishing the new, is an act of sovereign wisdom, grace, and authority in God: *I will make a new covenant*. Observe, 3. What is the great and comprehensive promise of the new covenant. "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; that is, 1. I will make a clear and perspicuous revelation of my mind and will unto them, and give them a thorough knowledge and understanding of my laws, so that their own consciences shall condemn them when they do transgress them. And, 2. By my Holy Spirit I will make a deep and efficacious impression of them upon their hearts and spirits. Where note, That the precepts of the old covenant are all of them turned into promises under the new; their preceptive and commanding power remaineth; but grace is promised for the performance of them. Note farther, That the work of grace, in the new covenant, passeth on the whole soul in all its powers and faculties, to their change and renovation: "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." And, consequently, to deny the necessity and efficacy of the sanctifying and renewing grace of God in the habits and acts of it, is plainly to overthrow the evangelical covenant. Observe, 4 What is the relation which is here said to ensue between God and his people; "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Here note, 1. God's relation to us: *I will be to them a God*, I who am all sufficient in myself, will be your all sufficient preserver, and your all-sufficient rewarder. As nothing less than God's becoming our God can relieve and help us? so nothing more can be required thereunto. Note, 2. Our relation to God, *they shall be to me a people*; that is, a special and peculiar people, owning dependency upon him, and professing all subjection and obedience to him. And observe, God undertakes for this, *they shall be to me a people*. Learn thence, That God doth as well undertake for our being his people, as he doth for his being our God: he that assumes them into that relation freely, will preserve them in it powerfully: "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Those words are not to be understood absolutely but comparatively: they are a promise, that under the new covenant dispensation the Holy Spirit shall be so plentifully poured forth, and the light of the gospel so clearly shine forth, that there shall not be such need as under the law, to teach men the knowledge of God, and their duty to him; they shall not need, in such a manner as formerly, to instruct one another in the meaning of the types and shadows of the law: *they shall all know me*: that is, all ranks and degrees of men, all sorts and conditions of persons, shall own me to be the Lord. Note here, What abuse is put upon this text by some, who bring it to set aside the necessity of human teaching; for it is by such teaching that God gives men the

knowledge of himself. Learn hence, that there is a duty incumbent on every man to instruct others according to his ability and opportunity, in the knowledge of God. But, Lord, pity us, we have more, that mutually teach one another sin, folly, vanity, yea, villany of all sorts, than the knowledge of God and the duty we owe unto him! This is not what God here promiseth believers in a way of grace, but what he hath given up careless unbelieving professors to, in a way of vengeance.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

This is the great fundamental promise of the covenant of grace, pardon of sin. Thence learn, that free and undeserved grace, in the pardon of sin, is the original spring and foundation of all covenant-mercies and blessings. Observe farther, How copiously the Spirit of God sets forth the benefits of pardoning grace, I will forgive and forget; *I will be merciful, and remember no more*; pardoning mercy is full as well as free. Observe lastly, The aggravating names here given to sin, it is called *unrighteousness*, because nothing can be more unequal and unjust, than for man to sin against God his creator, his ruler and benefactor; and *iniquity*, or a transgression of the law, an erring and swerving from the rule of holiness, which we are to walk by. Learn hence, 1. That the aggravations of sin are great and many, which the consciences of convinced sinners ought to have regard unto. Learn, 2. That we can never understand aright the glory and excellency of pardoning mercy, unless we are convinced of the greatness and vileness of our sins in these several aggravations of them. Learn, 3. That the covenant of grace fully assures us, that there are riches of grace and abundance of pardoning mercy in God, which disposes him, for Christ's sake, to be merciful to penitent sinners' unrighteousness, and to remember their transgressions no more, how many and heinous soever they have been.

13 In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.

The apostle, having, in the foregoing verses, proved the insufficiency of the old covenant, and the necessity of the new, and given the preference to the latter above the former; in this last verse he acquaints us with the abrogation of the old covenant, *it is made old*; and with the abolition of it, *it is ready to vanish away*: as the old things lose their power, strength, and vigor; so the old covenant lost its binding power and obliging force. And as that which waxeth old moulders away by little and little, till at last it does totally vanish, and utterly perish; thus the legal dispensation by little and little decayed, until it wholly ceased at last: yea, it is observable, that the whole policy and Jewish government did vanish away, and totally expire in a few years after the writing of this epistle. Learn hence, 1. That the outward appearance of the legal administration was glorious, and very taking to the Jews: the fabric of the temple, the ornaments of the priests, the order of their worship, had a glory in them which dazzled the eyes, and captivated the minds and affections of the people. Learn,

2. That all this glory did gradually vanish, and at last totally disappear: all the glorious institutions of the law were at best but as stars in the firmament of the church, and consequently were all to disappear at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness: *in that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old; now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.*

CHAPTER IX.

Our apostle having, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, asserted that the old covenant made with the church at Sinai, with all the ordinances of worship and privileges thereunto belonging, was taken away and ceased; and well knowing how hard and very difficult it would be to persuade the Hebrews to forego those things which they were so exceedingly fond of, they looking upon them to be (as indeed they were) of God's own appointment, and expected all their happiness to depend upon a strict observation of them, and a firm adherence to them; he comes in this chapter to make a comparison between the old and new covenant, between the legal and the evangelical dispensation, showing that the former was to cease, and that it was greatly to the church's advantage that it should do so, yea, absolutely necessary, that it might be brought unto that state of perfection it was designed unto; and accordingly thus he speaks, ver. 1.

THEN verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

In this, and the following verses, the apostle gives us a particular and distinct view of the typical ordinances in the old covenant under the Mosiac dispensation, and also of their accomplishment in Jesus Christ: and here in general he acquaints us, that the first covenant had an outward legal service, with sundry rights and ordinances of divine worship, and a worldly sanctuary, raised by men, of earthly materials; a temporary tabernacle; verily the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, &c. Observe here, that there never was any covenant between God and man, but it had some ordinances and institutions of divine worship annexed unto it; the original covenant of works had the ordinances of the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The covenant of Sinai, whereof the apostle here speaks, had a multitude of them; and the gospel covenant is not destitute of them; witness our sacraments and public worship. Observe, 2. That all ordinances for worship must be resolved into divine ordination or institution, as that which renders them acceptable and well pleasing unto God: a worship not ordained by God is not acceptable to God; it had ordinances of worship. Observe lastly, How God can animate outward carnal things with an hidden invisible spring of glory and efficacy. So he did their sanctuary with its relation unto Christ, which was an object of faith, which no eye of flesh could behold.

2 For there was a tabernacle made;

the first wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the show-bread: which is called the sanctuary,

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called The Holiest of all :

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant ;

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

In these verses, the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, sets before our eyes the beautiful face of God's public worship, under the ceremonial law. And first, he describes the place appointed by God for his solemn worship. This was, first, the tabernacle, then the temple: the tabernacle was an ambulatory temple; the temple a standing tabernacle. The tabernacle was a type and figure of Christ's incarnation, whereby the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, as it dwelt typically in the tabernacle; this tabernacle had two parts, the sanctuary or holy place, and the *sanctum sanctorum*, or the *holy of holies*. Our apostle tells us what sacred utensils were, by God's appointment, in both these places. 1. In the sanctuary there was the *candlestick*, representing that fulness of light which is Christ, and which is by him communicated to the whole church. The *table* whereon stood the *show-bread*, typifying the saints' communion with Christ, and with one another; also the *show-bread* itself, which typified Christ, as being the only bread of life to his church, the only spiritual food of the soul that nourishes it unto life eternal. 2. In the holy of holies there was the *golden censer*, which was to hold the incense. This represented the intercession of Christ, which gives efficacy to the prayers of all believers: the prevalency of all our prayers depends on the incense which is in the hand of our merciful High-Priest. The *ark of the covenant overlaid with gold*; this, with the mercy-seat which covered the ark, was the most glorious and mysterious utensil of the tabernacle, the most eminent pledge of the divine presence; called the ark of the covenant, because the two tables, in which the ten commandments were writ by the finger of God, were kept in it; next the *golden pot*, in which the *manna* was laid up, and miraculously kept from putrefaction (which of itself would have stunk in a few days) a type of Christ the bread of life. Then *Aaron's rod that budded*: this originally was the rod of Moses, wherewith he fed his sheep in the wilderness, and afterwards wrought his miracles, and particularly smote the rock with it till it gushed out water. When Aaron was called to the office of the priesthood, it was delivered unto his keeping. This rod of Moses, wherewith he smote the rock, is commanded to be laid up in the tabernacle, because the spiritual rock that followed them was to be smitten with the rod of the law, that it might give forth the waters of life unto the church. Last of all the *tables of the covenant*; that is, the two tables of stone

cut out by Moses, and written on with the finger of God, containing the ten commandments, which were the substance of God's covenant with the people. These two tables of stone were by the express command of God, put into the ark, and there was nothing else in the ark but them. The pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were laid up in the holy of holies, near the ark, but not in it, which were of no actual use in the service of God, but only kept as sacred memorials. Having thus described what was in the ark, next the apostle tells us what was over the ark, namely, the cherubims and the mercy seat. The cherubims were *Alata animalia*, winged creatures, of human shape, but wings, to denote their angelical nature; there were two of them, one at each end of the ark, shadowing the mercy-seat; from between these cherubims, over the mercy-seat, it was God that manifested his majestical presence, spake unto Moses, and gave out his oracles as a prince spake from his throne. The mercy-seat was of pure beaten gold, the measure of it exactly answering the ark: this covered the ark wherein the law was; and was a type of Christ, who fully covers our sins; the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight; and is therefore called by the apostle, Rom. iii. 25. our propitiatory, or propitiation, or mercy-seat. "For if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, according to the law, who could stand?" These are the particular things which the apostle thought fit to take notice of, in the Jewish tabernacle; all which we see pointed at Christ; and there was in them all, more or less, a representation of the person and mediation of Christ. Hereunto were they designed, by divine wisdom, to denote, that in him alone is God well pleased, in him alone will he be glorified.

6 Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God:

7 But into the second *went* the high-priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Our apostle having given an account, in the preceding

verses, of the structure or fabric of the tabernacle, in the two parts of it which belonged to the priest; namely, the holy place, and the holy of holies, (for of the first court, the court of the people, he says nothing); he comes now to discourse of this service, which, by the appointment of God, the priests were to perform in this magnificent structure.

— Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priest went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

Where Observe, 1. The persons administering, the Priests only, and they of the posterity of Aaron: all others were forbidden upon pain of excision. Observe, 2. The general foundation of the services of these priests in the sanctuary. They entered into it, but were to go no farther; they must not so much as look into the holy of holies: no, nor yet abide in the sanctuary when the highpriest entered into the most holy place. Observe, 3. The time of this their entrance into the sanctuary to discharge their service, *always*; that is, every day, and at all times, as occasion did require. Observe, 4. The service itself, *accomplishing the service of God*; these services were either daily or weekly: daily, were dressing the lamps, supplying them with holy oil, morning and evening, also the service of the golden altar, on which the priests burnt incense every day. The weekly service of the sanctuary was the changing of the show-bread every sabbath in the morning. All the service was typical, representing the continual application of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice unto his church to the end of the world. The tabernacle itself, and the inhabitation of God in it, was a type of the incarnation of the Son of God. All the utensils of it were representations of his grace. He is the light and life of the church, the lamp and the bread thereof. The incense of his intercession renders all our obedience acceptable unto God; and accordingly there was continual application unto these things without intermission, every day: signifying unto us that a continual application unto God by Christ, and a continual application of the mediation of Christ by faith, are the springs of light, life and comfort of the church. Having thus described the priest's service in the first part of the temple, ver. 6, he comes now to declare the service and administration of the highpriest in the second part of the temple, or holy of holies, ver. 7.

— But into the second *went* the highpriest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.—

Observe here, 1. The person administering described, *the highpriest alone*; none of the priests were permitted to be so near him as the sanctuary, when he administered in the most holy place. Thus sacredly was the presence of God, in the holy of holies, made inaccessible not only to the people, but even to all the priests themselves. The great truth which was represented and shadowed forth was, that there was no entrance into the gracious presence of God, but by our great High-Priest the holy Jesus. The highpriest alone, and no other person, entered into the holy of holies. Ob-

serve, 2. The highpriest engaging in his services. "He entered through the veil into the holy place." This was a type both of the entrance of Christ into heaven; and of our entrance by him into the throne of grace. We read, Mat. xxvii. 51. of the rending of this veil, at the death of our Saviour, from top to bottom: signifying thereby, that the way was laid open into the holy place, and the gracious presence of God discovered, and made accessible to all that come unto him by Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. The time of this service expressed, it was *once only every year*; and the day, the precise day of the year, determined, Lev. xvi. 29. to wit, the tenth day of the month Tisri, answering our September called the great day of atonement; on which day such a complete atonement was made for sin, that the Jews had a saying, "that on the day of expiation all Israel was made as innocent as in the day of creation." Observe, 4. The nature of this service; the apostle tells us, it was *not without blood*, that is, he did it by blood, sprinkling it seven times with his finger towards the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. 11, 12. There is an emphasis in the expression, *not without blood*, to manifest the necessity of the death and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ our great High-Priest, and the impossibility of our entering into the gracious presence of God without the blood of the reconciling sacrifice Christ Jesus. Observe, 5. For whom his blood was offered; first for himself, then for the people; that is, for his own sins, and the sins of the people: this argued the great imperfection of that state; whereas Christ our great High-Priest, was not to offer up the blood of goats, but his own blood, not for himself at all, but for others only; not once a year, but once for all; "by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified."

— The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.

The apostle, in this verse, declares the spiritual use and signification of the Levitical service, and what the Holy Ghost did intend thereby; namely, that the true and proper means to enter into heaven, the holy of holies, was not so fully and clearly manifested; and that heaven, represented by the holy of holies, was as yet inaccessible; for Christ first entered into heaven as our forerunner, with his blood to appear before God, and thereby prepare the way for our entrance after him. Hence learn, 1. That the Holy Ghost's design, in all the Levitical service, was to direct the faith of believers to Christ the promised Messiah, who was signified thereby; *the Holy Ghost thus signifying*. Learn, 2. That although typical institutions, attended diligently unto, were sufficient to direct the faith of the Jews unto the expectation of a real expiation of sin, and a gracious acceptance with God thereupon; yet the clear manifestation of the way of expiation of sin by the blood of Christ, is the great privilege and discovery of the gospel. Learn, 3. Although the standing of the first tabernacle was a great mercy and privilege, yet the removal of it was a greater, because it made way for the bringing in of that which was much better, the gospel state.

— Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts

and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience,—

—*Which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

As if the apostle had said, “the first tabernacle was but a figure, or typical representation of good things to come, serving only for the present non-age of the church: for the gifts and sacrifices then offered could not, of themselves, perfectly justify, sanctify, or save any man, nor could they pacify the conscience of the sinner.” Where note, that conscience cannot be satisfied until God’s wrath be pacified, Now, the ceremonial rites could not pacify God’s wrath, because they could not satisfy God’s justice: nothing but the blood of Christ could do that, which those sacrifices were only typical representations and prefigurations of.—Observe farther, the apostle’s reasons why those legal rites could not make them perfect; namely, because the nature of them was such, that they reached only to the outward man, consisting only, for the most part, in *meats, drinks, and divers washings*, that concerned the flesh and body of man, which did not of themselves, commend any man to God, and were imposed upon them as a yoke, until the times of reformation; that is, the time of the Messiah, the time of the New Testament dispensation. Note here, the great impression of the Jewish dispensation, it was weak and imperfect and consequently not to be continued. Note farther, that nothing can give peace to conscience but what gives satisfaction to God’s justice. Whoever seeks it in any other way, than by virtue of Christ’s atonement, will never attain it in this world, or that which is to come; no offerings could make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

11 But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

Our apostle having showed, in the preceding verses, how, and after what manner, the Levitical priests executed their office, he comes now to declare how, and after what manner Christ, our great High-Priest, did also execute his. And, 1. As the Levitical priests had a tabernacle, an earthly sanctuary, to officiate in; so Christ had a greater and more perfect tabernacle to execute his office in, namely, that of his own body, not like theirs, made with hands, but miraculously formed in the virgin’s womb, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost; in which tabernacle the fullness of the Godhead dwelt substantially. The human na-

ture of Christ was that tabernacle in which the Son of God administered his sacerdotal office in this world, and wherein he continueth yet to do so in heaven by his intercession. And well may this tabernacle be called greater, being so not in quantity and measure, but in dignity and worth; and more perfect, that is, more perfectly fitted and suited to the end of a tabernacle, both for the inhabitation of the divine nature, and the means of exercising the sacerdotal office, in the making atonement for sin, than the other was. Learn hence, that the human nature of Christ, in which he exercised and discharged the duties of his sacerdotal office, in making atonement for sin, is the greatest, most perfect, and excellent ordinance of God, far excelling those that were most excellent under the Old Testament. The glory of this tabernacle of our Saviour’s body in heaven, will be the object of holy admiration unto all eternity, as it was admirably fitted and perfected for service and usefulness here on earth. Observe, 2. The apostle declares, that as Christ had a more excellent tabernacle, so he was incomparably a more excellent High-Priest than ever the legal dispensation had; they entered the holy of holies, he entered heaven; they entered often, he but once; they entered with the blood of goats and calves, he in his own blood. And the effect, fruit, and benefit of it was unspeakable: thereby he obtained eternal redemption for us. Note here, that whereas it is said that Christ entered into heaven with his own blood, it is not so to be understood, as if he carried the material blood which he shed with him into heaven, in a vessel or otherwise, as the highpriest carried the blood of the sacrifice in his hand into the most holy place; but that Christ presented his body in heaven, out of which the blood was shed, and by the merit of his death, made expiation for sin, and purchased eternal redemption for sinners. Learn hence, that the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Great High-Priest, into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to save thereby to the utmost was a matter so great and glorious, that it could not be accomplished but by his own blood. No other sacrifice was sufficient to this end; not by the blood of bulls and goats.

13 For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?

The apostle had asserted, in the former verse, that eternal redemption was the fruit of Christ’s sacrifice: he proves it in these, and that by an argument drawn from the less to the greater: thus, “If,” says he, “the blood of bulls and goats, and the water that was mixed with the ashes of the burnt heifer, (or red cow mentioned, Numbers xix) purified from ceremonial uncleanness, and procured the external sanctification of the flesh, or outward man; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the eternal spirit, (that is, his Godhead, his divine nature) offered up

himself, his whole man, soul, and body, a sacrifice, without spot, to God the father, be able to purge our consciences from all spiritual impurity and uncleanness of sin, (that dead, because deadly work,) and render us fit to serve the living God in an holy course of christian obedience? Note here, 1. That Christ's offering himself to God was a special act, as High-Priest of the church, wherein he gave up himself in a way of most profound obedience, to do and to suffer whatever the justice of God required unto the expiation of sin, even to the shedding of his blood. Note, 2. That Christ's Godhead it was, which rendered the suffering of his manhood infinitely meritorious; or that Christ's blood was effectual, not simply as it was material blood, but as offered by the eternal Spirit; his blood, though not the blood of God, yet was the blood of him that was God. Note, 3. That the purging of our consciences from dead works is an immediate effect of the death of Christ, and a benefit which, upon our faith and obedience, we are made partakers of. Note, 4. That the best works of men, antecedently unto the purging of their consciences by the blood of Christ, are but dead works, unsuitable to the nature of the living God. Lord help us to remember, that when we come to hear, to pray, or perform any act of worship, that we are doing it to the living God. O how improper for, and unsuitable to, a living God, are dead services without life, without heart, without spirit?

15 And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth.

These words represent unto us one special benefit accruing by the death of Christ, namely, the ratification of the gospel covenant; for by this means he took upon him the glorious office to be the Mediator of the new covenant, that by the intervention of his death he might make satisfaction for the sins of believers under the Old Testament, as well as for those that live under the New; and that as well those that lived before Christ's coming in the flesh as since, might by virtue of his death, obtain the promised eternal inheritance. Note here, that God designed an eternal inheritance unto some persons; that the persons designed are they that are called; that the way and manner of conveying a right and title to this inheritance was by promise; that there was an obstacle to the enjoyment of this inheritance, which was transgression against the first covenant; that this obstacle might be removed, and the inheritance enjoyed, God made a new covenant; which had a Mediator, who expiated sin by the sacrifice of his death. Note farther, That the efficacy and merit of Christ's death and mediation extends itself to all that are effectually called, as we those

that lived before his coming in the flesh, as those that lived since. Note lastly, how the covenant of grace is here called a Testament, because it received its ratification and confirmation by the blood of Christ.—All things required in a testament are here found, namely, a testator deceased, Christ Jesus; legacies bequeathed, temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings; legatees named, the heirs of promise; conditions required, upon which only the legacies may be obtained, faith, repentance, and sincere obedience; seals annexed, baptism, and the Lord's Supper; witnesses subscribing, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.—The sum is this, that the death of Christ is the foundation, life, and soul of the new covenant; and that the new covenant is of the nature of a testament, and the benefits promised therein: to wit, remission of sin, reconciliation with God, sanctification on earth, and glorification in heaven, are legacies freely left us by our deceased Testator, who *was dead but is alive again, and lives for evermore*, to execute his own will and testament, of which the scripture is the instrument, and the sacraments the seals. Learn, from the whole, 1. That there is an irrevocable grant of the whole inheritance of grace and glory made unto believers in the new covenant. 2. That as the grant of these things is free and gracious, so the enjoyment of them is secured against contingencies, by the death of Jesus Christ the great Testator. *A testament is of force after men are dead; but of no strength at all while the testator liveth.*

18 Whereupon, neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people.

20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament, which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Our apostle having entered upon a comparison between the first and second covenant in the former verses, he goes on to prosecute it in these; showing that both of them were *dedicated*, that is, confirmed by blood. The first covenant which God made with Israel in Horeb, had not its sanction without typical blood. The using of blood for the sanction of leagues and covenants was a very ancient rite, and probably signified, that the parties confederating did thereby engage blood and life for the observation of them. Now that the covenant between God and Israel was thus solemnized, and received its confirmation by blood, the apostle makes appear from the history of Moses, Exodus

xxiv. unto which he appeals; where we find the sprinkler to be Moses, the sprinkling to be blood, the *things sprinkled* were the *book* wherein the covenant was written, and the *people* who engaged themselves in the covenant. Now the use and end of this sprinkling upon the people, was the confirmation of the covenant on their part, as the sprinkling of it upon the altar was the confirmation on God's part. And the words added to the action were, *this is the blood of the covenant*; that is, this is the blood by which the covenant is confirmed, and made inviolable betwixt God and you: he calls it the *blood of the covenant*, because it was a sign of it, and a real confirming it. In like manner, the new covenant was confirmed by blood, even by the blood of Christ, as is evident from his own words. Luke xii. 20. *This cup is the new testament in my blood for remission of sin.* Remission of sin is one principal blessing promised in the new covenant; but this promise had been in vain, if Christ's blood had not been shed to satisfy divine justice, and thereby make sin remissible: for though man had repented, and could have made even hell itself to swim with his tears, yet his sins could not have been remitted, had not this blood made it remissible: so that the blood of Christ is the firm and immovable basis and foundation upon which the new covenant was fixed. This is the first part of our apostle's design in these words: namely, to prove the necessity of Christ's blood for confirmation of the new covenant. Next, he proves the efficacy of that blood for taking away of sin; telling us that the tabernacle, the vessels, and all the utensils thereunto belonging, yea, all the things which were purified, were ceremonially purified by blood; and that, as without shedding of blood then there could be no remission, so no acceptance with God now without the shedding of the blood of Christ. Learn hence, that in all things wherein we have to do with God, and whereby we approach unto him, it is the blood of Christ, and the application of it to our consciences, that gives a gracious acceptance with God; without this all is unclean and defiled now, as without shedding of blood there was no purification then.

23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

As if the apostle had said, "if the tabernacle and utensils thereunto belonging, which were patterns and types of heavenly things, must be consecrated by the blood of bulls and goats, much more must the heavenly things themselves, which were shadowed by them, be purified and consecrated by better blood than the blood of beasts, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ." Learn hence, 1. That there is such uncleanness in our natures, in our persons, in our duties, in all our services, that, unless they and we are purified by the blood of Christ, neither we nor they can have any acceptance with God. Learn, 2. That the sacrifice of Christ is the one only everlasting fountain and spring of all sanctification and sacred dedication, whereby the whole new creation is purified and dedicated unto God. Learn, 3. That neither heaven itself, nor heavenly things, could have been made meet for us, or we for them, had not they

been dedicated, and we purged, by the sacrifice of Christ. By *heavenly things* here we may understand heaven itself, of which the tabernacle was a type. Now as the purification of the tabernacle was only to prepare it to be a place in which their persons might be presented before God; in like manner, was heaven itself prepared and purified for us by our Lord's entrance into it with his own atonement, or propitiatory sacrifice. Christ's entering into heaven, and his appearing with his blood of sprinkling in the presence of God for us, procures the acceptance of our prayers and praises whilst we live, and our admission into those heavenly mansions of bliss and glory prepared for us when we die.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true*: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, and that is Christ, our Great High Priest, the mediator of the new covenant.— Observe, 2. What is spoken of him, 1. Negatively, that he is not entered into the holy place of the sanctuary, or tabernacle made with hands, that is, built by the hands of men, which was a figure of the true holy of holies, to wit, heaven. All God's appointments in his service have their proper season, their proper glory, beauty, and use; even the tabernacle, and the external utensils thereof, made with men's hands, had so, whilst they had the force of a divine institution. 2. Positively, He is entered into heaven itself, the place of the peculiar residence of the presence, majesty, and glory of God; where all his blessed saints enjoy him, and his holy angels minister unto him. Observe, 3. The end of our great High-priest's entrance into heaven declared, *now to appear in the presence of God for us.* The priests of old, when they entered the holy place, were forced soon to go out again to prepare for a new sacrifice: but this word *now* is expressive of the whole season and duration of time; from the entrance of Christ into heaven, until the consummation of all things: there is no moment of time in which it may not be said, he now appeareth in the presence of God for us. Learn, hence, That the continual appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ for us in heaven, as our great High-Priest, in the presence of his Father, is the foundation both of our safety and our comfort, from whence relief may be derived upon all occasions, whatever difficulties, temptations and trials may be before us.

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the highpriest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others.

26 (For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world,) but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Our apostle, in these words, sets forth the excellency of

Christ's sacrifice from its singularity; it needeth no repetition, as their sacrifices of old did; their sacrifices were repeated often, and their repetition was an evidence of their imperfection: but Christ's once offering himself a sacrifice was sufficient, in regard of the infinite worth and dignity of his person: *once in the end of the world, in the gospel-age, the last age of the world, hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* Here note, that the virtue of Christ's sacrifice once offered, did extend itself to all times, and purchased pardon for sins committed in all ages, even long before it was offered: for the death of Christ must be considered, not as a natural, but as a moral cause: not as a medicine that heals, but as a ransom that frees a captive. A captive may be released upon assurance given that a ransom shall be paid, though it be not actually paid. Thus the death of Christ was available to purchase pardon for believers before his coming, because he interposed as their Surety: and is therefore called the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, not only in respect of God's decree, but Christ's efficacy: the salvation we derive from him, was ever in him; Christ's once offering was sufficient; his sacrifice may be often commemorated, but only once offered.—Such indeed is the absolute perfection of the once offering of Christ, that it stands in need of, and will admit of no repetition in any kind. Note farther, that this once offering of Christ is always effectual unto all the ends of it, now and hereafter, even no less than it was in the day and hour when it was actually offered. This sacrifice needs no repetition like those of old, but is always fresh in the virtue of it, and needs nothing but renewed application by faith for the communication of its effects and fruits unto us; *for by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* Though the sufferings of Christ were necessary to the expiation of sin, yet he suffered neither more nor oftener than was necessary; to have suffered often was altogether needless, and would have been useless. Note lastly, the great end for which Christ once became a sacrifice, namely, *to put away sin*; plainly implying, that sin had erected a dominion, a tyranny over all men, as by a law; that no power of any mere creature was able to disannul or abolish this law of sin; that the destruction and dissolution of this law of sin, was the great end of Christ's coming to discharge his priestly office in the sacrifice of himself: "Now in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away, to abolish and destroy sin, by the sacrifice of himself."

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.

These words may be considered relatively and absolutely. Relatively thus; "as God hath appointed that all men should once die penally for sin, and then be judged, so did he determine that Christ should once suffer penally, to ex-

piate sin, and take away the guilt of it fully. And as after death men must appear the second time to judgment, so after his once offering to take away sin and death, Christ shall appear the second time to bestow upon us eternal salvation." Note here, that Christ's being offered to take away the sins of many, cannot be meant of his taking them away in the Socinian sense, to wit, by his holy doctrine, which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our sins by way of imputation: for this is evident from the opposition here, between his first appearance and his second: *Christ was once offered to bear our sins, but he shall appear a second time without sin.* Why? Did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes, certainly he did, as to any inherent guilt: for the scripture assures us *he had no sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, at his first coming he bore our sins; at his second coming he shall appear without sin? The words can have no other imaginable sense but this: that at his first coming he sustained the person of sinner, and died as a sacrifice; but at his second coming he shall appear as a judge, to confer eternal life on those who are made partakers of the sacrifice of his death. Thus the words are to be considered relatively. Absolutely thus, "It is appointed for all men once to die." Here is the first word of certainty, *all men must die*: then the word of singularity, *they must once die*, not often; once and but once; they die by statute and appointment. The supreme Lord of life and death appoints man his time, both for coming into the world, and going out of it; we come in at his command, and leave it at his dispose. *And after death the judgment*: the word after signifies the order of time: for death goes before, and judgment follows it. The judgment is both particular of every individual person, and general and universal of all: after which follows the first, eternal, and unalterable condition of man, either in a state of misery, or felicity. The parties judged will be angels and men; the person judging, Jesus Christ: he, by redeeming mankind, obtained right and power to judge mankind; such a Judge as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a Judge as the subtilty of the wisest cannot delude; such a Judge as the richest of the wealthiest cannot bribe: in a word, such a Judge as there is no appealing from, or repealing of his sentence. O great day! when the stiffest knee shall bow at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and the strongest back shall break under the insupportable burden of a Redeemer's wrath! when the Alexanders and Cesars, which once shook the earth, and made the world to tremble, shall revere and lie prostrate at the foot of Christ! And, Lord, seeing that judgment is before us, let us seriously believe it, daily expect it, duly prepare for it: let no profit tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to do that thing which we cannot account for at thy tribunal. AMEN.

CHAPTER X.

The design of our apostle in the chapter before us, is twofold; first, to show the weakness and imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices considered in themselves, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. Secondly, to improve this doctrine unto faith, obedience, and perseverance in our christian profession unto the death, by several weighty arguments; showing parti-

cularly, the fatal danger of apostacy from Christ, and his holy religion.

FOR the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.

In the former part of this chapter, the apostle proves the impotency and imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices by sundry arguments; namely, first from the nature of them, they were but shadows; from the plurality of them, they were many; from the repetition of them, they were often; and from the inefficaciousness of them, they could not take away sin.

The former of these is taken notice of, in this first verse, *the law having a shadow of good things to come*. An allusion probably to the art of painting, wherein a shadow is first drawn; and afterwards the very image itself: or a metaphor taken from the shadow of a body in the light of the sun. As the shadow is the representation of a body; a just and true representation of it, and of nothing else, yet but an obscure representation of a body; the life, vigor, and spirit of a body, cannot be represented by it: thus was it between the sacrifices of the law, and the sacrifice of Christ; the blood of those sacrifices were representations of Christ: they were a just representation of Christ: he was the idea in the mind of God, when Moses was charged to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount; and they were but an obscure and dark representation of him; the glory and efficacy of these good things appeared not visible in them. Learn hence, that whatever there may be in religious institutions, and the diligent observation of them, if they only shadow forth Jesus Christ, and do not actually exhibit him to the faith of believers, with the benefits of his mediation, they cannot make us perfect, nor give us acceptance with God.

—Those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Here we have a second argument to prove the impotency and weakness of the legal sacrifices; and it is drawn from the repetition and non-cessation from them. Thus, "those sacrifices which were often repeated, year by year, could not of themselves make satisfaction for sin, or purge the conscience of the sinner from guilt. Had justice been satisfied, and conscience quieted, there had been no reason why those sacrifices should have been so often repeated. But the case was otherwise, for in their most solemn sacrifices there was a commemoration and confession made of their

former sins by the highpriest every year; which was an intimation to them, that they needed a new and better sacrifice for the expiation of sin, namely, that of the Messiah, in and by which alone remission of sin was to be expected and obtained." Learn hence, 1. That the repetition and reiteration of the same sacrifices is an evident demonstration of their weakness and insufficiency. Accordingly the church of Rome, by affirming the sacrifice in the mass to be the very same with that which Christ offered on the cross, do prove an insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ for the expiation of sin, if the apostle's argument here be good: for he affirms, that all sacrifices that must be repeated are weak and insufficient. Learn, 2. That although repeated sins have need of repeated confession, and renewed pardon, yet they have no need of a sacrifice; for he who is once purged has no more conscience of sin, that is, though he knows he has many sins, yet he has not a trembling, tormenting, accusing conscience, because he is purged, and his sins pardoned, through that one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Learn, 3. That the discharge of conscience from the guilt of sin, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, is a full demonstration of the sufficiency of the virtue of that sacrifice: and that there needs no reiteration of it, but only fresh applications made unto it by repeated acts and exercises of faith.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The intendment of our apostle in these words, is to prove that the sacrifices of the law could not expiate sin, nor make reconciliation with God, which the sacrifice of Christ alone was ordained and appointed to. Here observe, 1. The subject matter spoken of. The blood of bulls and goats: they were accompanied with great solemnity and pomp of ceremony in their celebration: and the people had a great esteem and veneration of them in their minds: but when all was done, that which was offered was no more than the blood of bulls and goats. Observe, 2. That which is denied of these sacrifices, namely, the taking away of sins: to take away sin is to make atonement for sin, to expiate the guilt of it before God, by a satisfaction given, or price paid, that it shall never bind over the penitent sinner unto punishment. Observe, 3. The manner of the negation; it was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Impossible from divine institution: they were never designed for that end, therefore could never effect it; for the virtue of every institution depends upon its designation to its end. Now the blood of bulls was only designed to represent the taking away of sin, but never by itself to effect it. And it was also impossible from the nature of the thing; for how could the blood of a beast expiate the sin of a man? satisfaction must be made for sin in and by the same nature that had sinned. Learn hence, that it was utterly impossible that sin should be taken away before God, and from the conscience of a sinner by any other blood than the blood of Christ: it is this alone that cleanseth us from all sin, for he alone was the propitiation for them.

5 Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

6 In burnt-offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast no pleasure.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

8 Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and *offering* for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure *therein* (which are offered by the law);

9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

10 By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once *for all*.

Our apostle having showed the weakness and insufficiency of the Levitical sacrifices in the former verses, he comes now to declare the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and of his blessed undertaking, to do, fulfil, perform, and suffer all things required by the will and wisdom, by the holiness, and righteousness of God, unto the complete salvation of the church. And this he doth by a quotation out of the Old Testament, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. Where Christ is brought in, as newly made man, speaking to his Father, in and after this manner: "Forasmuch as thy wisdom did institute, and formerly appoint sacrifices, as types prefigure the sacrifice of thy Son, but thou didst not intend their longer continuance, when he should once be offered up: pursuant to this holy will and pleasure of thine, I am now come into the world: thou hast prepared me a body, an holy and innocent human nature, fit to be united to my glorious Godhead, in which nature I will suffer, and, by my sufferings, satisfy thy justice for sin; and, by the sufficiency of my sacrifice, put a period to all the Levitical sacrifices that did precede me, and prefigure me." Learn, hence, 1. That in the fulness of God's appointed time, Christ came into the world to accomplish that which the Levitical sacrifices did only prefigure, but could not effectuate. 2. That in order thereunto, Christ did assume the human nature, and offered in himself that nature willingly to his Father, as a sacrifice to atone divine displeasure. 3. That by this one sacrifice and oblation of Christ, which he performed in obedience to the will of God, all that believe in him are justified and saved, do obtain remission of sin, grace here, and glory hereafter; "by which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all."

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man after he had offer-

ed one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool:

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Our apostle still proceeds upon his former argument, namely, to assign a farther difference between Christ and the Levitical priests. 1. The Levitical priesthood consisted of a plurality of persons; the priests were many; by reason of death they had many successors; but the evangelical priesthood consisted but of one single person, the Lord Jesus, called here, *this man*. 2. The Levitical priesthood consisted of a plurality of sacrifices; there were also many, many in number, and many in kind, bulls, lambs, goats, &c. but the sacrifice which Christ offered was but one, as to the kind namely, *that body which was prepared*, ver. 5. 3. The Levitical sacrifices were oftentimes offered, ver. 11. but the sacrifice of Christ was but once offered, 4. The Levitical sacrifices could never take away sin; but Christ by the sacrifice of his death took away sin for ever, fully and everlastingly. 5. The Levitical priests stood and ministered, ver. 11. *Every priest standeth daily*. This is the posture of servants; but Christ sits, which is the posture of the Lord; *this man after he had offered sat down*, 6. They stood daily ministering and offering, because their sacrifices could not take away sin: but Christ did his work fully by one offering, and after that sits or rests for ever in heaven. Learn hence, 1. That Christ crucified is the only divine and proper sacrifice under the gospel. *Divine*, because its institution and appointment was of God: *proper*, because all the essential properties of an expiatory sacrifice were found in this. It was a living creature offered by a priest; it was offered to God, and it was a sweet savor unto him; and it is the only proper sacrifice of the gospel: doing good is called a sacrifice, Heb. xiii. 16. Righteousness is called a sacrifice, Psal. iv. 5. but not properly, but allusively and metaphorically only. Learn, 2. That the sacrifice of Christ is but of one kind, and was but once offered; yet it is of such unspeakable value, and everlasting efficacy, as to take away sin fully and finally, and to perfect all them that are or shall be sanctified to the end of the world. The virtue of this sacrifice reacheth backward as far as Adam, and reacheth forward to the last believer springing from Adam: and as it reacheth backward and forward to all believers, in former, present, and future ages, so to all the sins of all believers, which are fully purged and expiated by it; the design and end of this oblation being to atone, pacify, and reconcile God, by giving a full and adequate compensation and satisfaction to the justice of God, for the wrong done to the holiness of his law. Thus our Jesus, *by one offering, has perfected for ever them that are sanctified*.

15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith

the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them:

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18 Now, where remission of these is, *there is no more offering for sin.*

Our apostle had asserted the perfection of Christ's sacrifice in the former verses, he proves it in these by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, recorded, Jer. xxxi. 31. where after he had promised a new covenant instead of the old, and had said, *this is the covenant I will make with them after these days*, namely, when the days of the Old Testament are expired, then he says, *I will put my laws into their hearts, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* Now seeing God promiseth, under the new covenant, sanctification and remission of sin to all believers, of which covenant Christ is Mediator, and by whose death the covenant is ratified and confirmed, therefore this one sacrifice once offered up is abundantly sufficient. And if remission of sins be obtained by Christ's one sacrifice, there needs no repetition of it, nor any other offering for sin. Learn hence, that the sacrifice of Christ was of that excellent virtue and transcendent merit, that by once offering it took away sin, all sin, and made it eternally remissible; and upon faith actually and eternally remitted: to what purpose then should there be any more offerings for sin? Yea, they who look for and trust to any other, fall into that sin for which there is no remission provided in the covenant, nor shall any other offering be accepted for them for ever; for they despise both the wisdom and grace of God, the blood of Christ, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost; wherefore there is no remission.

Here now we are come to a full end of the doctrinal part of this epistle, concerning the nature of Christ's priesthood, the necessity and efficacy of his sacrifice, the power and prevalence of his intercession. O glorious mysteries; the light of the church of the Gentiles, the glory of the people Israel, the foundation and bulwark of evangelical faith!

19 Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21 And *having* an highpriest over the house of God:

22 Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The apostle having thus finished the doctrinal part of his discourse, and informed their judgment of the excellency

of the evangelical service above the Levitical sacrifices, he comes now, in the applicatory part of his discourse, to direct their practice in several weighty and important duties, which appeared to be incumbent upon them; as namely, to *draw near to God*, ver. 22. to persevere in the christian profession, ver. 23, to stir up one another to love and good works, ver. 24 to continue in christian communion, ver. 25. The first duty exhorted to is *to draw near to God*, seeing we have *boldness, &c.* Let us draw near with a true heart. Note here, 1. The duty exhorted to, and that is, *to draw near to God*; in general, to worship him; in particular to pray unto him, and seek remission of sin and eternal life from him; to come unto God as clothed with glorious majesty, sitting upon a throne of grace, and propitiated by the blood of Christ. Note, 2. The manner of performing this duty, *with a pure heart, and in full assurance of faith*; with the heart, or we give him a skin instead of a sacrifice; with sincerity of heart, which is the life and soul of all acceptable worship; and with a full assurance of faith grounded upon the fidelity of God, and the immutability of the promise. Note, 3. The qualifications of the person: he that draws near to God, must, 1. Have his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, that is, his soul cleansed by the blood of Christ, and freed from the accusations of an evil condemning conscience. 2. His body washed with pure water, to wit, the laver of regeneration, which was signified by the legal washings. Note, 4. The encouragement we have thus to draw near to God; and that is threefold: 1. We have a new and living way unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus; an allusion to the legal dispensation, wherein the highpriest had a way to pass through the veil with blood into the holiest, to expiate the people's sins, and obtain mercy for them: ours is called a new way, because newly made manifest; and a living way, because it leads to and ends in life eternal; or a living way, in opposition to the typical way of going into the holiest, which was a dead way to all but the highpriest, and to him too if he entered above once a year, and then also if he entered without blood. Farther, this new and living way is here said to be consecrated through the veil of Christ's flesh; that is, made passable for penitent sinners; the throne of grace made accessible through the blood of a mediator. When Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent, to signify that our great High-Priest was ready to enter the holy place of heaven, to procure eternal redemption for us. 2. Encouragement is boldness, or freedom and liberty to enter into the holiest; a freedom for our prayers to enter heaven whilst we live, and a right and liberty for our persons to enter it when we die. 3. The mean whereby we obtain this liberty, *By the blood of Jesus.* We, that before could not come near him for our sins, may now come near him by faith in the blood of his Son; for that blood satisfied justice, merited divine favor, and made God accessible. Learn hence, 1. That as sin had made God inaccessible to sinners, as sinners: so the blood of Christ, that new and living way, has made him accessible to believers. 2. That although, from the first promise of Christ, there was always a way for believers to come to God, yet it was not so manifest, as it was after Christ's death and ascension, and the gospel's revelation.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

The second duty which the apostle exhorts the Hebrews here unto, is perseverance in the christian faith and hope, in order to the actual enjoyment of the great reward. Where, Observe, 1. The duty itself *to hold fast the profession of our faith*: not blindly, without due examination: but, having examined the grounds and foundations of our faith, to maintain the profession of it against all temptations and terrors of the world, occasioned by sufferings and persecutions, and against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge us from our religion, and make us proselytes to their party and faction: thus let us *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*. Observe, 2. The reason enforcing this duty, because *he is faithful that has promised*. Mark the gradation: we have a promise, even a promise of eternal glory, as the reward of our perseverance. This promise is God's promise, not man's, and the promise of a faithful God, who neither can nor will change his mind; he can as soon change his being as change his word and promise; *He is faithful, &c.*

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.

Observe here, the duty exhorted to, to *consider one another*, that is, to watch over one another. This consideration respects the gifts, the graces, the temptations, the dangers of one another, and is the foundation of all those mutual duties of warning, exhorting, and admonishing one another: duties, God knows, generally lost amongst us, and with them is the glory of the christian religion departed from us. Learn hence, that the mutual watch of christians over each other, and their mutual exhortations of each other unto gospel-duties, is necessarily required, as a special mean for their preservation in their christian profession. Observe, 2. The duty we are to *provoke* and be *provoked* unto, and that is, to *love and good works*; that is no true faith which can be separated from love: and that is no true love that is separated from good works. The great end of christian communion amongst believers, should be to excite one another to love! which is the spring and fountain of all good works: and to provoke one another to good works; as the genuine effect and fruit of a sincere love to God and our neighbour.

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Observe here, 1. That in the apostle's time there were christian assemblies, in which christians did meet together to worship and serve God, and edify and comfort one another; and, in times of peace and liberty, they had convenient places erected, and separated for that end and use. The light of nature, as well as of scripture, dictates that God is to be worshipped solemnly and publicly; that public worship pleases him most, and that he accepts it best. Observe, 2. It was the manner or custom of some then to forsake the public assemblies; some out of sloth and negli-

gence; others out of fear and persecution: this was a dangerous sin, and so continues. God and Christ esteem themselves forsaken, when their worship and worshippers are causelessly forsaken. Observe, 3. The duty intimated and directed to, *not to forsake the assembling together, as some do*; for christian assemblies are the life, the food and nourishment of our souls; consequently forsaking of church assemblies is usually the forerunner of apostasy. Observe, 4. The great inducement and encouragement to this duty, *because the day approacheth*. What day? *Ans.* The day of Jerusalem's approaching destruction to them; the day of death and judgment coming upon, and hastening towards us. Learn hence, that the intimations given of approaching judgments, ought to influence unto special diligence in all evangelical duties. 2. That to see evidently the approaches of death and judgment, and yet not to be sedulous and diligent in the duties of divine worship, is a sign and token of a backsliding frame, tending unto final apostasy from Christ and his holy religion.

26 For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

In these verses the apostle gives a vehement enforcement of his preceding exhortation, to an untainting perseverance in the profession of christianity, and this is drawn from the dreadful consequences of apostasy. We have here the nature of the sin expressed, the impossibility of deliverance from the guilt of it declared, and the punishment that will unavoidably follow upon it asserted. Observe, 1. Wherein the nature of this sin consists, *if we sin wilfully*, that is, by renouncing christianity. Where note, How our apostle puts himself in among the number; to show that there is no respect of persons in this matter, but those who have equally sinned, shall be equally punished. Note farther, that the apostle, by sinning wilfully, does not mean every wilful sin, and that there is no recovery after any voluntary sin committed: but by wilfully, he means obstinately, maliciously, and with despite. Observe, 2. The season and circumstance of this sin, *after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, that is, after the gospel has been preached unto us, and we, upon conviction of its truth, and sense of its power, have taken upon us the public profession of christianity: after we have dedicated ourselves to Christ in baptism, and joined ourselves unto the body of his church: after all this to relinquish and renounce the christian profession, either for fear of sufferings, or love of this present world, exposes us to an unutterable and inevitable condemnation. Observe, 3. What the apostle charges as an aggravation of this sin, namely, that it cannot be expiated, "There remains no more sacrifice for sin:" for God has no other Son to offer as a sacrifice for sin, if this be rejected; and no other Spirit to make that sacrifice effectual, if the Holy Spirit be despised, and finally resisted; and therefore no ground of hope can remain for such apostates. The punishment of sins unpar-

donable is unavoidable: it is an eternal decree of divine justice, that the sacrifice of Christ shall never benefit that man, who finally falls away after he has received the knowledge of the truth. Observe, 4. The dreadful and tremendous judgment here threatened to apostates, and what they must eternally expect, namely, the *fiery indignation*, and fearful wrath of the just and holy God. From the whole learn, 1. That there is an inseparable connexion between apostasy and eternal ruin. 2. That the minds of wretched apostates are oftentimes filled with dreadful expectations of approaching wrath. 3. That the dread and terror of God's final judgment against apostates, is, in itself inconceivable, and accordingly shadowed out by things of the greatest dread and terror in the world. 4. That God's fiery indignation, though it shall devour his adversaries, yet shall it never eat them up; it shall eternally prey upon them, but never consume them, or annihilate their being. O mysterious fire! whose strange property it is always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. God grant that we may never experimentally know, or feelingly find, either where hell is, or what it is.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnessess:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?

The apostle here confirms what he had before spoken, of the sad and certain destruction of apostates; and compares it with the punishment inflicted on the breakers of Moses' law. If those, under the testimony of two or three witnesses of that apostasy, died without mercy; how much sorer punishment is due to the contemners of Christ, who tread under foot, that is, vilify and undervalue our Lord Jesus Christ, esteeming him as one that died a public malefactor; counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; that is, a common thing; making nothing of the solemnest rite that ever was used in the world for the confirmation of any covenant, to wit, the shedding of the blood of the Son of God, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace; as if he were guilty of lying and falsehood, in bearing witness of the divine power of Christ. Learn hence, 1. That although to transgress Moses' law was an heinous offence, yet to sin wilfully against the gospel, after we have received the knowledge of it, is far more heinous. Learn, 2. That to revolt from and rebel against God loving sinful man, against Jesus Christ ransoming and redeeming captive slaves, and against the Holy Spirit sanctifying and cleansing polluted souls, comes nearest the sin of devils; and as the sin is the more heinous, so the punishment must be far more grievous: for God has allotted different degrees of punishments, unto different degrees and aggravations of sins. Learn, 3. That the punishment of final apostasy is eternal,

without any hope of mercy, and without the least relaxation of punishment: for they shall have judgment without any mercy.

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again the Lord shall judge his people.

The apostle had declared in the verses before, the certain judgment of apostates: here he declares the Judge, the Lord; and the judgment, *vengeance*; *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord*; where, by vengeance, is meant vindictive justice in punishing sinners. The apostle's argument seems to be this: "if God professes himself an avenger of all sin and injury done to his people, as he certainly doth, Deut. xxxii 36. Much more will he show himself an avenger of so horrible an indignity offered to his Son and his Holy Spirit." Learn hence, that the consideration of the righteous nature of God, and that inclosure he has made of vengeance to himself under an irrevocable purpose for its execution, gives indubitable assurance of the unavoidable destruction of all wilful apostates.

31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Our apostle, in these words, winds up his whole argument against the wilful despisers of the gospel, taken from the aggravation of that sin, with the severity of the punishment that would certainly befall them that are guilty of it. Note here, 1. The description given of God, he is the *Living God*; so called, both by way of opposition unto all dead and dumb idols, and also with respect to his lively power and strength, whereby he is able to avenge the sins of men; and likewise to signify the eternal duration of his existence. He ever liveth to execute his wrath, and inflict vengeance on the apostate sinner. Learn, that the name of the living God is either full of terror or comfort to the souls of men. O Lord! thine attributes, which are the principal delight of all sincere christians, and the special object of their hope and faith, are an eternal spring of dread and terror to all impenitent sinners. Note, 2. What is the effect and fruit of all sin in general, and of apostasy in particular, namely, a falling into God's hands. There is a threefold hand of God mentioned in scripture; his protecting hand, his correcting hand, and his wrathful and revenging hand. It is safe and comfortable to fall into God's protecting hand; it is profitable and beneficial, though not pleasing and delightful, to fall into God's chastening and correcting hand; but to fall into his angry hand; his wrathful and revengeful hand, this is sad and fearful: either to fall under this sentence of his wrath in this life, or under the full and final execution of that wrath in this life to come. Note, 3. The tremendous dreadfulness of that wrath; it is a fearful, dreadful thing, that which no tongue can utter, no heart can conceive. *Who knoweth the power of thy wrath?* Psalm xc. Learn hence, that the wrath and vengeance which the ever-living God will certainly inflict upon all wicked sinners in general, and upon all wretched apostates in particular, is very dreadful and tremendous; and so must needs be, because it is a

wrath inconceivably great, and unavoidably sure, and because it is the wrath of a just God, of an almighty God, and of an ever living God.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Our apostle here proceeds to a new argument to persuade christians to perseverance drawn from the consideration of their former sufferings for christianity: "Since ye were illuminated, that is, baptized into the christian faith, ye endured courageously afflictions, a fight of afflictions, yea, a great fight of afflictions." Learn hence, That the wisdom of God oftentimes permits and suffers persons, at their first conversion, to fall into manifold trials and temptations: carnal relations now first scoff, then frown, and at last cast off. The world hates them, marks them out for persecution, loads them with calumny and slander. But observe farther, the apostle directs them to call to remembrance their former sufferings: he doth not mean the remembrance of what was bitter and afflictive in their sufferings, but the cause for which they suffered, and the presence of God enjoyed by them in and under their sufferings: this would encourage, embolden, and strengthen unto duty. Learn hence, That a wise management of former experience is a great direction and encouragement unto future obedience.

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

Here our apostle particularly mentions the sufferings which the primitive saints underwent for the sake of christianity, and reduces them to three heads, shame, pain, loss: they suffered in their names, by being disgraced; in their persons, by being scourged; in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods. Let all that make profession of the name of Christ expect and provide for such sufferings, especially for reproaches. We may put a due value upon our names and reputations, but must not be over solicitous about the preservation of them. Let us keep in the way of our duty, and leave our good name to God's care and keeping. The world first thunders out reproaches, then falls into a storm of persecution. Learn hence, That all temporary sufferings, in all their aggravating circumstances, in all their formidable dress and appearance, may be, and oftentimes are, the lot and portion of those who have undertaken the profession of christianity. "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock to the world." The christians here were exposed to the world as it were upon a stage, or in a theatre where multitudes might gaze upon them, revile, and make a sport of them.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

The first words of this verse, *Ye had compassion on me in my bonds*, prove St. Paul to be the author of this epistle;

for who else could there be, whose bonds for the gospel were so known, and so famous among the believing Jews? His bonds were first at Jerusalem, afterwards at Rome, the two capital cities of the Jews and Gentiles. And St. Paul declares here what a tender sympathy and fellow-feeling with him in his suffering they did express: *ye had compassion of me in my bonds*, that is, ye owned me in my sufferings, ye sympathized with me under my sufferings, ye administered to my succour and relief when burdened with my sufferings. Observe next, He reminds them of their deportment under their own sufferings; ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Probably, the bread which they eat, the clothes which they wore, the beds whereon they lay, were taken from them by their persecutors: yet all this spoil was taken joyfully; not more joyfully by the spoilers, than it was by the spoiled. Learn, It is the peculiar glory and excellency of the gospel, that it gives insuperable joy unto the christian's mind, under the greatest outward sufferings: "They endured joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Observe lastly, The reason of this their christian patience under sufferings: they had a substance: they had a substance in heaven; and they had a better substance in heaven than they lost upon earth; and they knew they had it, "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Learn hence, That faith by giving an incomparable preference to the things of heaven, above all perishing things on earth, affords abundant joy and full satisfaction in the loss of them all, upon the account of an assured interest in better things.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

As if he had said, "Seeing you have endured so much, never shrink back from a bold and courageous profession of Christ and his holy religion, which will be crowned with a great recompence of reward." Observe, 1. The exhortation, *Cast not away your confidence* and courage in the free profession of christianity, like cowardly soldiers, that in the heat of the battle do cast down their shields and armor, and run away. The christian is a spiritual soldier: he must not shrink, or give back, but die a conqueror rather than be taken prisoner. Observe, 2. The reason which enforces the exhortation, (*Which hath great recompence of reward*) *mark, the reward is certain*, and that it is due to such as persevere. Perseverance and the reward are inseparably joined together, so that the one shall infallibly follow the other. Hence learn, That in times of suffering, and in the approaches of them, it is the duty of believers to look upon the glory of heaven, under the notion of a refreshing and all-sufficient reward; *cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward*.

36 For ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Ye have need of patience: but had they it not already, when they endured such a great fight of afflictions? Yes, assuredly; the meaning hereof is this: "Ye have need of the continued exercise of patience; implying, that with-

out the constant exercise of patience, none can pass through tribulation to the glory of God, and their own advantage. We have need of patience to perform difficult duties, to resist strong temptations, to wait for an answer of our prayers, and also to wait for the reward of our patience. After we have done the will of God, we have need of patience to enable us to wait for the receiving of the promise, that is, the good promised. Here note, That the glory of heaven firmly believed, will powerfully sustain the christian spirit under sufferings. 2. That patience is as necessary to enable us to expect and wait for the reward of our sufferings, as it is needful and necessary to support and uphold us under sufferings. Observe farther, The comfortable assurance which the apostle gives, both of the certain coming, and speedy coming of Christ to reward their faith and patience; "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Note here, The christian's suffering season will be short, Christ will come to call him off. "He will come, and will not tarry;" and when he comes, no difficulties shall be able to stand before him, but such as have suffered patiently, shall be rewarded gloriously.

38 Now the just shall live by faith, but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

These words, *The just shall live by faith*, are taken out of the prophet Habakkuk, and are three times made use of by St. Paul, in his epistles, Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. and in this place. By the just man, understand a justified man; by the life which he lives, understand a life of sanctification and of glorification, a life of grace and holiness, and a life of glory and happiness. Learn, That whatever life the believer lives, after a more excellent manner, and for more excellent purposes and ends than other men, he lives that life by the help and assistance of his faith. In the following words, "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Observe, 1. The crime supposed, if any man that has embraced christianity, shall, either for sufferings feared or felt, draw back from his holy profession. The word signifies to sneak and slink away out of fear; and the apostle means by it, a quitting our profession of christianity for fear of suffering. Learn hence, That in and under great, sharp, and long trials, persons are in danger of drawing back from that profession of the gospel wherein they are engaged. Observe, 2. The sentence pronounced upon this crime, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him; that is, God will be exceedingly displeased with him, and punish him very severely; intimating, that apostasy from the profession of God's true religion, is a sin highly provoking to him, and will be most severely punished by him. Here note, That these threatenings imply, that there is a possibility of the saints falling away, considered in themselves; but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning power of sin. These threatenings are intended to awaken their care, and have a singular influence on their preservation. From the whole learn, That backsliders from the gospel are in a peculiar manner, the abhorrence of the soul of God: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Observe here, 1. A twofold opposite state, namely, them that *draw back*, and them that *believe*, that is, persevere in believing; "we are not of them that draw back." Intimating, 1. That in the visible church there ever have been, are, and will be, a number of hypocrites, who, for fear of suffering in a time of persecution, will draw back. 2. That it is every christian's duty to evidence to his own conscience, and also to give evidence unto others, that he is not of this sort or number; "we are not of them who draw back." Observe, 2. A twofold opposite event, *perdition* on the one hand, and *salvation* on the other. The first of these is denied, the latter is affirmed, concerning these Hebrews: "we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." Where note, 1. The actual influence of apostasy on the one hand to destruction; nothing can free apostates from eternal ruin. Note, 2. The actual influence of faith on the other hand to the saving of the soul. Thence learn, That sincere faith will carry men through all difficulties, hazards, and troubles, unto the certain enjoyment of eternal blessedness. "We are of them that do believe, unto the saving of the soul."

CHAPTER XI.

Our apostle having, in the close of the foregoing chapter, spoken of the just man's living by faith, he comes, in this chapter, to give an excellent description of it, and passes many high encomiums upon it, showing both what it is, and what great things it has done in all ages of the church. From whence we may observe, in general, That it is faith alone, which in all ages of the world, under all dispensations of divine grace, in and towards the church, hath been the grand vital principle, enabling the saints to live unto God, to obtain the promises, and inherit eternal life, and will continue so to be to the consummation of all things.

NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Observe here, 1. The thing described, or the subject spoken of, and that is faith; that faith whereby the just man lives, the apostle here speaks of, though not as justifying, but as it is effectually useful in our whole life, especially unto constancy and perseverance in the christian profession, which was the great duty urged and enforced in the foregoing chapter. Observe, 2. The description itself, it is *the substance of things hoped for*. 1. That is, it is a confident and firm expectation of the good things which God has

promised, giving the good things hoped for, a real subsistence in our minds and souls. 2. It is the evidence of things not seen; that is, it evidences the reality and certainty of future things, it realizes the invisible realities of another world unto our minds, and causes us to believe them as strongly as what we see with our bodily eyes. Learn hence, That a lively faith gives such a reality, certainty, and present being to things hoped for, and yet to come, as if they were visibly seen and actually enjoyed

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Having in the former verse described faith, in this and the following verses he enters upon the just praise and deserved commendation of this divine and excellent grace, which has such an universal influence into all the parts of the christian life. In this verse, to commend that faith which he had in the former verse described, he brings in the experience of the elders, or Old Testament saints, all true believers from the foundation of the world, who by faith obtained from God a good testimony, recorded in the holy scriptures. *But*, or through it, as a condition appointed and ordained of God: not for it, or by the worth and influence of it as the meritorious cause, the elders or saints of God, from the beginning of the world, obtained a good report. Learn hence, 1. That the Old Testament saints had the same kind of faith that we have, and were saved in the same manner that we are; they had the same promises, the same terms of grace, the same meritorious purchase by the blood of Christ: he is therefore called *the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world*, slain in God's purpose and decree, slain in the types and figures of his death; though his blood was not actually shed, yet was it decreed to be shed, and so was as effectual to them as to us. Learn, 2. That the renown of the Old Testament saints was their faith, that made them famous; not their priority in living before us, not their longevity in living many years beyond us, not upon the account of their other graces, which yet rendered them truly excellent, are they said to obtain a good report; but upon the score and account of their faith. Abel was famous for righteousness, Enuch for walking with God, Abraham for obedience, Moses for meekness, but the crown is set upon the head of their faith only: *by it the elders obtained, &c.*

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The design of the apostle in these words is to prove, that faith satisfies itself in the word of God, concerning the way and manner of the world's creation; for though the world be now visible, and the things contained in it are said to be seen, yet the original framing and making of the world has a principal place among things not seen. Learn hence, That by faith assenting to divine revelation, and not by reason, we understand the truth and wonders, the seasons and causes, the manner and end of the world's creation. Reason indeed tells us that there was a creation, consequently a creator; but reason without divine revelation could never

have discovered the circumstances and manner of the creation, which wholly depended upon the will of God. Reason and nature could never have known them, had not God in his word first revealed them: the old heathens could never determine who made the world, nor when, nor how it was made, or whence, and out of what it was made. Reason may propound the question, how was the world made, and all things herein? But revelation must resolve it. A poor child learns more by its catechism, than all the philosophers ever learn by their profound researches, and painful studies. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed*, it follows, *by the word of God*, that is, both by his external and imperial word, his word of command, saying, *Let it be: He spake and it was done*, Psalm xxxiii. 9. And also by his essential and substantial word, Jesus Christ, by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2. in that order which Moses has historically related. Observe lastly, How and after what manner the world was made, not out of any pre-jacent or pre-existent matter, but out of nothing: that which was not at all, could not be seen: *the things that are seen, were not made of things that do appear*. Here note, That the power of God framed many things out of nothing, as the heaven of heavens, the dwelling place of God and angels, immediately; other things mediately out of the chaos, that is, such rude, indisposed and unfit matter, as had no disposition to receive such a form, as it did actually receive from the power of God; and may therefore deservedly be called a creation out of nothing. Learn hence, That in the work of creation, though other attributes of wisdom and goodness visibly appeared, yet none were so eminently conspicuous as the power of God. Well might St. Paul say, Rom. i. 20. That herein was manifested *his eternal power and Godhead*.

4 By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he had obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

From a general declaration of the nature of faith in the foregoing verses, our apostle proceeds to give instances of the efficacy and power of faith in particular persons, in this and the following verses. And he begins here with Abel. But why not with Adam? Because Adam was the first sinner, and the greatest of sinners; and although received to grace and mercy, yet after his fall Moses speaks little of him, nothing very notable; neither did Almighty God put that honor upon Adam which he put upon his son Abel; he had the honor to shed his blood for Christ, and for testifying his faith in him; and accordingly Abel is here represented as the first evangelical believer, *By faith Abel, &c.* Observe farther, 1. The action which Abel performed, he offered sacrifice to God; he offered a sacrifice most excellent, and he offered it by faith. But did not Cain bring his offering of faith too? Yes, no doubt, he believed the being of God, and considered him as a creator and preserver, and accordingly offered the fruits of the earth, as an acknowledgment that all these things were made, preserved, and bestowed on man by God. But Abel's faith was fixed on God, not only as a creator, but as a redeemer also, accom-

panied with a sense of sin and guilt, trusting in the way of redemption and recovery which God had provided. Here note, That the performance of the outward duties of divine worship, is not the rule of the acceptance of men's persons with God, but a difference and distinction is made from the inward principle, whence those duties do proceed. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifice, but not from a like principle, nor yet for a like end. Observe, 2. The effect and fruit of Abel's faith, it procured a testimony and witness from God himself that he was righteous; he testified that he had respect to his person by the approbation of his suffering. Our persons must be justified before our performances can be accepted. God has first respect to the offerer, then to the offering; for the person must recommend the gift, not the gift recommend the person. Observe, lastly, The privilege of Abel's faith; *by it, being dead, he yet speaketh*. Some understand the words in a passive sense, he is spoken of: he being dead, there is an honorable mention of him. Religion is the truest honor, and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, others in an active sense, and so the words import, that the dead saints do yet speak, and that somewhat worthy to be heard and observed; they speak by the precious graces with which they were enriched; they speak by the holy life they maintained, by the good works they wrought, by the eminent services they did for God and man, by their sharp trials, by their bitter sufferings; by these they speak, to the honor of religion, and to the furtherance of the gospel. God's Abels, his dead saints, do thus speak when laid in the dust.

5 By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.

The second instance is Enoch, concerning whom our apostle affirms, that he was translated, and that he was translated by faith; translated from one condition to another; from grace to glory, from earth to heaven. He was gathered by God, both in body and soul, to himself; and in a way of eminent grace and favor free from death. Hereby God gave the world a convincing testimony, that the body is capable of eternal life and happiness. But how was he translated by faith? *Ans.* Not efficiently; faith was not the efficient cause of his translation. That was an immediate act of divine power; not meritoriously, for it is recorded as an act of sovereign grace and favor; but instrumentally only; he was by faith brought into that state and condition of favor and acceptance with God, as to have this peculiar privilege conferred upon him. Some we find are carried to heaven by special prerogative, by privileged dispensation; *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death*. But observe farther, What went before his translation, and that was his pleasing God; before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Such as would live with God hereafter, must study and seek to please God by walking with him here; would we come where Enoch is, we must walk as Enoch did. There is no hope of living with God in heaven, if we do not please him here on earth.

6 But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God, must believe, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Without faith, that is without justifying faith, without faith in the Messiah, for that is the faith here spoken of, there is no possibility of pleasing God, and if so, then no possibility of being saved without faith. This appears partly from the divine constitution, God has so appointed it, partly from the nature of the thing itself; faith being the first regular motion of the soul towards God, no works, no duties, no performances, whatsoever can please God without faith. *He that cometh to God*, that is, hath any access or approach to him in a way of worship, or any access or acceptance into his grace and favor, he must believe, 1. God's being; 2. God's bounty; that he is: and that he is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him. Learn, hence, 1. That the first point of faith, if we would have any thing to do with God, is firmly to believe that there is a God: *He that cometh to God must believe that he is*. Learn, 2. That the fountain of all obedience and service to God, is a firm belief of his being a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him. Learn, 3. That the whole issue of our finding God when we seek him, depends upon our diligently seeking of him; he is a rewarder of them, of all and only them, that diligently seek him.

7 By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Noah an eminent person in the line of the church, and one that walked with God, and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Observe, 2. What was spoken of him; *he was warned of God*, touching his designs and purposes to destroy and drown the old world. Observe, 3. What was the effect of this warning, it produced in Noah fear and obedience; fear of the threatening, and obedience to the command: he was moved with fear, and prepared the ark. Observe, 4. The exercise, yea, eminent exercise of Noah's faith: neither the difficulty of the work, nor the length of time, an hundred and twenty years; nor his want of success all that time of preaching, nor the contempt and scorn cast upon him by the whole world, could weaken his hands or discourage his heart in the least from going on with his work. Observe, 5. The consequent of Noah's faith and obedience with respect unto the world, *he condemned the world*: not as a judge, properly and authoritatively, but as a witness, by plea and testimony; he condemned it by his doctrine, by his example, and left it altogether without excuse. Observe, 6. The fruit and effect of Noah's faith and obedience with reference to himself: *He became heir of the righteous-*

ness which is by faith; that is of the happiness promised to them who are justified by faith; he was evidenced and declared to be a righteous person.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

The next illustrious instance of the efficacy of faith we have here in the person of Abraham, who obeyed the call and command of God in leaving his own native country, to go he knew not whither, and to receive an inheritance he knew not when. Where note, 1. The foundation of Abraham's faith and obedience, and that was the call of God; he had an immediate command to go out of his own country into a certain place, with a promise to receive it for an inheritance: *Get thee from thy country, relations, friends, and all outward enjoyments, is a command becoming the greatness of God to give; and self-denial in fact, or resolution to comply with such a command from the great God, is the foundation of all sincere profession.* Note, 2. What was the principle of Abraham's obedience in complying with this call of God, and that was his faith: *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed.* True faith, wherever it is, bringeth forth sincere obedience; these two can no more be separated than the light and the sun, than the fire and heat; obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience. Note, 3. The difficulty, and therein the excellency of his obedience; *he obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went.* If faith be once satisfied in the call and command of God, it will follow him when it cannot see a step of its way; over hills and mountains, through dales and valleys, fearing nothing. He that has God's call, need not fear God's conduct.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The apostle spake of the place which Abraham was called from, in the foregoing verse, namely, out of Ur of the Chaldees; here he speaks of the place he was called to, Canaan, styled the land of promise, that is, the land which God had newly promised to give unto him. Where note, 1. Abraham's act of obedience, "he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country;" he was there as a sojourner, not an inheritor, moving up and down from place to place, until God thought fit to settle him and his posterity. Abraham was a sojourner both in his condition of life, and in his disposition of heart. Canaan was a type of heaven, and accordingly Abraham expected a better country, with a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Learn, That the children of God here on earth, where

they have best right, and most possessions, are but strangers and pilgrims. Note, 2. The manner of his sojourning in this land, *dwelling in tabernacles.* This was both an act of policy, and an act of piety: of policy, that they might live peaceably, without giving umbrage to the natives, or occasioning any envy or grudge from them; and of piety, to express their hopes and desires of a better country. Note, 3. Abraham's companions, his fellows, and followers, in this act of obedience he sojourned with Isaac and Jacob as heirs of the same promise. Where mark, How all the saints of God are of the same spiritual disposition; they are animated by the same spirit, governed by the same laws; they act from the same principle, and for the same end, and desire nothing more than to live together, and to enjoy God and one another. Note, 4. The reason rendered why Abraham esteemed himself but as a stranger in Canaan, because his thoughts ran much upon heaven, of which Canaan was but a type; "he looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Where observe, 1. Abraham's act of expectation, he looked for it, he rationally expected it was not a blind hope, but well built on the power and promise of God. 2. What he looked for, *a city;* not Jerusalem an earthly city, as some would have it, for that was not possessed until eight hundred years after, and then only by his posterity for a limited time; but an heavenly city, a settled, quiet habitation, a suitable dwelling for them that have had a life of trouble in this world. 3. The city itself described, 1. By the nature of it: *it has foundations,* in opposition to tents and tabernacles which had no foundation, but were moving, ambulatory dwellings, supported only by stakes and cords; this city is founded upon the eternal power, the infinite wisdom and immutable counsel of God. 2. By the maker and builder of it, *God,* he is the contriver, framer, and erecter of this city; and as he is the maker, so he is the disposer of it also; please God, and he will give it thee, none can give it thee without him, he will never give it thee without pleasing of him.

11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Our Apostle having spoken of Abraham's faith before, makes an honorable mention of his wife Sarah's faith here. It is a blessed thing when husband and wife are one in the faith, as well as one flesh. When the constant companion of our lives draws with us in the same yoke of religion. Note, 1. The person whose faith is here commended, *Sarah herself,* a woman, a barren woman, and a barren woman well stricken in age; a woman weak in sex may be strong in faith. Though Sarah at first laughed, yet she afterwards firmly believed. And the apostle takes no notice of the former, but applauds the latter. Oh! with what great indulgence doth God cover the failings of his children, but proclaims aloud their graces to the world! Men do not thus; they will overlook all that is good in others, and report only what is amiss. Sarah's laughing, Rahab's lie, Job's impatience, are not mentioned, but their graces are remembered. Who would not serve such a gracious master, that winks at

our failings, but accepts and rewards our weak services and sincere graces? Note, 2. The commendation and fruit of Sarah's faith, she received by its strength and ability for conception; probably she recovered her youthful vigor, and received a general restoration of nature, to an ability for all its primitive operations, which was before decayed by age; she received strength to conceive seed when past age. Learn, That it is the property of faith to expect a blessing absolutely above the use of means, when we have a particular and special warrant from God so to do, as Sarah had in this case. Note, 3. The ground of Sarah's faith, "Because she had judged him faithful that had promised," that is, she resolved her faith into, and rested upon the veracity of God in the accomplishment of the promise, which is the proper and immediate object of faith. Learn, that wherever we exercise and put forth faith, we must take care and be sure that we have a promise to exercise it upon, otherwise it is not faith, but fancy: God's promise, and not God's power, is the ground of faith; it is not what God can do, but what he will do, and what he has engaged and promised to do, that is the ground of faith: he can quench all the fire in hell: but where has he said he will do it: "she judged him faithful who had promised."

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead; so many, as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

These words acquaint us with that gratuitous remuneration and gracious reward which God gave Abraham and Sarah, as the fruit of their faith, namely, the blessing of a numerous posterity; there sprang of them, and both of them, as good as dead, with reference to the procreation of children, a numerous issue, like the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea. Hence learn, that the God of nature, at his own pleasure, works things above the power of nature in its ordinary efficacy and operation; by weak and dead means he often produces mighty effects. Learn, 2. That whatever difficulties and oppositions lie in the way of the accomplishing God's promises, they shall have an assured accomplishment on God's part, if faith be kept up in lively exercise on our part.

13 These all died in faith—

That is all the forementioned saints, Abel, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, they all died in the faith of the promised Messiah, believing he should come, and expecting salvation by his coming. It is not enough for a christian to live in the faith, but he must also die in the faith; and to die in the faith, is an honorable and happy manner of dying; it is a greater happiness to die in the Lord, than to die for the Lord; if a man die for the Lord, and be not in the Lord, he is not blessed in his death: a man may die for the Lord's cause, yet not for the Lord's sake, but out of vain glory.

—Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,

and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Observe here, the great trial which the faith of the Old Testament saints was put unto, they died, *not having received the promises*; that is, they went to their graves before the great blessings God had promised were accomplished. Faith is contented with the promise, though it wants actual possession of the good things promised. God would have believers, in all ages of the church, to live by faith, and promises not actually performed; and it is a great honor to God, when we are ready to die, to go to the grave with assurance, and to profess our confidence that God will make them good; "these all died, not having received the promises." Yet observe, the actings and exercise of their faith towards these promises, which they had not yet received in their accomplishment; 1. *They saw them afar off*, at a great distance; it is the property of faith to eye the blessings promised at a distance; so that no distance of time or place can weaken faith as to the accomplishment of divine promises. 2. *They were persuaded of them*: this imports the mind's satisfactory acquiescing in the truth of God for the accomplishment of his promises: a firm persuasion of the truth of God's promises, and a quiet waiting for the accomplishment of them at a great distance is an eminent fruit of faith. 3. *They embraced him*; the word signifies, they saluted and hugged them. Whence note, that faith is an act of the will, as well as of the understanding; there is in faith adherence as well as assent; an embracing as well as a persuasion; the heart cleaves to the promise with love, delight, and a complacency. "And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"; so they were in outward condition, wandering from place to place; so they were in affection, and disposition, looking upon this world as their pilgrimage, and heaven as their home and proper country; because thence they are born, there lies their inheritance, there are all their kindred, there is their longest abode. Christians should not only account, but confess themselves pilgrims, and discover it by their journeying and mending their pace heavenward.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly, that they seek a country:

15 And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned:

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

As if the apostle had said, "they that say such things, namely, that they, even in the land of promise, are pilgrims and strangers, do declare plainly, that they seek a country where they may rest and dwell, when this their pilgrimage on earth is ended." Now, this country was not Chaldaea, but heaven; a glorious city which God prepared for them, as an abundant recompence for their earthly

country, which they left at God's command. Here note, 1. That heaven is the christian's proper country; they are born from heaven, their conversation is in heaven, their eternal habitation is there, their head and husband, their friends and kindred, are there; and it is theirs by a right of donation, by a right of purchase, by a right of possession and conquest. Note, 2. That this heavenly country is by far the better, yea the best of countries; best in regard of the largeness and extent of it; best in regard of the safety and security of it; best in regard of the order and government of it; best in regard of the company and society dwelling in it: all saints, none but saints, none but perfect saints; best in regard to the immunities and privileges belonging to it, and in regard of the duration and continuance of it, a country that can never be invaded, never be conquered. Note, 3. That sincere christians have strong desires after, and vehement longings for, this better, this best of countries: *now they desire a better country: and God is not ashamed to be called their God.*—They that by their faith give glory to God, in acknowledging his faithfulness in this life, he will never be ashamed of them, either in life, or at death, or after death. Learn, 1. That it is the greatest privilege, honor, and advantage, that any can be made partakes of, that God will bear the name and title of their God. 2. God's owning of believers as his, and of himself to be their God, is an abundant recompence of all the hardships which they undergo in this their pilgrimage. The top and sum of all happiness, is to have the Lord for our God.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son;

18 Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.

The next person instanced in, for the fame of his faith, is, Abraham, who was deservedly styled the *father of the faithful*: him God tries in a very extraordinary manner, by putting him upon offering up his son Isaac. Where note, that where God gives much grace, he tries grace much; the greater the faith, the greater the trial; strong faith must prepare for strong trials. Here Abraham's faith was tried, whether he would depend upon God's promise above reason; his obedience was tried, whether he would yield to God's command against nature; his love was tried, whether his affection was not more warm towards his son, than to his God; and his fear was tried, whether he did reverentially acknowledge and stand in awe of God, by adoring his sovereignty and dominion over him. Trials are the best touchstone of faith; without which men will want the best evidence of its sincerity: and great trials in believers are an evidence of great faith. Observe farther, The excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon his trial; *he offered up his son Isaac*; that is, he did in part, and was ready to have done it thoroughly, had not God counter-

manded him. Learn hence, that where there is a divine command obliging us to obedience, it is the wisdom and duty of faith, to close its eye against all insuperable difficulties and dangers. Abraham objected not against the horrid nature of the command, to kill a son, his own son, the only son, the son of the promise: but deliberately, and upon due consideration, was ready to execute what God required. Lord! what a strong faith was here, fortified with an impregnable resolution, that could make Abraham hold out three days against the violent assaults of his own nature, and the charming presence of his son, enough to melt his heart; yet nothing made him stagger in his duty, but he performs a most miraculous act of obedience, in defiance of all difficulties. Observe lastly, the fruit and success of Abraham's faith: he believed God could and would raise Isaac from the grave, and he receives him again in a figure, as one snatched out of the very jaws of death. There is no such way to enjoy the continuance of an earthly comfort, as by resigning it up to God: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure."

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Note, that there is a blessing by way of prayer, and a blessing by way of prophecy, foretelling what shall befall persons in time to come; of this kind is Isaac's blessing. The patriarchs were in a peculiar manner directed and guided by God, and their blessing was a conferring of a right to the parties blessed. Thus Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come; that is, concerning the great and future things which should happen to their posterity after them. Note here, Esau's wicked men have their portion in outward blessings as well as Jacob's, as well as the best and holiest of men; partly as they are God's creatures, partly as they descend from parents in covenant with God, and partly because they make some profession of the name of God: and God will be behindhand with none, but so far as they do good they shall see good.

21 By faith Jacob when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph: and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff.

Observe here, in dying Jacob, the frame and carriage of holy men in their dying seasons to bless their children, and worship their God. Jacob blessed Joseph and his two sons, laying hold on the covenant made with Abraham. It is no small privilege to be born of parents taken into visible covenant with God, and no small comfort, when God comes to take away such parents from us, to have the benefit of their blessings and prayers. Jacob, when dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and as he blessed them, so he worshipped God with religious worship, and in a devout manner, *leaning upon the top of his staff*. Learn hence, that our addresses to God ought to be exceeding reverent, both as to the frame of our souls, and also as to the gesture of our bodies; we cannot always be affectionate in prayer, for affection depends upon the vigorous motions of the bodily spirits; but we should always be reverent and serious in prayer, otherwise it is no worship. Learn farther, that where faith

gives a willing mind, bodily infirmities shall be no less an hindrance from duty.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Here we have a twofold instance of Joseph's faith when dying. 1. "He made mention of the departing of the children of Israel;" he said unto his brethren, "behold I die, but God shall bring you into the land which he hath sworn unto your fathers." See how the good man dies in the faith of the promise. Thence learn, that it is of singular use, and great advantage to the church, that such believers as have been eminent in profession, should, in their dying moments, testify their faith in the promises of God; so did Jacob before, so did Joseph now. The second instance or evidence of Joseph's faith was, that he *gave commandment concerning his bones*; that is, he took an oath of his brethren that they should carry his bones out of Egypt, and bury them in Canaan, thereby owning and professing himself to be of the posterity of Abraham; and thereby also encouraging the faith and expectation of his brethren and their posterity, to hope for their deliverance out of Egypt, and be put into the possession of the promised land; so that it is evident that there was faith, much faith, showed by Joseph in disposing of his bones. The papists' plea from hence, for paying veneration to their relics, is weak and contemptible: this was a special charge given in faith to do what was done; and to shut them up in a coffin, and decently bury them, was all that was done. Now to take example from hence, to dig men's bones out of their graves, to enshrine them, and place them upon altars, to carry them in procession, to adore them, to ascribe miraculous operations to them, casting out of devils, and the like, is fond and ridiculous.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

In these words the faith of Moses' parents is celebrated: the birth of Moses fell out in the very height and fury of Pharaoh's persecution, when the king had given commandment to destroy all the male children; Moses was then born, and hid by his parents, and preserved as a deliverer of the church of God. O! how blind are all the persecutors and opposers of the church of God! When they think all things secure, and their counsels so deeply laid, that God himself cannot deliver out of their hands; then doth the Almighty lay in provision for his church's deliverance, and their destruction. Now was Moses a deliverer born and hid. But observe a double cause of Moses' hiding; the first external, *They saw he was a proper child*; they had a persuasion that God would provide a person to be their deliverer: and they saw something divine in Moses to stir up their faith, and raise their expectation, that he might be the person. The second internal and moving cause, *they were not afraid of the king's commandment*, or bloody decree. Learn hence, 1. That the commands of kings and princes

have oftentimes been a very great trial to the children of God; so was Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the golden image, and such was Pharaoh's command here. Learn, 2. Kings and princes must not be obeyed in things contrary to the word of God: obedience without reserve is to be paid to none but God. "They were not afraid of the king's commandment."

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

The next person whom our apostle instances in, is Moses himself, whose faith and self-denial were most evidently conspicuous in all the instances of them. Observe, 1. His great self-denial, with all the enhancing circumstances of it: "when he came to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Note here, 1. The circumstance of time, *when he came to years*: it was no childish act, when he knew not what he did, but when he came to age, and understood: nay, farther, this was when Moses was newly come to age, in the prime and vigor of his time, when he had just began to taste the sweetness of youthful pleasures: the world appears a dead and dry thing in the winter of old age, but looks green and beautiful in the spring of youth: but Moses when come, just come, to years refused it. Note, 2. The circumstance of his education, he had been bred from a child in a princely way and manner, he never knew what belonged to a low estate: those that never had much, forsake but little when they forsake all: want will never much pinch those who never understood plenty; but those who have enjoyed fulness all their days, for them to stoop voluntarily, from the height of ease and honor, to the depth of affliction and hardship, is admirable. Thus did Moses, he refused honor, and chose affliction. Note, 3. The circumstance of his obligations, Pharaoh's daughter having saved his life, adopted him for her son, giving him princely breeding, *he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*: and set her heart upon him as her own. However, Moses breaks through all, and away he goes. But whither went he? Why to a company of poor bondmen, laboring at the brick-kilns, to take his lot of suffering with them. Note, 4. The circumstance of his expectations; how very fair and certain a prospect he had of enjoying the crown of Egypt; he did not refuse it because he despaired of attaining it, for he was an adopted heir unto it. Note, lastly, that all this was not a rash and sudden determination, but a deliberate and advised choice, Acts vii. 23. St. Stephen says, he made this choice *when he was full forty years old*; that is, when he was of ripest judgment, and in the height of prosperity and reputation: he did not only, as Josephus says, at three years old cast a crown, given him for a play-toy, to the ground, and

trample it under his feet; but as the apostle says here, when he came to be a man, he treated it with no more respect, *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. Behold here Moses' faith, an eminent self-denial, in choosing rather to suffer affliction with the worshippers of the true God, than to gain a kingdom by renouncing God, and his holy religion. From whence learn, That faith is a grace which will teach and enable a person openly to renounce all worldly advantages at God's call, when he cannot enjoy them with an upright mind and a good conscience. *Quest.* But how did Moses come to know his stock and race, that he was an Hebrew born, and not an Egyptian, no son of Pharaoh's daughter? *Ans.* He found himself circumcised, and so belonged to a circumcised people. The token of God's covenant received in infancy, duly considered, is a most effectual mean to preserve a person in the profession of the true religion. Add to this, that his own mother was his nurse, and continually with him, and probably his father frequently; who, being persons fearing God, took care very early to impress him with the principles of the true religion, and with the detestation of the Egyptian idolatry.

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Observe here, 1. The common lot and usual condition of God's people in this world; it is an afflicted state and condition. 2. That wicked men oftentimes enjoy pleasures in the ways of sin, whilst good men meet with much affliction in the work of holiness. 3. That notwithstanding this, all wise and good men do rather choose afflicted godliness, than pleasant and prosperous wickedness. 4. That a spiritual eye can see an excellency in the people of God, when in the lowest suffering condition, will join himself unto them, and appear with them, and for them, though it be with great loss, and much hazard. Moses here chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the short sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court.

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

The former verse acquainted us with the general choice which Moses made of affliction with the people of God; this acquaints us with one sort and particular kind of affliction which he chose, namely, reproach for Christ; this he counted his glory, his riches, his treasures, beyond all the riches and treasures of Egypt. Note here, that the people of God have been, and usually are, a people under reproach; not only a persecuted, but a reproached people; the foundation of all sufferings is laid in reproach; that is the cover for all. The Jews by reproaches, first stirred up the rage of the people against Christ before they attempted to take away his life. Note, 2. The reproach of good men is the reproach of Christ, because he and they are but one mystical body, and because of the near union that is between them. The reproach of the wife is the reproach of the husband, especially if she be reproached for his sake,

and upon his account. Again observe, what an high esteem a gracious person has of reproaches, in the cause of Christ, and for the sake of Christ: he esteems them his glory, his treasure, his greatest treasure; he rejoices and takes pleasure in them, and very much values himself by them. Verily no man deserves the name of a christian till he has such an esteem of Christ, and value for him, that the worst things in the world, even persecution and reproach, shall be preferred by him before the great things of the world, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him. Observe lastly, The ground of Moses' faith, self-denial, contempt of the world, and all his excellent actions, and that was the recompence of the reward which he had respect unto; *for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward*. Where note, That there is a reward laid up for good men; that it is lawful, yea, laudable, very expedient, yea, very necessary and needful, for a christian to eye this reward, and to have respect unto it in the whole course of his obedience; and this doing will be a mighty encouraging motive to undergo all hardships and difficulties in the way of religion *he had respect unto the recompence of the reward*.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Our apostle having described the faith of Moses, with respect to his sufferings with the people of God, in the former verses, comes now to instance in the power and activity of it with respect to their deliverance, in these verses. Where note, 1. The spiritual fortitude which attended his faith, *he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king*: even the wrath of the greatest king upon the earth is to be disregarded, if it lies against our duty to God. Note, 2. The reason or ground of this his fortitude and courage, *he endured as seeing him who is invisible*; that is, he saw him by faith whom he could not see by sense: he saw him in his omnipresence, power, faithfulness, and had a fixed trust in him at all times, and on all occasions. Learn hence, That there is nothing insuperable to faith, whilst it can keep a clear view of the power of God, and the promises of God. Note, 3. The commendation of Moses' faith, from a due observation of a double ordinance of worship, namely, *the passover, and the sprinkling of blood*. As to the former, Moses' faith in keeping the passover had respect to its divine institution, to the command for its perpetual observance, to the sacramental nature of it, to the mystical or typical signification of it. Learn hence, that a vigorous and lively exercise of faith, is always required unto the right and due celebration of a sacramental ordinance: *by faith he kept the passover*: it follows—and *the sprinkling of blood*. This was a temporary ordinance and observation, annexed to the

first celebration of the passover, not repeated afterwards; the sprinkling of the blood on the side-posts of their houses, was a token that the destroying angel should pass over those houses, that none should be destroyed in them: but this rite, though it ceased with the first passover, yet it abides for ever in its mystical signification; God hereby teaching us, that unless we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our Paschal Lamb, no other privilege can secure us from the displeasure of God, and everlasting destruction; *by faith he kept the passover, and sprinkling of blood, ver. 28.* Note, 4. A farther instance of the power and efficacy of Moses' faith in passing through the Red Sea, ver. 29. Probably he entered first into the sea, at the head of the people himself, both to conduct them, and to encourage them; the waters doubtless were raised to a very great height on both sides of them; and though they were a wall unto them, yet it was a mighty act of faith, to put themselves between such walls, as were ready every moment to fall upon them, had they not been under an almighty restraint. Learn hence, that faith will overcome all fears and dangers, and find a way through a sea of difficulties, under the call, and at the command of God. But how came it to pass that the Egyptians going in the same path through the Red Sea, were drowned, in which the Israelites were preserved? *Ans.* The Egyptians entering in was an act of presumption, the Israelites was an act of faith. God commanded the Israelites to go through: now, as faith gives courage to obey God in difficult duties, so it gives encouragement to hope that safety shall evermore accompany duty.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

After the faith of Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea, we have here the faith of Joshua and the Israelites before Jericho, recorded and related. Jericho was a walled and well fenced city, and a frontier town that kept them from entering into Canaan. God commanded them not to fight but to walk, to go round the city seven days, and he would give them an unexpected entrance into it; they believe and obey, and the success was according to their desire; *by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, &c.* Here note, 1. The grace exercised, *faith*: they believed God upon his word, they entered Canaan at this frontier town; God remembers his promise, and disappoints not the faith and expectation of his people. Note, 2. The readiness and exactness of the people's obedience, they compassed the town so many days, they do what God commands, and no more; here is no mount raised, no engine planted, no sword drawn, they only walk, not fight. Doubtless the men of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight, and said one to another "what, will these men beat down our city with their eyes? Will they conquer us only by gazing upon us?" And farther, as the army only must encompass the city, so must the priests blow with the rams' horns; a contemptible mean! Had they made use of the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, that had been a good ground to hope for success, they being the symbols and sacred signs of God's presence with them; but verily trumpets of rams' horns seemed more fit to move laughter, than to do execution; yet assuredly no ram

of iron could have been so forcible for battery as these rams' horns, when God had appointed them. It is the praise of omnipotency oftentimes to work by improbabilities. Note, 3. The event and success which followed their faith, and accompanied their obedience, *the walls of Jericho fell down.* Nothing can stand before the power of God, and the faith of his people. If we will believe God's promises, and execute his commands, we need no shifts nor artifices, no power nor policy of our own to work deliverance for us. Learn hence, That when faith makes use of the means prescribed by God, though it cannot discern what influence the means can have to the end aimed at, yet the issue and the event shall certainly be according to God's appointment and faith's expectation; *by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after, &c.*

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Observe here, 1. The person spoken of, Rahab, a Gentile, an Amorite, an harlot, who kept a victualling house in Jericho, and so was both harlot and hostess, defiled both in mind and body with idolatry and adultery. 2. What is spoken of her: she believed; *by faith, Rahab, &c.* She was converted to God before the spies came to her, by what she had heard of him and his mighty works. Behold here a blessed instance! 1. Of the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace. 2. Of the power and efficacy of divine grace, in calling and converting a person given up by her own choice to the vilest of sins, even to the ravings of lust; but no sinner nor sin is to be despaired of, in whose cure sovereign grace is engaged. Observe, 3. The effect and fruit of her faith, *she received the spies with peace*; that is, entertained them safely, concealed them, gave them intelligence, exposed herself to danger, in the conveyance of them; an eminent fruit, a special evidence, and an high demonstration of her faith; indeed she told an officious lie; but God pardoned it, and the apostle here makes no mention of it: the Holy Ghost lays, as it were, the finger upon the scar, and covers it out of sight contrary to the practice of the malignant world, who overlook all the good, and reflect only upon the evil of an action; whereas God takes notice of the good, but passes by the evil. Observe, 4. The benefit and advantage she received by her faith, *she perished not*; that is, when the credulous and idolatrous people of Jericho were destroyed, she and her family were preserved. From the whole learn, 1. That God is ready to show wonderful mercy to penitent sinners, if they return to him, and believe in him, how great soever their sins have formerly been. Learn, 2. That true faith wherever it is, will show itself by some eminent effects, and notable fruits of it. Learn, 3. That the rewards of faith are excellent, and truly glorious; as she was preserved from the common ruin at Jericho, so shall all believers be saved from that wrath and destruction, which shall come ere long upon the impenitent and unbelieving world.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of

Jephthae: of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again

In these and the following verses, our apostle sums up the remaining testimonies which he might have produced to show the great things which faith have assisted persons to do, and also enable them to suffer the hardest and most terrible things that could be encountered with. In the verses now before us, an account is given us of the great things of all sorts, which faith has enabled to do; particularly, it was faith that made them fearless whom God raised up, in the days of the judges, to conflict with the enemies of the church; it was faith that assisted them in the combat, and rendered them victorious in the conflict; it was faith rendered Gideon successful over the Midianites, Barak over the Canaanites, Samson over the Philistines, Jephthae over the Amorites, David over the Jebusites and Moabites: it was faith in the promise of God that made them courageous, and rendered them victorious; there is nothing so great, so difficult or seemingly insuperable, that should hinder us from acting faith in all things, even things more great and excellent than the conquest of earthly kingdoms. Observe next, Our apostle having enumerated the persons believing, he now reckons up the noble acts and honorable achievements of their faith. *Through faith they subdued kingdoms*: so did Joshua subdue all the kingdoms in Canaan, and David all the kingdoms about it, viz. Moab, Ammon, Edom, Syria, and the Philistines: these were subdued by faith because what they did was in obedience to God's command, and in the accomplishment of his promises, for he had given all those kingdoms by promise to the Israelites, before they were subdued by them; thus they are said to subdue kingdoms by faith. Yet note, that they made use of all other heroic virtues besides faith; courage, valor, military skill, and military stratagems; faith excites all graces and virtues, and puts them in motion. *Wrought righteousness*; they executed the judgments of God on the enemies of the church, and administered justice impartially to all that were under their rule and government; and this working righteousness is a fruit of faith, for unbelief is the cause of all the injustice and oppression that is in the world: *obtained promises*; that is, the good things promised: so did Abraham, by faith, obtain a promised son, Joshua a promised Canaan, David a promised kingdom: but there was a great space of time between the promise and the performance, which put their faith sometimes hard to it. *Stopped the mouths of lions*; thus Daniel, chap. vi. because he believed in his God, ver. 23.

and the faith which heretofore stopped the mouth of lions, can stop the rage of the most savage oppressors and persecutors, whenever God pleases. *Quenched the violence of fire*; so did the three children's faith, Dan. iii. *not a hair of their head was singed*, they knew not which way God would deliver them, but they committed themselves to the omnipotency and sovereignty of God in the discharge of their duty, with a full persuasion that one way or other he would deliver them. *Escaped the edge of the sword*; as did David the sword of Goliath and Saul, though sometimes his fear prevailed that he should one day perish by the sword of Saul. Fear may be in cases of danger, and yet faith at the same time have the principal conduct of the soul; by faith David escaped the edge of the sword: so did the Jews the sword of Haman, and Elijah the sword of Jezebel, *out of weakness were made strong*; some apply this to Gideon and his three hundred men, Judges vii. 15, others to Hezekiah, who by the power of faith was in a wonderful manner recovered, and restored from a desperate sickness to perfect health, Isa. xxxviii. *Waxed valiant in fight*: so did Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Jephthae, and David, who through faith in the promise, and of the presence of God with them, feared neither the number nor strength of their enemies. David often declares that God "girded him with strength to the battle, and taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight; so that though an host encamped against him, yet his heart was not afraid." *Turned to flight the armies of the aliens*; those aliens were the heathens and idolators, Philistines and Midianites, who were enemies to Israel, and to the God of Israel, and they made them fly and turned their backs; for as they fought for God out of a principle of faith, so God fought for them, according to the faithfulness of his promise, which was the ground of their confidence and courage. *Women received their dead raised to life again*; this is applied to the widow of Zarephath, and the Shunamite, 2. Kings iv. 36. 1. Kings xvii. 23. They were raised by the prophet's faith and received by their mothers, when raised with joy and thankfulness. These ten instances did the apostle select and choose out of many, to give, of the great things that had been done through faith, thereby to assure the Hebrews, and us with them, that there is nothing too hard nor difficult for faith to effect, when it is set on work, and managed according to the power of God.

—And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in

mountains, and *in dens and caves of the earth.*

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, acquainted the Hebrews with the great things which faith enabled the Old Testament saints to do, he now lays before them an account of the hard and difficult things which faith enabled them to suffer, and here reckons up the sharpest and bitterest sufferings that human nature perhaps can be exposed to; but to do the greatest things, and to suffer the hardest, is all one to faith. Faith stands ready for both, as God shall call. Observe here in general, that the evils enumerated are of such various sorts and kinds, as to comprise every thing that may befall believers on the account of their christian profession: do we meet with temptations, scorings, mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonments, yea, death itself, by all sorts of tortures and extremities? This is our encouragement, that others in the cause of God, have undergone them, and been carried victoriously through them: but the particulars in this little book of martyrs follow.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. In this passage, and several others here following, the apostle is concluded to refer to the story in the Maccabees, which though written after the closing of the canon of the scripture, when there was no extraordinary prophet in the church, yet the matters of fact were then fresh in memory, and are here alluded to, particularly Eleazar, 2 Mac. vi. 28 who was beaten to death when he had been persuaded and allured to accept deliverance by transgressing the law; and also the mother and her seven sons, they expected a *better resurrection*, better than what their persecutors offered them, even a glorious resurrection of their bodies at the last day. *Others had trials of cruel mockings*, as Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 24. and others; and *scourgings*, as Jeremiah, chap. xx. 2. &c. and xxxvii. 15. *Also bonds and imprisonments*, as Joseph in Egypt, and Jeremy in the dungeon; some were stoned, as Zacharias the son of Jehoiada, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. *Others sawn asunder*, as Isaiah under the tyranny of Manasseh; others were tempted with fair promises and great rewards, but refusing, were *slain with the sword*. Learn hence, that torments in the cause of religion have been a very old invention of the devil and the world, and they have placed great hopes of prevailing by them; but no instruments of cruelty, no endeavours of hell shall ever prevail against the faith of God's elect. *They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; destitute, afflicted, tormented.* This some refer to Elijah, who was destitute and fed by ravens, 1 Kings xvii. 4. but it has been the portion of many of God's faithful servants to be driven from their habitations, sometimes by the cruelty of the laws, sometimes by force and violence. *Of whom the world was not worthy:* that is, the men of the world think the saints of God not worthy to live amongst them, whereas the world is not worthy of such excellent company; and therefore, as soon as their work is done, God removes them. Learn hence, 1. that God's esteem of his people is never the less because of their outward sufferings and calamities, whatever the world judgeth of them; they esteem them the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; but God is of another mind. Learn, 2. Let the world think as highly and as proudly of itself as it pleases, God thinks it at all times, but especially when it persecutes his people, base, and unwor-

thy of their society. *They wandered in deserts and mountains:* behold here the state and condition of some of the servants of the living God, who, when driven from all the inhabited places, took up their lodgings in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.* Learn hence, that oftentimes it is much better and more safe for the saints of God to be in a wilderness, among the beasts of the fields, than in a savage world inflamed by the devil into rage and persecution.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

That is "All the forementioned scripture saints, with others that lived from the beginning of the world, and the first giving out of the promise of the Messiah, Gen. iii. 15. all and every one of these obtained a good report through faith, that is, a good testimony that they pleased God; nevertheless they received not the promise, that is, the actual exhibition of the promise; Christ, the promised Messiah; the promise they had, but not the thing promised, this was not in their days exhibited. Christ was not then come in the flesh; this promise was made by God to the elders from the beginning, but not actually accomplished until the fulness of time. Learn hence, That the Old Testament saints had from the beginning the promise from God, concerning the exhibition of Christ in the flesh for the redemption of the world; which promise they were persuaded of the truth of, embraced it with desire, longing for the actual accomplishment of it, and thus enjoyed the benefit of it as well as we."

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The better thing here spoken of, is the coming of Christ in the flesh. Lord, what are we? And how were we better than they, that this better thing should be reserved for us? They saw the promise afar off, we enjoy it at hand. *Jucundius est spectare quam expectare bonum.* That they without us should not be made perfect: without us, is as much as without the things which are actually exhibited unto us. God never intended or designed, that the infant condition of the church should be perfect before the exhibition of Christ: that is, that they should be justified and saved by any sacrifices or services done in their time, but by looking to the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, whereby both they and we are perfected. Learn hence, That it is Christ alone who was to give perfection and consummation to his church: all the outward glorious worship of the Old Testament, though it pleased God, yet had no perfection in it; this God reserved for our times, that they without us should not be made perfect.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter contains an application of the doctrine delivered and confirmed in the foregoing chapter, in which our apostle having pressed christian Hebrews to perseverance in the faith, and patience under the heaviest sufferings for the sake

of their holy profession, by laying before them several instances of the Old Testament saints, who by the help of their faith did such great service for God, and endured such sufferings from the world; he comes now to reinforce his exhortation to patience and constancy in the cause of Christ; from the testimony before insisted on, with new additional motives, encouragements, and directions, in the chapter before us, in which he thus bespeaks them.

WHEREFORE, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing we, who are now called forth for to suffer, have before us so many instances of the faithful, who like a cloud of witnesses, have gone before us, and by the help of their faith conquered all impediments that lay in the way of their salvation, let us take encouragement from them to quit ourselves like men; and as runners in a race, let us cast off all worldly incumbrances which will entangle us, and avoid all sin, especially a bosom corruption, which easily besets us, and as easily overcomes us, and let us run with patience and perseverance the race of christianity set before us. Note, 1. That the Old Testament saints are here called *witnesses*, a *cloud of witnesses*, and a *cloud encompassing us*; they are witnesses of this grand troth, namely, that faith will carry believers safely through all that they may be called to do and suffer in the profession of the gospel; they are called a *cloud of witnesses*, partly for their number, there being a great multitude of them; partly for their direction, there being a leading virtue in them. As there was a cloud that went before the children of Israel to lead them in the wilderness, so this cloud of witnesses leads us up and down the wilderness of this world, in the darkest night of our sorrows and sufferings; and they are said to *encompass us*, because the scripture every where encompasses us with them, so that we can be in no suffering state or condition, be it never so sad, but we may turn our eye, and behold the face of some or other of these worthies looking upon us, and encouraging of us to patience and perseverance; and therefore to faint in our profession, whilst we are encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, is a great aggravation of our sin. Learn hence, That it is a special honor which God puts upon his saints departed, especially such as suffered and died for the truth, that even after their death, they are witnesses to faith and obedience in all generations: "We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

—Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;

Note here, 1. Christianity is a race, a race set before us

by God, and it is our duty faithfully and perseveringly to run it. Note, 2 That in order to the running of this race, all impediments must be laid aside: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. By every weight is generally understood the world, its riches, honors, pleasures, preferments, which oftentimes are a peculiar obstruction to constancy and perseverance in the profession and practice of christianity: this dead weight must be laid aside, by mortifying our hearts and affections towards the world, for it is inordinate love to these things which gives them their weight and incumbrance; where this grace is in its due exercise, the world cannot influence the mind into any disorder, nor make it unready for its race. By "the sin which doth so easily beset us," some understand all sin in general, others a bosom beloved sin in special, others timorousness and fear in particular; all softness and tenderness, with respect to suffering. In the original word rendered *easily beset us*, some think there is an allusion to the long garments worn in the eastern countries: which, dangling about a man's heels, unfit him for running a race. As a man that has a burthen on his back, or a long garment hanging down to his heels, is altogether unfit to run a race, so unready are they for the spiritual race, who are entangled with the love of the world, or with any sinful compliances. Note, 3 That patience is a grace very necessary to enable a person to run the race of christianity which God has set before him. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Such is the inevitableness and unavoidableness of the christian's trials; such the multiplicity and variety of them; such the long duration and continuance of them; that there can be no perseverance without patience. Note, 4. The way discovered, and the means declared, how, and by which we attain this grace and patience, namely, by *looking unto Jesus*. Learn hence, That looking unto, and beholding of Christ in his patience, is a notable mean to excite and stir us up to the practice and performance of our duty. Note, 5. The special title given here to Christ, he is styled *the author and finisher of faith* in his people; he is deservedly styled *the author of our faith*, because his holy doctrine is the foundation of our faith, because his holy ordinances are the special means of faith, and his holy Spirit the producer of faith in the souls of his people, and his precious blood the purchaser of faith, and all grace, for his people: And he is the *finisher of our faith* too, as well as the author of it, inasmuch as he has, by his promise, engaged to perfect what he has begun, Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he that has begun a good work in you will perform it, &c." And inasmuch as he doth by his intercession plead with the Father for the believer's preservation in faith, and perseverance in holiness unto the end; "I have prayed that thy faith fail not." Luke xxii. 32.

—Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle having propounded

the example of suffering saints before, to provoke them to patience and constancy under their tribulations, he propounds now the example of a suffering Saviour, and bids them *consider him*; *Qualis sit*, compare his sufferings with your own, consider who he was, and who you are; was not he the Son of God? had not he all glory and power in his hand? yet he *endured*, &c. consider him therefore. Learn hence, that the frequent consideration of Christ in his sufferings, is the best mean to keep up faith, and encourage patience under our own sufferings. Observe, 2. How our apostle particularly enumerates the sufferings which our Lord Jesus underwent, he *endured the contradiction of sinners*: that is, the great opposition made to his doctrine, the slander cast upon his miracles, the indignities offered to his person, the malicious and unwearied attempts against his life. Next he *endured the pain of the cross*, and despised the shame of the cross. Pain and shame are the two constituent parts of all outward sufferings, and they were both eminent in the death of the cross; no death more cruel and painful, no death more opprobrious and disgraceful, and never did these appear in any person's death to that degree of extremity, as in the death of Christ; yet he patiently endured them with an holy composure of soul, without reviling the villainous Jews, or threatening them with that vengeance and destruction which it was in his power to have brought upon them every moment. Lord! never any example of patient suffering like to thine, nor can any equal to it be given in human nature. Learn hence, that the manner of Christ's enduring sufferings, particularly pain and shame, ought to be continually before us, that God may in some measure be glorified by us, according therunto when we are called into a suffering condition. Observe, 3. What it was that carried Christ through his sufferings, it was *the joy that was set before him*: that is, say some, his glorious exaltation; rather the prospect of that glory which would redound to God and his church by his patient suffering. The glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, were now set before him, and he valued them above life, honor, reputation, and ease, and every thing that was dear unto him. Accordingly it was called his pleasure, Isa. liii. 10. Learn hence, that herein is Christ our great example, in that he was influenced and acted, in all that he did and suffered, by a constant respect to the glory of God, and the salvation of his people: "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, &c." Note, 4. The reward of our Lord's patient sufferings declared, he is therefore *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. God's throne implies his majesty and power, the right hand of his throne implies the highest honor, dignity and power, next to God. Christ's advancement above angels, and all creatures, is hereby intimated: this glorious estate was the great reward of his sufferings; he *became obedient unto death*, therefore God thus highly exalted him. Observe lastly, The advantage we shall reap and receive by eyeing Christ in, and imitating his patience under all our sufferings; it will prevent our being *wearied and faint in our minds*. Learn hence, That such sufferings may befall us in the way of our profession, as may cause us to faint and grow weary. 2. That when we do begin to faint and grow weary under sufferings, it is our duty to look unto Jesus, and consider him as an example of the greatest patience and constancy of mind; "look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, and consider him who endured—that ye be not weary nor faint."

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Here the apostle subjoins another reason why the Hebrews should be reconciled to a suffering condition; because what they had already suffered was but a flea-bite, compared with what Christ and the forementioned cloud of witnesses suffered: he and they resisted unto blood, which you never yet did; "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, &c." By blood is meant death and loss of life; though they had resisted bravely, and suffered manfully, yet their lives were safe. Learn hence, 1. That such as are engaged in the christian profession have no security, but that they may be called forth to the utmost sufferings, even to the sealing of it with their blood. Learn, 2. That whatever befalls us on this side blood, is to be looked upon as a fruit of divine tenderness and mercy towards us. Learn, 3. It is highly dishonorable to faint in the cause of Christ and the gospel, under lesser sufferings, when we know there are greater to be undergone by ourselves and others, on the same account. Learn, 4. That it is a noble struggle to resist even unto blood, in opposing sin, and striving against it, both in striving against the sin which others commit, and in striving against the sin which others, by promises or threatenings, would tempt us to commit. O how honorable a warfare is it to be engaged against such an enemy as sin is!—*Striving against sin*.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children,—

As if he had said, "By growing weary and faint in your minds, you will plainly show, and evidently declare, that you have forgotten that exhortation which God gives, Prov. iii." The want of a diligent consideration and due remembrance of God's promises, recorded in scripture for our encouragement unto duty, and support under difficulties, is very sinful, and of dangerous consequence unto our souls, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you."

—My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

Note here, 1. A sweet and endearing compellation, *my son*. Learn hence, that good men, when under the greatest trials and heaviest afflictions, are God's sons, he calls them *sons*, and he deals with them as with sons. Note, 2. The nature of the saints' afflictions declared; not judgments but chastisements, and fatherly rebukes; the original word signifies such a correction as a father gives his child for his instruction, and bringing him to a sense of his duty. Learn hence, That all the afflictions which God lays upon his children are not the effects of his vindictive anger, but the fruits and effects of his paternal love. Note, 3. A cautionary direction given against two very dangerous extremes in the time of affliction, namely, despising correction, and fainting under it. It is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of all the children of God, when under his fatherly hand, to take care that they neither despise his chastisements, nor faint under them. When God has taken away

one of our comforts, to say, "Let him take all if he will; if my children must die, let them die; if my estate must go, let it go." This is to despise. God cannot bear it, to see us bear his hand thus lightly. The other extreme is fainting: if when goods are taken away, the heart is taken away, and when relations die, the spirit of a person dies with them. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint, &c."

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

A reason is given in these words, why we should not faint under divine chastisements, because God chasteneth every one whom he loves. Here note, That love is antecedent unto chastening, and that chastening is consequential unto love. Note, 2. That divine love and fatherly chastisings are inseparable; *whom he loveth*, that is, whomsoever he loveth, *he chasteneth*, none goes free. Note, 3. That no person then has any reason to complain of his portion of fatherly chastisements, seeing it is the constant way and manner of God's dealing with his children. Note, 4. That in and under all our chastisements, the resignation of ourselves, to the sovereign pleasure, and infinite wisdom of God, is the only means to preserve us from fainting and weakness.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Observe, 1. He does not say, *If ye be chastised*, but, *"If ye endure chastisements"*, God dealeth with you as with sons: if ye endure them with faith and patience, with submission and perseverance, so as not to faint under them. Learn hence, That a patient endurance of chastisements is of great price in the sight of God, as well as of singular use and advantage unto us. Afflictions and chastisements are no pledges or assurances of our adoption, but when and where they are endured with patience. Observe farther from those words, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" 1. That every one of God's sons, more or less, stands in need of his fatherly chastisement. 2. That God is very careful, as a wise and tender father, to correct and chasten all his children. 3. That God in correcting of his children dealeth with them as with sons; he is the world's sovereign, but the believer's father: as he is the governor of the world he treats men righteously in his judgments; as he is the father of believers, he treats them graciously in afflictions. Observe again from those words, "If ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers," (that is, all sons are partakers,) that all true children are under God's fatherly discipline; and all that are not under his discipline are not his children, *then are ye bastards and not sons*. Learn hence, 1. That God's family, or visible church in this world, has

some bastards in it, sons that may have gifts and outward enjoyments, but are not heirs, and have no right to the heavenly inheritance. Learn, 2. That this is a great evidence of it, that they are not the genuine sons of God because they go unchastised; not that they are altogether without affliction, for they are in trouble like other men, but they are not sensible of divine chastisements in their afflictions, they do not receive them, bear them, and improve them as such, but are impaired by their afflictions, rather than improved by them; they come cankered out of the furnace, and leprous out of Jordan; afflictions that should refine them from their dross, and purify them from their filth, boil their scum and impurity more into them. Learn, lastly, That a joyous state of freedom from affliction, is such as we ought to watch over with great jealousy and fear, lest it should be a leaving us out of the discipline of the family of God; not that we may desire afflictions as such, much less exasperate and torment ourselves; but we may pray that we may not want any pledge of our adoption, leaving the order and disposal of all things to the will of God.

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure: but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

These words are a fresh argument to persuade christians to a patient enduring of divine chastisements; the argument is drawn from the less to the greater, thus: "If our earthly parents chastened us only a few days, and after their own pleasure, and yet we were subject to them, how much more ought we to be subject to God our heavenly Father, who chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness?" Note here, 1. Earthly parents do and may chastise the children of their flesh, and they ought to reverence them for so doing, and pay a reverential submission to their parental chastisements. Note, 2. That the motive of, and rule which parents too often follow in correcting of their children, is their own will and pleasure: they have frequently a greater regard to their own passions, than to their children's advantage, and correct often in humour than in reason, erring sometimes in the matter, sometimes in the manner, sometimes in the measure of their corrections. Note, 3. That great is the difference between divine and parental chastisements. 1. In their author, one is the father of our flesh, the other of our souls and spirits; they are the immediate product of his power, which is a fundamental reason for our patient submission to God in and under all afflictions. 2. In their end, the one for their own pleasure, the other for his children's profit, to make them partakers of his holiness, by renovation, sanctification, and mortification: the carrying on of these things in us, is that which God designs in all his chastisements. Learn,

hence, That we can have no greater pledge, and assurance of divine love in afflictions than this, that God by them brings us nearer to himself, and makes us more like himself; if under divine chastisements we find no increase of holiness, they are utterly lost, and we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them. Note lastly, The duty we owe to God the Father of spirits, and that is subjection, together with the benefit and advantage of it: by being in *subjection to the Father of spirits, we shall live*. Now this subjection unto God, consists in an acquiescence in his right and sovereignty to do what he will with his own, in an acknowledgment of his wisdom and righteousness in all his dealings with us, in a mighty sense of his care and love, and in an entire resignation of ourselves to his holy will in all things. And behold the advantage and benefit of this subjection to God in our chastisements, *we shall live a spiritual life on earth, and an eternal life in heaven*. The rebellious son under the law, that refused subjection to his earthly parent was stoned to death; see Deut. xxi. 18. and died without mercy: but they who yield subjection to God in their chastisements shall live, and not die.

11 Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Our apostle, in these words, seems to obviate an objection against a compliance with his exhortation to bear divine chastenings with silence and submission; and this is taken from the trouble and sorrow wherewith chastisement is accompanied; this he takes for granted is so, but takes off the weight of the objection, by opposing the benefits of all affliction thereunto. Learn hence, 1. That all afflictions for the present are grievous to the flesh, and painful to human nature. Learn, 2. That though afflictions are grievous, yet their fruits are gracious to a believer; God in his sovereign wisdom doth so dispose and manage his people's afflictions, that he makes them end in a happy fruit, even in the fruits of holiness and sanctification; and after affliction has done its work, and wrought kindly, God comes in with comfort and joy; and cheering cordials follow bitter physic. Observe farther, How the benefit of chastisement is expressed in a threefold gradation. Affliction yieldeth fruit: it is no dead and dry thing, but this rod blossoms, and brings forth almonds. The fruit it yieldeth is *the fruit of righteousness*, namely, patience, submission to the will of God, weanedness from the world, mortification of sin, purity of heart, holiness of life, farther readiness and greater fitness for suffering: these are the sweet fruits which God enables his to gather from the sour tree of affliction. And this fruit of righteousness which affliction yields is *peaceable fruit*, because it is a pledge and evidence of our peace with God, and because it brings peace into our own minds. By these fruits of righteousness our hearts are quieted, our minds composed, all tumults allayed, and we enabled to possess our souls in patience. O happy fruit of affliction! blessed is the man whom thou chastisest. Observe lastly, Who they are that are blessed with these special benefits of affliction, only those that are *exercised* thereby. The original word is an allusion to those in the public

games, who strip themselves naked, and put forth all their strength for mastery. To be exercised by chastisements, is to have all our spiritual strength put forth, all our faith and patience tried to the utmost. Learn hence, That a christian can never find any benefit in chastisements, unless he be exercised by them, that is, unless his graces be stirred up by them to an holy and constant exercise, for hereby alone do they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down; and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing so glorious fruits spring from sanctified afflictions, be not dejected in mind, nor suffer fear to seize upon you, which weakens the hands, and enfeebles the knees, and causes them to smite one against another; but be resolute for God, make straight paths in the way of christianity, not stepping once out of it to avoid persecution, lest they who are already lame and feeble, the weak and wavering christians, be disheartened and moved by your example to turn out of the way, but let them rather by your constancy be confirmed in their christian course." Learn hence, 1. That in the running of our spiritual race, we must put forth our utmost strength and activity; but where the course is long, and difficulties great, we are apt to grow weary and despond, our *hands hang down*, and our *knees grow feeble*. Learn, 2. That faintness and weariness in duty, dejection and despondency as to success, are great evils, and of fatal consequence unto others as well as ourselves, which therefore we must with all intention of mind watch against: "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." Learn, 3. That negligent and careless walking in time of prosperity, and pusillanimity and weakness in time of trial, is a great mean of turning aside those that are lame and weak out of the paths of visible holiness, *lest that which is lame be turned out of the way*. Learn, 4. That the sight and due consideration of a christian's courage and constancy, will tend very much to the healing of the lame and weak christians whilst they are in the way, whose recovery when quite turned out, will be very difficult, if not impossible. "Let it rather be healed."

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Our apostle having now finished his exhortation unto patient perseverance in the profession of the gospel under all sufferings and afflictions, he now proceeds to a prescription of practical duties incumbent upon christians at all times in the daily course of their conversation, two of which are contained in this verse, namely, to *follow peace and holiness*; the former contains our duty to man, the latter our duty to God. Here observe, That both duties are enjoined in one and the same precept, and also with one and the same penalty; *Without which*, that is, without following of both, which, without pursuing and endeavouring after both, *no man shall see the Lord*. Indeed, if a person follow holiness

though he cannot obtain peace, he may see God, provided he pursues peace, and the fault none of his that he doth not find it; but if he does not pursue peace, though he pretends never so much holiness, he cannot be happy; for a christian must be of a peaceable, as well as of a pious conversation: peace and holiness, peaceableness and purity, are here joined together, and he can neither be happy in this or the next world, that puts them asunder. Observe farther, the manner how peace and holiness must be followed, namely, with intense endeavours: the original word imports a vehement pursuit, a metaphor taken from huntsmen, who follow the chase, and pursue their game, though it flies before them: if peace may be had, though it be upon hard terms, we must endeavour to secure it, for it can never be bought too dear, if it be not purchased by sin and baseness. A frame and disposition of seeking peace with all, is eminently suited unto the doctrine and grace of the gospel. A froward spirit, ready for strife and contention, easily provoked, and retaining long a sense of injuries, is directly contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel. Observe likewise, how that holiness towards God must be accompanied with peaceableness towards man. It is evangelical holiness, which is here required; which must be inward holiness, an universal holiness, a sincere and real holiness, an humble and self-denying holiness, a growing and progressive holiness, a constant and persevering holiness, and such a holiness towards God, as is always accompanied with righteousness towards man. Observe, lastly, the absolute necessity of holiness in order to eternal blessedness, *without it no man shall see the Lord*. The future sight of God in glory depends peremptorily on our present holiness, not as the meritorious cause of it, but as a necessary qualification as preparation for it, and as it is the indispensable condition of our obtaining of it. The soul is by holiness made meet and fit for the enjoyment of God in happiness, Col. i. 12. Lord! how miserably mistaken will they be, who expect to see God to their comfort hereafter, who have lived and died in an unholly state here!

15 Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

Our apostle having declared what our duty is with respect to ourselves in the foregoing verses, he acquaints us, how much it is to our duty to take care of, and watch over others, to do what in us lies, that none may fall short of the grace of God, that is, fall from the grace of God, and the profession of christianity; so that it is very plain, that apostasy is the sin here pointed at, their falling back from christianity to Judaism, for fear of persecution: this is deservedly called a *root of bitterness springing up*, according to Deut. xxix. 18. *A root that beareth gall and wormwood*. Learn hence, 1. That looking diligently unto the good of others, and to prevent their falling into sin, especially into the sin of apostasy, is a duty we are obliged to by the light of nature, and the royal law of love. Learn, 2. That the root of apostasy from God, and the profession of christianity, may abide invisibly in and among eminent professors of religion. It is here called a *root*, because at the beginning it is hidden in the hearts of men, and cannot be discovered until it springs

up; and it is called a *root of bitterness*, because of its noxious and poisonous qualities, its bitter effects and fruits. Learn, 3. That there is no man professing the gospel who comes short of the grace of God, but it is by reason of himself and his own sin. Unbelief, negligence and sloth, are the true causes why such persons do fail of the grace of God: "looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God."

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Our apostle proceeds in these verses to warn them against such sins as would occasion their apostasy and falling from the grace of God, and they are fornication and profaneness; "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person." Where note. How the apostle puts fornication and profaneness together, because they usually go together; fornicators, such especially as are habitually so, do always grow profane, and profane persons do set light by fornication, and they are sins very seldom forsaken; few fornicators, and profane persons, do ever come to repentance. By *fornication*, understand all conjunction with women out of wedlock, be it with single or married persons. By *profane persons*, understand such as mock religion, who lightly regard its promises and threatenings, who despise or neglect its worship, who speak irreverently of its concerns. Note, 2. The instance which the apostle gives of a profane person, in the person of Esau: "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau." The scripture makes no mention of his fornication; but the way whereby he manifested his *profaneness* is declared, namely, that *for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright*. Which birthright had many privileges belonging to it, as namely, a double portion of the paternal inheritance, a right of rule and government over the family, power and dominion, dignity and superiority belonging to him, but especially the honor of priesthood, all which did belong to the first-born. And to these the blessing which run from Abraham in the patriarchal line, and was communicated from father to son, containing an inclosure of all church privileges, and preservation of the promised seed. Now Esau, by selling his birthright, did virtually renounce his right unto this blessing, wherein the promised seed and the church-state were contained, and doing all this upon a slight consideration, for a mess of pottage or morsel of meat; and in a regardless manner, utterly unconcerned at what he had done. This was his profaneness; and accordingly the scripture says, *thus Esau despised his birthright*. Learn from hence, how much it concerns all persons not to glory in their outward privileges. Esau here was the first-born of Isaac, circumcised according to the law of God, and partaker in all the worship of God, yet he proved an outcast from the covenant, and promises thereof. *Profane Esau!* The 16th verse acquaints us with the fruitlessness of Esau's sorrow for parting with his birthright, and the unprofitableness

of his endeavours in order to the recovery of it: when he would have inherited the blessing afterwards. This *afterwards*, say some, was not less than forty years, for he sold his birthright when he was young, and when he designed the recovery of the blessing, Isaac was old; thus long did he live in sin, without any sense of it, or repentance for it; but falling into distress, it fills him with perplexity, and he seeks the recovery of the blessing: and herein he was a type of all unbelievers, and obstinate refusers of the grace of Christ. Learn, from his example, that there is a time coming when the profanest sinners upon earth will be found upon their knees at God's door, seeking, and that earnestly, with strong cries and tears, for the obtaining of that blessing which they now sinfully undervalue, and scornfully despise. "Afterwards Esau would have inherited the blessing, and sought it carefully with tears." It follows, he was rejected; that is, by his father Isaac; and found no place with him for repentance. Isaac would not change his mind, nor recal the blessing, which as a prophet of God he had conferred on Jacob. Learn hence then, that such sinners as now neglect the seeking of the blessing in God's time, have great reason to fear that they shall not find it in their own time, though they seek it with tears saller than those of Esau. Profane contemners of the grace of God, ought to fear being excluded from the mercy of God; and as Isaac did not, God will not repent or alter his righteous sentence upon them. This sad event had the profaneness of Esau, and the like will they meet with who despise the grace of God.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.

Our apostle's design being to bring over the Hebrews fully from Judaism to christianity, he enters here upon a description of both states, showing the excellency of the one above the other. He describes first the legal state of the church under the Old Testament, and the manner of their forefathers entering into covenant with God at Mount Sinai. And then he sets forth the evangelical state, whereunto they were called, and into which they were entered. In the verses now before us, he sets forth the dread and terror of the Mosaic dispensation, and the way and manner how their forefathers under the Old Testament entered into their church-state; telling them, that they came to a mount

that might be touched, that is, to Mount Sinai, in the desert of Arabia, a barren and fruitless place, full of bushes and brambles, but without water or food; intimating, that such as are under the law, in a state of sin, bring forth no acceptable fruit unto God; and as there was no water in the desert, but that which the people lived upon was brought out of the rock, and that rock was Christ; it intimates, that from Christ alone were all their and our refreshments: the law affords none, but thunders from its fiery mouth, wrath and a curse. Farther, this mount is said to be *what might be touched*; that is, a sensible, awful thing, exposed to feeling; intimating how low and inferior the giving of the law was in comparison of the promulgation of the gospel, which was from heaven. The law was given from a mount that might be touched by man or beast, though if either touched it they must die, to intimate the bondage and fear the people were then in, who might not so much as touch the mountain where were the signs of God's presence: but the gospel was promulgated from heaven, and the Son of God sent down on purpose from thence to plant and propagate it here in the world. The second thing which the apostle tells them they were come unto, was to *fire that burned*. This fire that burned on the mount was a token of God's presence, and a distinct mean of filling the people with dread and fear. This fire represented the purity and holiness of God's nature, his jealousy and severity against sin. Thus the law represents to us the holiness and severity of God, with his anger and displeasure against sin and sinners, but there leaves us consumed, without relief, by Jesus Christ. Unto fire the apostle adds *blackness and darkness, and tempest*; which blackness and darkness might be caused by thick clouds and smoke that covered the mount. The darkness was a type of that utter darkness of hell, which the transgressors of that law deserved; and the tempest and terrible storms were emblems and signs of God's fiery indignation and fearful vengeance on the wicked violaters of his holy law, and might also point out and signify the effects of the law then delivered; namely to bring the soul into darkness, that it can see no light either for its direction or consolation; and it raises a tempest in the mind, of disquieting, perplexing thoughts, without relieving or encouraging a sinner to look out after any relief, until Christ in his gospel says, *Behold me, Behold me*. It follows, ye are come to the *sound of a trumpet*: this was not a real trumpet, but the sound of a trumpet formed in the air by the ministry of angels waxing louder and louder, to signify the nearer approach of God; also as this trumpet did summon the people to appear before the Lord as a legislative trumpet, in like manner there shall be a judicial trumpet, to summon the world to appear before Christ at the great day. After the sound of the trumpet followed the voice of words; that is the voice of God in a terrible manner promulgating the law out of the midst of the fire, in a language understood by that people. As the sound of the trumpet so the voice of God was loud, majestic, terrible, and like thunder. *Quest.* But why was there such vast solemnity used at the giving of the law? *Ans.* To signify the majesty and authority of him who was the supreme lawgiver, even the Lord of heaven and earth; and that the greater the outward solemnity was, the greater the inward impression might be upon the minds of the people; and to signify, that if the promulgation of the law was so awful, the transgression of it would be fatal, and the transgressor's punishment very dreadful. Observe

lastly, The event of this sight and hearing on the part of the people: fear made them desire that they might hear this voice no more: and God's design in all, was to cause them to long for, and look after that great prophet, Christ Jesus, by whom God would speak unto them more comfortably, and by whom they might have access to the throne of grace more freely. "They entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more," because it heightened their fear and dread to the utmost. Learn from hence, That the sight and voice of God will be very dreadful to us: and there will be no appearance for us before him with confidence and peace, unless we have an answer in readiness with us to all the words of the law, even all that the law requires of us: and such as trust to their own works and merits to answer for them, or to any thing whatsoever, besides the blood and sacrifice, the mediation and satisfaction, of Jesus Christ, the surety of the new covenant, will find themselves eternally deceived. The next evidence the apostle gives of the dreadful promulgation of the law, and consequently of the miserable state of them that are under its power, appears in this, that the people "could not endure that which was commanded;" that is, the severity of that command, that if a beast touched the mountain, "it should be stoned or thrust through with a dart." All this was to show the absolute inaccessibleness of God, in and by the law, and at what distance we ought to keep ourselves from every thing that falls under the curse of the law. It is added last of all, "that Moses himself did exceedingly fear and quake." From whence observe, How all persons concerned were brought to an utter loss and distress at the promulgation and giving of the law, from whence no relief is to be obtained, but by him alone who is "the end of the law for righteousness unto all them that believe."

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels;

23 To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that* of Abel.

Our apostle having given an account, in the foregoing verses, of the state of the Jewish church under the law, comes now to declare that more excellent state whereinto believers are called in and by the gospel. The privileges here summed up, partly respect the church militant, and partly the church triumphant. Observe then, The glorious privileges of the gospel-state, and what believers are said to come to whilst militant here on earth. 1. They are said to come unto "mount Sion, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem; not to mount Sinai, which was full of terror and discomfort, but to mount Sion, full of all spiritual blessings.

Where note, The gospel church is called the city of the living God. A city is a place of safety and a place of honor, a place of peace and rest. The souls of sinners can find no place of rest and safety under the law, but we have all these things by the gospel, rest in Christ, peace with God, safety in divine protection, &c. And as a king dwells in his city, so God dwells in the church of believers; "that is my rest for ever, here will I dwell," says God, "for I have a delight therein." Oh, what manner of persons ought they to be who are the denizens of the city of God! Alas! the great number who pretend highly to the church, and its privileges, are citizens of this world only, and altogether unfit for this holy society. 2. Believers are next said to come to an *innumerable company of angels*: to come to these, is to be of their society; they and we are one in Christ; the angels above, and believers below, make up but one corporation or family; they are our fellow-citizens, and our fellow-subjects. True, they are above us, and at a mighty distance from us, yet upon occasion very near us; and though we do not see them, yet they love us, have a special care of us, and are ministering to us, as heirs of the same salvation with themselves. 3. They are come to the *general assembly and church of the first-born*; that is, they are of the number of God's regenerate and adopted ones, of those that are born again, whose names are registered in heaven. As the first-born under the law had a right to the inheritance, to a double part of the inheritance; so they who are interested really in the gospel-church, have a right to all that God has provided, and Christ hath purchased, even to the whole inheritance of grace and glory. O glorious privilege, to be brought unto this blessed society, this general assembly of the first-born! Especially if we consider what company, what society, what assembly, we belong unto without it, which is no other than that of devils, and the seed of the wicked serpent. 4. They are come to *God the judge of all*; that is, they have access to God by Jesus Christ, access to his favor by justification, and access into his presence by prayer and supplication, yea, access to him as a judge, without terror or consternation, blessed privilege; believers have a comfortable access to God as the judge of all with all their causes and complaints, he will hear them, plead their cause, and judge for them, and make their oppressions unsafe to the greatest of the sons of men. 5. Believers are said to come to the *spirits of just men made perfect*. Come to them, though not in the same place with them, until death; yet we and they have the same God and Sovereign, the same Head and Saviour, the same expectation of a glorious resurrection. Note here, 1. There are spirits of men in a separate state and condition, capable of communion with God and the church. 2. That all the spirits of just men departed, are made perfect; their race is consummated, perfect deliverance from all sin and sorrow is completed, and a full reward enjoyed; their faith is heightened into sight, and all their graces elevated into glory. 3. That yet are they spirits still, and no more but spirits; and though perfected spirits, yet there is wanting the last finishing stroke from the hand of God to render the bodies as well as the spirits of just men for ever perfect in the morning of the resurrection. 4. Believers are here said to come to *Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*; as if the apostle had said, "Your fathers came to a mount of fire and smoke, of darkness, terror and death, where there was no Mediator to make their peace

with God, no blood to cry for mercy, and to cleanse them from sin; but you by forsaking Judaism, and coming over to christianity fully, are come into that society where Christ is Mediator and priest; where the blood of Christ sprinkled upon your souls, cries aloud for mercy, and cleanses from all sin. "And to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Intimating that Christ's blood solicits God with stronger cries for mercy, than did ever Abel's for revenge. *Quest.* But what are those *better things* which the blood of Christ speaks above and beyond the blood of Abel? *Ans.* 1. It speaks better things from God unto us, namely, that his justice is satisfied, his wrath appeased, the condemning guilt of sin expiated, and the majesty of God fully reconciled to all believers. 2. It speaks better things to God for us, namely, to be at peace with us, to rest in his love towards us, to furnish us with all grace here, and to fit us for glory hereafter. O blessed Jesus! thy blood never cried as Abel's did, for vengeance on them by whom it was shed, but pleaded for pardon, and obtained pardon on the behalf of many of them. Happy they! who by faith are made partakers of this typical blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing verses, given a summary account of the two states of the law and the gospel, with the incomparable excellency of the latter above the former, he gives them an exhortation and cautionary direction to take heed that they did not turn a deaf ear to so excellent a person as Christ was, preaching to them by his doctrine: "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh. Here note, in general, that to refuse any who speak unto us in the name and authority of Christ, is to refuse Christ himself. This may be applied to all the faithful preachers of the gospel, however they may be despised in and by the world. But it is here the person of Christ that is particularly intended, to refuse him here, is either to reject his doctrine, and not to receive it, or having received it, to renounce it; so that this refusal includes both unbelief and apostasy, either of which are fatal and dangerous to the sons of men. Observe next, The reason drawn from the heinousness of the sin, and the grievousness of the punishment: "if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth:" that is, Moses, who delivered his message here below; "much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven;" that is Jesus Christ his Son, sent down from heaven, personally to deliver his holy doctrine; and now speaking to us from heaven by his Holy Spirit, in his ministers and apostles. Note here. 1. That Christ did in former times speak unto his church by Moses and the prophets. 2. That in these latter times he vouchsafed to speak unto his church personally himself. 3. That after he personally disappeared and left the world, he vouchsafed still to speak unto his church by his Spirit in the ministry of the word. 4. That though to refuse Christ, when speaking here on earth, was a grievous sin, and deserved a fearful punishment; yet to refuse him now, speaking from heaven, is a more grievous sin, and

deserves a greater punishment, considering who speaks, what he speaks, and from whence he speaks; the gospel was a mystery brought to us from the bosom of the Father, the clearest revelation of God's will, and the fullest manifestation of his love, and yet few regard it, most reject it, to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation.

26 Whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven:

27 And this *word*, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

As if the apostle had said, "the voice of God, at the promulgating of the law on mount Sinai, shook the earth: but he promised after this to shake all nations, and that Christ the expected Messiah, the desire of all nations, should come, which is now fulfilled." *Quest.* But what means our apostle by God's shaking not the earth only, but also heaven? *Ans.* He means thereby all the Mosaical worship, all the judaical state, those were shaken at the coming of Christ, in order to the introduction of the immovable gospel-state which was perpetually to remain. Learn hence, That the coming of the Messiah was to be the last dispensation of God for the salvation of mankind, and consequently was to be perpetual and unchangeable. The apostle argues from the words, *once more*, that the former dispensation should be removed, to make way for that which should perpetually remain. Several things are here asserted by our apostle. 1. That there were some things which were intended by God to be shaken, namely, the Levitical priesthood, and all the Jewish sacrifices and services; these things were to be shaken, moved, yea, altogether removed out of the way. 2. That there were things that could not be shaken or removed, but remain; these were the gospel state, the christian religion, which shall continue until time shall be no more. 3. That the former things were removed, that the latter might be introduced and established; the law and the gospel were inconsistent; the legal and evangelical administration could not stand in force together, therefore there was a necessity for the nulling of the one, in order to the establishing of the other. 4. That the removal of the law, to bring the more perfect administration of the gospel, doth prove the stability and immutability of the gospel, that it stands fast for ever, there shall be no more shaking, no farther alteration in matters of religion to the end of the world. For thus it follows:

28 Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably; with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Observe here, 1. That the apostle calls the dispensation of

the gospel, *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*, in opposition to the law, which was an imperfect and alterable dispensation: the gospel revelation is full and final, there is no need of any farther revelation after this, nor of any change of that religion which was brought from heaven by the Son of God, in regard of the perfection of it, and its admirable fitness to reform the world, and to recover mankind out of their lost estate and lapsed condition, and to bring them to eternal happiness; and this by the purity of its doctrine, and the power of its arguments, to work upon the minds of men by the clear discovery of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world; we have received now *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*. Observe, 2. The inference which the apostle draws from the perfection and perpetuity of this revelation which God has last of all made to the world by his Son, *let us have grace to serve God acceptably*; that is, let us live as becometh those to whom God hath made so clear and perfect a revelation of his mind and will; we have all the advantages of divine revelation which the world ever had, and the last and most perfect that the world ever shall have; we have not only Moses, but Jesus; not only the moral law, but the glorious gospel, which the Son of God came down on purpose from heaven to declare to the world. Observe, 3. The manner how God must be served, *with reverence and godly fear*. Reverence, in divine service, looks at God's glorious excellency and majesty, and at our own unworthiness, together with that infinite distance between him and us; and *godly fear* is a religious awe upon the soul in holy duties, from the consideration of the great danger of sinful miscarriages in his worship. Observe, 4. The reason making the foregoing duty necessary, *For our God is a consuming fire*. Our God, intimates a covenant relation. Note hence, That the believers' God is a consuming fire, but not to believers; or if so, not to consume their graces, but their corruptions only, or at most their corruptible comforts. Note, 2. That though God takes us near to himself, and in covenant with himself, yet he expects that we consider who he is, and what he is, even a consuming fire and a jealous God.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our apostle being now come to a conclusion of this most excellent epistle, closes it with an exhortation to the several evangelical and moral duties, thereby pointing out to the ministers of the gospel, the right order, and best method, of preaching, namely, first to unfold the mysteries of the gospel, with the grace of God therein, and then to improve it to practical holiness in the duties of obedience.—In the pressing of these duties here, because there was not room for all, he mentions only some, which were most necessary for the Hebrews to attend unto with diligence, in their present circumstances; and herein also ought our apostle to be our pattern in the work of the ministry. Circumstances may make it necessary oftentimes that some duties be more diligently pressed on our people than others, which in themselves are of no less importance than they. And finally, the divine wisdom and pious care of the apostle, is to be observed and followed by us, in that solemn and fervent prayer which he put to God for a blessing upon his ex-

hortations. Thus did our Lord before him, having preached a most excellent sermon to his disciples, St. John. chap. xiv. xv. xvi. He concludes it with a suitable prayer, xvii. Doubtless herein, according to our ability, we ought to follow our blessed Lord's and his holy apostle's instructive examples.

LET brotherly love continue.

Love being the fountain and foundation of all moral duties, our apostle begins with it, and places it at the head of all the rest, as comprehending our whole duty towards our neighbour. Note here, The duty commanded is *love*; the special duty recommended is *brotherly love*, or that brotherly affection which every true christian chiefly bears to all his fellow members in Christ for grace's sake; and the manner of the injunction or command is that this brotherly affection do *continue* and constantly abide, not in the pretence and appearance of it only, but in the truth and reality of it, for there are innumerable occasions which will be ready to impair and weaken it, if it be not well grounded; alas! unsuitableness of natural temper, differences in judgment, and matters of opinion, inconsistent worldly interest, readiness to provocation, or to be provoked, pride on the one hand, or envy on the other, will sadly occasion the temporary decay, yea, at last the total loss of this noble grace, if it be not well grounded, and deeply rooted. Learn hence, That *brotherly love* is very apt to impair and decay, if we endeavour not continually its preservation and revival. Lord, how marvellous is it, that so many amongst us can persuade themselves that they are christians, and yet be not only strangers, but enemies to this grace and duty of love! How is the power and glory of christianity weakened through want of it! and verily, until this holy love be again revived amongst us, the interest of christianity will run very low, yea, the concerns of religion will more and more run to ruin.

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

The second duty here exhorted to is hospitality, especially towards strangers, which consisted in receiving them into their houses, and furnishing them with all needful accommodations. In those eastern countries inns were not so ready as with us, and christians were generally poor, not able to bear their own charges in their travelling from place to place. Strangers, even amongst Heathens, were accounted sacred, and under the peculiar protection of God. And a punishment was appointed for those that were inhospitable towards them. Hospitality is a prescribed duty; but this part of it, to wit, the entertaining of the strangers which was so great a virtue in ancient times, is now driven out of the world by the wickedness of some, and the covetousness of others; few strangers are worthy to receive entertainment, and as few have hearts to give it. Observe farther, The manner of prescribing this duty. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers*: no doubt a positive command is included in the prohibition, *forget not*; that is, remember to do it, be always in a readiness for the discharge of this duty; our hearts ought

to be always in a gracious disposition toward such duties as are attended with difficulty or charge; the liberal mind deviseth liberal things. Observe, lastly, The reason enforcing the duty, hereby *some have entertained angels unwares*: so did Abraham and Lot entertain three angels, in the appearance of men, not knowing who or what they were. By receiving strangers, out of faith in Christ, and love to God, we may receive precious saints, and (which is more) some blessed angels sent to keep them, and (which is most of all) Jesus Christ, himself, who at present resents, and will hereafter acknowledge and reward, such kindness shown to his members as done to himself. Matt. xxv.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Hospitality towards strangers was expressed in the foregoing verse; here compassion towards sufferers, such as are captive prisoners in bonds, either upon a religious or civil account. Here note, 1. That bodily bondage is a bitter bondage; captivity is a most grievous calamity. 2. That we are very prone to forget others' captivity, when we ourselves are in prosperity. 3. That such as are in bonds for Christ's sake especially, and his holy gospel, ought particularly to be remembered by us, they are and ought to be the peculiar objects of our compassion; although considering the cause in which they suffer: it is better, and more honorable, to be in bonds for Christ, than to be at liberty with a raging, persecuting world; for bonds and imprisonments for the truth, were consecrated to God, and made honorable by the bonds and imprisonment of Christ himself, and commended to the church in all ages, by the bonds and imprisonments of the apostles, and the primitive witnesses to christianity. Note farther, How we are to be mindful of them, and in what manner, by visiting of them, administering to them, sympathizing with them, praying for them, and all this *as bound with them*, which implies an act of union, as members of the same mystical body, and suffering in and for the same common cause; *remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them*; it follows, *and those that suffer adversity, as being in the body*. This implies, that there are many kinds of afflictions besides bonds; that we are prone to forget those who suffer lighter and lesser afflictions; if they be not in bonds, we are ready to forget them, though they suffer much adversity; but the command is more general to remember all that are in any kind of adversity, whether they suffer in body, name, or estate, by sickness, pain, losses, reproaches, or any kind of calamity; the professors of religion are exempted from no sorts of adversity, and under every kind of it we must remember them, and sympathize with them, because we ourselves are *in the body with them*; that is, say some, we are members of the same mystical body with them, and therefore when one member suffers, all the members are to suffer with it. *Yourselves are in the body*; that is, say others, in the same state of natural life, subject and obnoxious to the same sufferings, and within the reach of the same adversities. Learn hence, That a sense of our own being continually obnoxious unto sufferings during this life, ought to incline our minds to a diligent consideration of others in their sufferings, so as to discharge

all duties of love and helpfulness towards them, as an evidence of our interest in the same mystical body with them, and as a ground of just expectation of the like relief and compassion from them; "Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

4 Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled:

Our apostle having, in the former verses, directed christians to their duty one towards another, in this, and the following verses, he directs them to perform their duty towards themselves; and because the two radical comprehensive lusts of corrupted nature are uncleanness and covetousness, he therefore commends unto their care and practice those two great duties of chastity and contentation; the former in this, the latter in the next verse. Now here observe, That to prevent the former sin, the ravings of unbridled lust, our apostle prescribes the remedy which God appoints, *marriage*; that is, the conjunction of two individual persons that have freedom in choice and consent, and have power over themselves, not being within the degrees of affinity or consanguinity prohibited, between whom there results such an indissoluble union, that thereby they become one flesh, such marriage he affirms to be honorable, and to be so esteemed, in regard to its Author, God himself, Gen. ii. 18. in regard of the place, paradise; in regard of the time, in man's innocency; in regard of the end and usefulness of it, the continuation of the race of mankind; thus it is honorable, and ought to be had in honor. The apostle adds, that it is thus *honorable in all*; that is, amongst all orders, ranks and degrees of men, that are called thereunto: the remedy is equally provided by God for all; and therefore for the church of Rome to deny it to their clergy, is to usurp authority over the consciences of men, and to judge themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker, which our first parents in innocency did not think themselves too pure for. Learn hence, 1. That divine institution is sufficient to render any state or condition of life honorable, and consequently the state of marriage. 2. That which is honorable by divine institution, may be rendered abominable by the miscarriages of men. 3. That it is an horrid contempt of the authority of God, and a bold usurpation over the consciences of men, to forbid the state of marriage unto any, which God has made honorable among all. Next to the state of marriage, the apostle adds the duty of that state, *the bed undefiled*, in opposition to the defiled bed of whoremongers and adulterers, and the preservation of marriage duties within their due bounds.

—But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Having exhorted to conjugal purity and chastity in the former part of the verse, he adds a very cogent reason and forcible motive to it in the latter words, because *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*; that is, all persons who in a single state of life do know one another carnally, without a marriage-vow or covenant between them; if both parties be single, their filthiness is called fornication; if either of them be married, adultery; neither of them shall escape the judgment of God; that is, temporal punishment in this life, and eternal damnation in the next. Learn hence,

That whatever light thoughts men have of the sin of uncleanness, yet we are assured it doth in its own nature deserve eternal condemnation, and such as live and die impenitently in it, shall certainly perish for it; and if so, then all occasions of, and all temptations leading to those sins, are to be avoided as we love our souls; for all sinners, those who have habitually given up themselves to the lust of the flesh, are most rarely and difficultly brought to repentance.

5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have. For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

6 *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Observe here, A dehortation or negative precept, "Let your conversation be without covetousness." By *conversation*, we are first to understand the disposition of the mind, then the actions of the life, both ought to be free from all inordinate love to, and endeavours after, more of this world than God is pleased to give unto us. By *covetousness* we are not to understand, as if a provident and prudential care for the things of this life were forbidden, or as if all endeavours to maintain our right to what God has given us were unlawful; but by *covetousness* is meant an eager and unsatiable desire after, accompanied with restless and unwearied endeavours for, the things of this life, proceeding from an undue valuation of them, and an inordinate love unto them. Learn hence, That as all sin in general; so covetousness in particular, is inconsistent with a christian conversation, according to the gospel. No sin at this day doth more stain the glory of christianity than this doth. Alas! the profligate lives of debauched persons, their blasphemies, adulteries, drunkenness, and such like, do not half the mischief to religion which this sin doth, because the persons guilty of it pretend to religion, which the other concern not themselves with. Observe, 2. A positive injunction, "Be content with those things that you have." Contentment is a gracious disposition of mind, whereby the christian rests satisfied with that portion of the good things of this life which the wisdom of God assigns him, without complaining of the little which God gives to him, or envying the much which God bestows on others. Yet know, that contentment with what we have, is not consistent with, nor exclusive of, an industrious diligence, and an honest moderate care to increase what we have, for ourselves and families. Honest industry is the command of God, and he has given us six days in seven for the exercise of it; but it is utterly exclusive of all covetous desires, of all anxious cares, of all priding ourselves in, and boasting of what we have received, contemning and despising others, a vanity which men of weak minds are only guilty of. Observe, 3. The argument to enforce this duty; "For he has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The words are a promise, a promise of God, a promise of his presence and providence to assure us of both, and that he will never leave us. He uses five negatives; *I will not leave thee, I will not, I will not, I will not forsake thee.* Where note; That the vehemency of

the expression, by the multiplication of the negative particles, is both an effect of divine condescension, and gives the utmost security to the faith of believers, that God will be present with them, and comfortably provide for them; so that the words are a strong reason to dehort from covetousness, and to exhort to contentedness: for having God present with us, to take care of, and provide for, us, we have all things in him, and a promise from him, that we shall not want any thing that is good and needful for us; only we must allow God this liberty, and give him leave to judge what is needful, and when it is needful. Observe, 4. That though the foregoing promise is made to Joshua, yet the apostle applies it to all believers, and draws comfort from it; "We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper." Here note, That whatsoever promise is made in particular to any one believer, if there be not some special reason which confines and ties it to his person, every believer may apply it to himself. This promise, which God made particularly to Joshua for his support, under that great difficulty in conquering the land of Canaan, the apostle here applies to the case and state of particular believers: *We may therefore boldly say, &c.* Believers having the same grounds that he had, may use the same confidence that he did, though our circumstances and his are not the same. All the promises of God's gracious presence made to the prophets and apostles of old, all believers may apply to themselves in their suffering state: *We may boldly say, &c.*

7 *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation;*

The best duty recommended to them, is respect to the spiritual guides, and ecclesiastical governors, whom God, by death, or persecution, at any time removes from them, and that is, to preserve their memory fresh amongst them as a precious treasure; "Remember them that have the rule over you." Secondly, To propound their holy conversation to their daily view, in a christian imitation of those evangelical graces and moral virtues, which were so orient and exemplary in their rulers' lives. Learn hence, 1. That it ought to be the care of the churches' guides to set before their people, and leave behind them, such an example of faith and holiness, as that it may be the duty of the church to remember them, and follow their example. Learn, 2. That it is the standing duty of that people whom God hath honored with the enjoyment of a spiritual guide and ruler, perseveringly to follow their faith in the soundness of it, and in the steadfastness of faith, and to imitate their conversation, by exemplifying those evangelical graces, and christian virtues, which did so orientally shine forth in the lives of their ministers.

8 *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

These words may be understood three ways; with respect to the person of Christ, to the office of Christ, and to the doctrine of Christ. 1. With respect to the person of Christ, he is eternal and immutable in every state of the church,

and in every condition of believers he is the same, and always will be the same in his divine person; he is, ever was, and ever will be, all in all, unto his church. 2. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" not only in respect of his person, but in regard of his office. The virtue of the legal sacrifice expired with the offering, but the precious oblation of Christ hath an everlasting efficacy to obtain full pardon for believers; his blood is as powerful to propitiate God, as if it were this day shed upon the cross. 3. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" in regard of his doctrine, that remains unchangeable and irrevocable. The gospel is the last revelation of the mind of God, made known by Jesus Christ, that ever will be laid before the world: such, therefore, as reject him and his doctrine, reject the last remedy, the only remedy, and must needs perish, without any possibility of recovery. Learn from the whole, That our Lord Jesus Christ was, from the beginning of the world, the immutable object of his church's faith, and the consideration of Jesus Christ in his eternity, immutability, and indeficiency in his power, as he is always the same, is the great encouragement of believers in the profession of their faith, and a mighty support under all the difficulties they meet with upon the account thereof; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines:—

There is an inference in these words from what was asserted in the former, concerning the immutability of Christ, and his doctrine: namely, thus: seeing that the doctrine of Christ taught by the apostles is as Christ himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," therefore the apostle exhorts them from being carried "about with divers and strange doctrines;" that is, in short, the doctrines of those that mingled Judaism and christianity together, by cleaving to the legal observation. Note here, The nature of the false doctrines, and what efficacy they have upon the minds of men; in themselves they are light and vain like the wind, tossing men up and down as the wind and the waves do the ship that wants ballast, turning them out of their course, and endangering their destruction; therefore, says the apostle, take heed that ye "be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines."

—For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

By meats here, understand disputes and controversies about the difference of meats: by grace, understand the doctrine of the gospel, and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit which fixes and establishes the heart, and keeps the christian steady and steadfast. Learn hence, That it is far better to have the heart filled with divine grace, than the head with disputes and controversies in religion: "It is good that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats." The reason is added, "They have not profited them that are occupied therein;" that is, to observe the doctrine concerning a religious distinction of meats, since the gospel has been entertained, is altogether unprofitable

and unavailable: yea, meats of themselves profited not those who observed them, even whilst the institutions concerning them were in force. Learn hence, That those who decline from the grace of God, as the only mean to establish their hearts in peace with him, do labor in that whereby they shall receive no advantage.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

These words are brought in as a farther reason why the christian Hebrews should not return to Judaism, or any other doctrine different from the gospel of Christ; *We christians, says the apostle, have an altar; that is, a sacrifice, a priest offered upon and sanctified by, the altar of the cross.* Note here, That the church of Christ under the New Testament has its altar, as well as the Old Testament dispensation had theirs. The altar which we have is Christ alone, and his sacrifice; for he was both priest, altar and sacrifice, all himself, and still continueth so to be. Note, 2 That this altar is every way sufficient in itself for the end of an altar; and therefore the introduction of any other sacrifice requiring a material altar, is derogatory to the sacrifice of Christ, and exclusive of him from being an altar. Observe next, The persons excluded from having any right unto, or expectation or benefit by this altar, namely, such as *serve the tabernacle*; that is, such as cleave still to the worship appointed for the Jewish tabernacle, and adhere to the Mosaic observations. They have no right to this altar by any divine institution, no right by virtue of their office, and relation to the tabernacle. Learn hence, That all privileges of what nature soever, without a participation of Christ, as the altar and sacrifice of his church, are of no advantage to them that enjoy them; "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle."

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the highpriest for sin, are burnt without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

As if the apostle had said, "As the beasts slain for atonement, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary, were not to be eaten by the priest, but to be burnt without the bounds of the camp of Israel: in like manner, Christ, when he was to be offered up to sanctify the people with his own blood, went without the gates of Jerusalem to suffer; signifying that as they rejected him as unworthy to live with them, so he departed from them, and their political and legal state. Accordingly, "Let us go forth unto him without the camp;" that is, let us go unto him from the Jewish state and ceremonial law, bearing his reproach of the cross, which must be expected by us. Observe here, That Jesus Christ in his suf-

fering did offer himself unto God: that the end of his offering was to sanctify the people: this he designed, and this he accomplished by his *own* blood, so called emphatically, partly in opposition to the sacrifice of the high-priest, which was the blood of bulls, and not their *own*; and partly to testify what our sanctification cost Christ, even his *own* blood. Observe farther, The circumstance of place where our Lord suffered it, it was *without the gate* of the city of Jerusalem; intimating, that he had now finally left the city and church of the Jews, and accordingly he denounced their destruction as he went out of the gate, Luke xxiii. 28, 29, 30. And by thus turning his back upon the temple, he plainly showed, that he had now put an end to all sacrificing in the temple, as unto divine acceptance; and by going out of the gate, he declared that his sacrifice and the benefits of it were not included in the church of the Jews, but equally extended unto the whole world: and by going out of the city as a malefactor, and dying an accursed death, he plainly declared that he died a sin-offering; that his death was a punishment for sin. Observe lastly, Our duty to go forth to him without the camp; this implies a relinquishing of all the privileges of the temple and city. 1. A turning our backs eternally upon all Jewish observations. 2. An acceptance of the merit of his sacrifice. 3. The owning of Christ under all that reproach and contempt that was cast upon him in his suffering without the gate, and not being ashamed of his cross. 4. In our conformity to him in self-denial and suffering: all which are comprised in this apostolical exhortation, "let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach." The sum is this, "That we must leave all to go forth to a crucified Saviour; and if we resolve so to do, we must expect and prepare to meet with all sorts of reproaches."

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

These words may be considered either relatively or absolutely: consider them with relation to the context, and their sense is this; "how cheerfully ought believers, according to the advice of the foregoing verse, *to go forth to Christ without the camp bearing his reproach*, when they consider their present state and condition, but they have no city here below, that was now the seat of divine worship, whereunto it was confined as the Jews did at Jerusalem, before the abolishment of their ceremonial worship; *but they seek one to come, even the heavenly Jerusalem*, where they shall worship God in his holy temple day and night?" Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and two things seem to be intended and designed by them. 1. That our condition in this world is very uncertain and unsettled, *we have no continuing city here*. 2. It implies a tendency to a future settling, and the hopes and expectations we have of a happier condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this world. Learn hence, 1. That the world never did, nor ever will, give a state of satisfactory rest unto all believers; it will not afford them a city of rest, hardly a place of refuge; they must therefore arise and depart, for this is not their rest. Learn, 2. That as God has prepared a city of rest for believers, so it is their duty to seek and secure it, and continually endeavour the attainment of it, in the way of his own appointment: *we have not, but we seek*.

15 By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, the fruit of *our* lips; giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Our apostle having, at the tenth verse, declared, that we christians have an altar, to wit Jesus Christ; here we are directed to offer a sacrifice, without which an altar is of no use: "by him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Where note, 1. Christians are to offer a sacrifice to God, and to none but God; no creature, angel, or saint, has any part in it: praise them we may, but offer a sacrifice of prayer or praise to them, we may not. Note 2. That the christian's sacrifice, which he presents to God, and none but him, is not propitiatory but gratulatory, a sacrifice of praise. We pretend to no expiation of sin, we owe that to a better sacrifice. What we offer is the fruit of our lips, not the fruit of our fields, or of our flocks, but of such lips as confess to his name. Note, 3. The time when, and the person by whom this sacrifice of praise is to be offered to God, and that is *continually*, constantly, morning and evening; not putting Almighty God off with less, under the gospel, than the Jews offered to him under the law, which was the morning and evening sacrifice; and all this by Christ; *by him let us offer*, by him who is our peace may we find access. It is his merit and mediation that crowns our sacrifice, and obtains acceptance for it. Note, 4. Another sacrifice especially recommended to our care, as exceeding acceptable and well-pleasing unto God, and that is the sacrifice of almsgiving, beneficence and bounty, doing all the good we can, and communicating to the relief of such as want; *but to do good, &c.* As if the apostle had said, "take heed you do not put God off with the fruit of your lips, the prayers and praises which cost you little, but now he calls for the labor of your hands, and for a part to be given to him in his poor members of what he has given to you; therefore be sure you forget not to do good and communicate, *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, with none better pleased than this, pleased with none without this; intimating, 1. That it is dangerous to the souls of men, when attendance unto one duty is abused, to countenance the neglect of others; when men give God daily a sacrifice of prayer and praise, but withhold from him in his members the sacrifice of almsgiving; they give him the fruit of their lips, which cost them nothing; *but to do good and communicate*, which will cost them something, this they forget. 2. That such works and duties as are peculiarly useful to men are peculiarly acceptable unto God? *With such sacrifices God is well pleased*.

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves. For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.

Two things are here observable: 1. The minister's duty towards his people. 2. The people's duty towards their ministers. In the former, note, 1. The duty required, *to rule, to watch*: God makes the bishops and pastors of his church here guiding rulers in church affairs; they rule not with rigor, but with lenity and benignity; they watch over them, that they may guide and lead them with rational guidance and conduct. Note, 2. The subject of this ruling power and authority, it is not over their estates, but their persons, particularly and principally their souls. *They watch for your souls*; as Jacob watched over Laban's, so do the ministers watch over Christ's flock, by day and night. Note, 3. The great engagement and obligation that lies upon them *thus to rule, and thus to watch*; they must give an account, that is, of their work and office, of their duty and discharge; there is a great shepherd, a chief shepherd, as Christ is called the prince of shepherds, to whom all inferior shepherds must give an account of their office, of their work, and of the flock committed to their charge. Note, 4. The different accounts that will be given by the ministers of God at the great day, some with joy, others with grief. It is matter of the greatest joy to us when we find any souls thriving under our ministry, and blessing God for the benefit they find by it: but on the other hand, the sadness of our hearts under the barrenness and unprofitableness of many under our ministerial labors, is not easily to be expressed. O God! with what sighing, with what groaning, with what inward heaviness and mourning, our accounts unto Christ are now given and accompanied, thou only knowest, and will make manifest at the great day. Observe, 2. The people's duty declared with reference to their spiritual guides and rulers, and that is, to *obey them*, and submit themselves; *Obey them that rule over you, and submit yourselves*: obey their doctrine, and submit to their discipline, but neither with a blind and implicit obedience: obey their doctrine, *teaching you all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them*; and submit to their rule whilst it is exercised in the name of Christ and according to his institution. Learn hence, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ, as supreme Head of his church, has ordered and ordained that there shall be officers of his church, to guide and teach, to rule and watch over it to the end of the world. Learn, 2. That the due obedience of the church in all its members unto the rulers of it, in the discharge of their office and duty, is the best means of its edification, and an happy cause of order and peace in the whole body: *Obey them, &c.*

18 Pray for us. For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

In these words observe, 1. A request made by the apostle to these Hebrews for prayer; *pray for us*: the prayers of the meanest saints may be useful to the greatest apostles both with respect to their persons, and the discharge of their office. Observe, 2. The ground which gave him confidence to ask their prayers, and assurance that he should receive them; *we trust we have a good conscience in all things*. Behold here with what modesty and humility the apostle speaks of him-

self, even in things of which he had the highest and fullest assurance; *we trust we have a good conscience in all things*. *Quest.* What is a good conscience? *Ans.* A good conscience is a conscience enlightened by the word of God, a conscience awakened by the Spirit of God, a conscience purified and pacified by the blood of Christ, a conscience universally tender of all God's commands. Observe, 3. The testimony given of his having a good conscience, *willing in all things to live honestly*; a resolution and will, accompanied with constant endeavours to live honestly, is a fruit and evidence of a good conscience; the word *willing* denotes readiness, resolution, and endeavour. Observe, 4. How he presses for an interest in their prayers, with respect to his present circumstances, and his design of coming to them; *I beseech you rather, &c.*

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle having in the former verse desired their prayers for him, in this verse he adds thereunto his own prayer for them, a most glorious and excellent prayer, inclosing the whole mystery of divine grace in its original, and the way of its communication by Jesus Christ, a prayer evidently proceeding from a spirit full of faith and love. Observe here, 1. The title assigned and given to God. *The God of peace*. But why the God of peace, rather than the God of power, or the God of grace, or the God of glory? Because the divine power was not put forth in raising Christ from the dead until God was pacified: justice incensed exposed him to death; but justice appeared freed him from the dead. Observe, 2. The titles assigned and given to Christ, and they seem to express his threefold office; of a prophet, in that he styles him the *great Shepherd of the sheep*; of a priest, that he is said to *be brought again from the dead, by the blood of the everlasting covenant*; and of a king, in that he is styled *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Note, Christ is a shepherd, that great shepherd of the sheep; a shepherd, because as a shepherd he rules and governs his people, as a shepherd he leads them by his heavenly doctrine and instructive example, as a shepherd feeds them with his word, yea, with his precious body and blood; he is styled not *the* but *that* shepherd, namely, that was promised of old, the object and the hope of the church from the beginning; and *that great shepherd*, because great in his person, great in his power, great in his undertaking, great in his glory and exaltation, above the whole creation; and the *great shepherd of his sheep*, because they are his own, a little flock in the midst of wolves, which could never be preserved, were it not by the power and care of this *great shepherd*. Observe, 3. The work assigned to God, as a God of peace, he *brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ*: Christ is said to raise himself in regard of immediate efficiency, but God the

Father is said to raise him in regard of sovereign authority. God the Father, to whose justice the debt was due, by letting Christ out of the prison of the grave, acknowledged himself satisfied; the God of peace, to evidence that peace was now perfectly made, brought Christ again from the dead. But how did he do this? It is answered *by the blood of the everlasting covenant*, that is, by the blood of Christ himself, which ratified and confirmed the covenant. Observe, 4. The things prayed for, 1. Perfection in every good work, to do the will of God; it is not an absolute perfection that is here intended, but a readiness to every good work or duty of obedience. 2. *To work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight*: by this understand the actual gracious performance of every known duty. Note, That the efficacy and actual efficiency of divine grace, in and unto every act of obedience and duty, is here prayed for, and relied upon. Observe, lastly, A doxology, or ascription of all glory to Christ, *to whom be glory, &c.* All grace is from him, and therefore all glory to be ascribed to him: the whole dispensation of grace will issue in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in a few words.

23 Know ye, that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty: with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24 Salute all them, that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

Our apostle had shut up and closed his epistle before: he adds these verses by way of postscript: now he begs of them kindly to accept, and wisely to improve the exhortations given them in this epistle, wherein he had handled many weighty matters in a few words. He lets them know that Timothy was set at liberty, and probably gone forth to preach the gospel, with whom, if he returned shortly, he hoped to come unto them, being desirous to see them: and thus, with salutations to them all in general, and to church-governors in particular, both for himself and the christians in Italy, he wishes them an increase of all grace, and an abundant sense of the love and favor of God in Christ; saying, *Grace be with you all. Amen.*

THE
GENERAL EPISTLE

OF

S A I N T J A M E S .

The epistle of St. James, together with the six following epistles, have gone under the name of catholic epistles for many ages, because, say some, they were not written to a particular city or country, as most of St. Paul's epistles were, but to all the christian Jews abroad, dispersed into several countries throughout the world, whose suffering condition rendered the consolation which this epistle affords very needful and necessary, as being greatly supporting.

The author and penman of it was St. James, commonly called James the Less, and our Lord's brother the son of Alphaeus, styled also James the Just, and bishop of Jerusalem; consequently its authority cannot reasonably be questioned.

The design of the epistle is, first, to establish the christian Jews in a well ordered religious course of life, and to fortify them against suffering from the unbelieving Jews. Secondly, to correct a pernicious error about the sufficiency of a naked faith and empty profession, without practice, &c. which spring from a misunderstanding and abuse of the way of justification by faith: the design of St. Paul, in Ep. Rom. (of which we have the same in Acts iv. 12.) was to manifest that Christ was the only one, and christianity the only way, to set us criminals clear with God, so as to bring us to himself in glory. And St. James shows us, that it is not the bare belief and profession of the christian faith, but the power and practical improvement of it, that must make or render it saving to us.

CHAPTER I.

JAMES, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Observe here, 1. The author and penman of this epistle described by his name. James; by his office, *a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, by a special office, as a dispenser of his gospel. It is the highest honor that can be conferred upon the greatest person, to be the servant of Christ, especially in the quality of an ambassador. Note also, How St. James styles himself the servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some read the words conjoined, others, disjoined; conjoined thus, *James, a servant of Jesus Christ, who is God and Lord*; and thus the fathers urged this text against the Arians, to prove the Divinity and Godhead of Christ; others read the words disjoined, thus, *James, a servant of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This latter reading seems most natural, and less strained, and affords an argument for proving the Divinity of Christ no less weighty than the former; for as the Father is Lord as well as Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ is God as well as the Father, and God will have all to honor the Son as they honor the Father. Observe, 2. The persons to whom this epistle is directed, *to the twelve tribes scattered abroad*; that is, to such and so many of the Jews as were converted to christianity, and were now dispersed and scattered into several countries and nations; to them is St. James excited and moved by God to write and direct this excellent epistle. Here note, by the way, these three things: 1. That God's own people in general may be dispersed and driven abroad from their own countries and habitations; it is no new thing to suffer in this kind, Heb. xi. 38. those, of whom the world was not worthy, wandered in deserts and mountains, woods and caves. Note, 2. The severity of God towards this people of the Jews, in particular; they were a sinning people, a sinful people, weary of God, sick of his worship, severe to his Son; and God grows sick and weary of them, and according to his threatening, Deut. xxviii. 64, scattered them from one end of the earth unto the other, among all people. Lord how dangerous and unsafe it is to rest upon, and glory in our outward privileges! None had more, none had greater privileges than the Jews, yet for their sins the land spewed them out and God dispersed them, yea, made them an hissing and a by-word among the nations. Note, 3. The tenderness of God's love and care towards the faithful amongst them in, and under this dispersion, he stirreth up St. James to write to the scattered tribes, and to apply seasonable comforts to them, and to all christians with them in a suffering state, which accordingly he does throughout this whole epistle.

2 My brethren; count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.—

Our apostle's design in this epistle being to support the believing Jews under their great sufferings for the cause of christianity, he first acquaints them with the nature of those sufferings which they might expect to fall under for the same; he calls them *temptations*, that is trials, they are correcting trials for sin, and they are experimental trials of the truth of grace, and of the strength of grace; the affliction of God's children are trials castigatory, probatory trials. Note, 2. The advice given in these trials to count it joy, all joy, when they fall into temptations, yea, into divers temptations; not that afflictions are in themselves joyous, the temptation or trial is not matter of joy, but of sorrow and heaviness considered in itself, but because of their good effects and sweet fruits, in proving our faith and increasing our patience, but mark; he says, *when ye fall into temptations*, not when ye run yourselves into them, or draw them upon yourselves; we lose the comfort of our sufferings, when, either by guilt or by imprudence, we bring them upon ourselves. Note here, That trials bow evil and afflictive so ever in themselves, and in their own nature, yet administer occasion of great joy to sincere christians, Rom. v. 3. *We glory in tribulations*; it denotes the highest joy, even to exultation and ravishment; there is joy resulting from the consideration of the glory that redounds to God, of the honor done to us, of the benefit done to the church, and to ourselves, by confirming the faith of others; evidencing the sincerity of grace to ourselves, preparing us for, and giving us a swifter passage to heaven. Note, 3. Our apostle's argument to press them to joy and rejoice under their afflictions; and this is taken, 1. From the nature of them, they are trials of faith. 2. From the effect and fruit of them, they beget or work patience. Learn hence, 1. That the afflictions which the people of God meet with, are trials of all their graces, but especially of their faith. This is a radical grace: we live by faith, we work by love; now if all grace, satan has a particular spite against the christian's faith, and God has a particular care for the preservation and perfection of it, *knowing the trial of your faith worketh patience*: that is, it administers matter and occasion for patience, and by the blessing of God upon it, it produces and increases patience; often trial puts us upon frequent exercises, and the frequent exercise of grace strengthens the habits of grace: consequently the more our trials are, the stronger will our patience be: *knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience*: it follows, ver. 4.

—But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

That is, "Let your patience and perseverance under sufferings resolutely continue and hold out to the end;" this the apostle urges, because some persons bore out the first brunt and onset of persecution, but being exercised with diversity and length of trials, they fainted. Now, as if the apostle had said, "if we will be complete christians, our patience must run parallel with our sufferings: thus shall we be perfect, not with an absolute perfection, but with a

perfection of duration and perseverance." Learn, That afflictions sanctified by God do tend exceedingly, not only to the increasing, but perfecting of a christian's patience.

Quest. But when has patience its perfect work, making the christian perfect and entire? *Ans.* When there is a strong faith, as the foundation of that patience; when there is a christian fortitude and courage, enabling us to sustain trials; when there is an exact knowledge of our duty to bear afflictions with a meek and quiet spirit, with a forbearing and forgiving spirit, yea, with a praying spirit, which includes the height of charity, under the highest provocations; in a word, when there is found with us an entire trust and dependency upon God's power and promise, and a cheerful submission, and quiet resignation of our wills to his most holy, wise, and righteous will, in and under the sharpest trials and heaviest afflictions that can befall us; then has patience had its perfect work, and the suffering christian, in a gospel qualified sense, may be said to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind, and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Observe here, 1. A truth necessarily supposed, that every man, more or less, lacketh wisdom to enable him patiently to bear, and prudently to manage, the afflictions of this life; and that there is need of great wisdom to enable us to glorify God in a suffering hour. Observe, 2. The person directed to, in order to the obtaining of divine wisdom, for the patient bearing of afflictions; *let him ask it of God.* He that wants wisdom let him go to the fountain of wisdom, God gives not his blessings ordinarily without asking, and the best of blessings may be had for asking; of the two it is much better to ask and not receive, than to receive and not ask. Observe, 3. A great encouragement for all that lack wisdom to go unto God for it, drawn first from the bountiful manner of his giving, *he giveth liberally*, without upbraiding. Secondly, from the certainty of the gift, *It shall be given him.* God's liberality in giving what we ask, and many times more than we ask, yea, more than we can either ask or think, is a mighty encouragement to faith and fervency in prayer, to perseverance and importunity in praying; especially if we consider what is added, that as God giveth liberally, so he upbraideth not; that is, he neither upbraids them with their frequency and importunity in asking, nor yet with their great unworthiness of receiving; but instead thereof, subjoins an assurance of granting. *It shall be given him.* It is a mighty encouragement to pray, when we consider there is not only bounty in God, but bounty engaged by promise. Observe, 4. The condition required on our part must be observed and fulfilled, as well as the promise made on God's part: *but let*

him ask in faith, nothing wavering. *Quest.* What is it to ask in faith? *Ans.* The person praying must be in a state of believing; the petitioner must be a believer; the thing asked for must be an object of faith, by being the subject-matter of some promise; a fervent prayer for that which God never promised is a foul sin. Again, the manner of asking must be faithful, with a pure intention of God's glory, with cheerful submission to God's will, with fiducial recumbency upon God's promise, with great fervency and warmth of spirit; he that will prevail with Jacob, must wrestle with Jacob for a blessing. Observe, 5. The evil and danger of wavering and doubting in the matter of prayer; and the evil of it is this, that it is perplexing and tormenting to the mind: *he that wavereth is driven and tossed like a wave of the sea:* an elegant similitude to set out the nature of doubting, when upon our knees in duty. And the danger of it is expressed, *let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*—Note, That doubtful and unbelieving persons when they pray, though they receive something, yet they can expect nothing. Let him not think to receive any thing; if he does, it is more than could be expected, because more than God has promised. Doubting in prayer is a provocation to God; and when a man's prayer is a provocation, how can he expect his prayer should be either heard or answered? *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

8 A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

By a *double-minded man*, we are to understand one that is divided in his own thoughts between two different ways and opinions, as if he had two minds, or two souls; many such there were in the apostle's days, judaizing brethren, that sometimes would sort with the Jews, sometimes with the christians: many such there are in our days, divided betwixt God and the world, between holiness and sin: like a needle between two load-stones, always wavering to and again, pointing frequently to both, but never fixed to either: such a man, says our apostle, *is unstable in all his ways*; that is, in all his actions. Learn hence, That whilst men's minds are divided between God and their lusts, they must necessarily lead very anxious, uncertain, and unstable lives, always fluctuating in great anxiety and uncertainty; for he is always at odds with himself, and in perpetual variance with his own reason: where men's minds are double, their ways must necessarily be unstable.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted;

10 But the rich; in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways:

Our apostle having finished his necessary digression concerning prayer, in the foregoing verses, returns now to his former argument, concerning bearing affliction with joy; and urges a strong reason here to enforce the duty, *Let the brother of low degree*: that is, such a christian as is brought low by persecution and sufferings for Christ, let him rejoice that God has exalted him, and made him rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom: nothing is more certain, than that the greatest abuses and sufferings for Christ, are an honor and exaltation to us; he adds, *But let the rich rejoice in that he is made low*, that is, when he loses any thing for Christ; as if the apostle had said, "Let the poor christian rejoice, in that he is spiritually exalted, and the rich man rejoice, in that he is spiritually humbled; a rich man's humility is his glory." Observe next, The apostle rendereth a reason why the rich man should have a lowly mind, in the midst of his flourishing condition, because all the pomp and grandeur of riches fades like a flower; and he himself also is beautiful, but fading; fair, but vanishing: and he pursues this similitude of a flower in the eleventh verse, showing, that as the flower fadeth presently before the heat of the scorching sun, so the rich man fades, and all his riches are both transitory and passing. Learn hence, That it ought to comfort a christian that suffers loss for Christ by persecution, to consider, that the things which he loseth for the sake of Christ, are things of a fading nature, which could not have been kept long by him, had they not been rent from him; but that which he secures by his perseverance, is an everlasting treasure, reserved in the heavens for him; by parting with that which he could not keep, he makes sure of that which he can never lose; well therefore may the rich man rejoice in his humiliation; *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, and the rich that he is made low.*

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

In these words the apostle lays down a forcible argument, to persuade christians to bear sufferings and persecutions with invincible patience, drawn from the blessedness which attends such a condition: *blessed is the man that endureth temptations, &c.* Note here, 1. The character of the person whom God pronounceth blessed; namely, not the man that escapeth temptations and trials in this life, but he that bears them with courage and constancy, with patience and submission. Note, 2. A description of that ample reward which shall be conferred upon such sufferers; *they shall receive the crown of life*: where observe, the felicity of a future state is set forth by a crown to denote the transcendency and perfection of it; and by a crown of life, to denote the perpetuity and duration of it. Note, 3. Here is an intimation of the time when this transcendent reward shall be dispensed, namely, when the suffering christian has finished his course with patience and perseverance: *when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.* Learn from the whole, That a patient and constant enduring of trials and afflictions in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with a crown of blessedness and immortality in the life to come: *blessed is the man that endureth temptations, &c.*

13 Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

There are three sorts of temptations spoken of in scripture, temptations of seduction, temptations of suggestion, and temptations of affliction: the last were spoken of, in the former verses. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*: the second sort are spoken of in this verse, *let no man say, when he is tempted to sin, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted by it, neither tempteth he any man to it.* Note here, 1. That God is not the author of sin, nor tempts any man to the commission of it; if he did, our evil actions could not be properly sins, nor justly punishable by God: for no man can be justly punishable for that which he cannot help, and no man can help that which he is compelled unto: and it is very unreasonable to suppose that the same person should both tempt and punish. To tempt unto sin, is contrary to the holiness of God: and after that to chastise for complying with the temptation, is contrary to the justice of God; God then is not the author of the sins of men. Note, 2. That men are very apt to charge their sins upon God, and to lay their faults at his door. *Let no man say so*; intimating, that men are very ready and apt to say so; and that it is not only a fault, but an impious assertion, to say that God tempts any man to sin. *Let no man say*; he speaks of it as a thing to be rejected with the utmost detestation, a thing so impious and dishonorable to God. Note, 3. The reason and argument, which the apostle brings against this impious suggestion, *God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man*; that is, he cannot be drawn to any thing that is evil himself, and therefore it cannot be imagined he should have any inclination or design to seduce others: he can have no temptation to sin from his own inclination, for he has a perfect antipathy against it; and there is no allurements in sin to stir up any inclination in God toward it, for it is nothing but crookedness and deformity: and how can he be supposed to entice men to that which his own nature does abominate and abhor? For none tempt others to be bad but those who are first so themselves. Inference, 1. No doctrine then ought to be asserted, or can be maintained, which is contrary to the natural notions which men have of God, as touching his holiness, justice, and goodness. Inference, 2. If God tempts not us, let us never tempt him: this we do, when we tempt his providence, expecting its protection in an unwarrantable way: as when we are negligent in our calling, and yet depend upon God's providence to provide for our families, which is to approve our sloth, and to countenance our sloth. Note, 4. The true account which our apostle gives of the prevalence and efficacy of temptation upon men, it is their own innate corruption, and vicious inclination, which doth reduce them to it. Every

man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed. Mark, He does not ascribe it to the devil; he may and does present the object, and by his instruments may and does solicit for our compliance: his temptations have a moving and exciting power, but can have no prevailing efficacy but from our own voluntary consent; it is our own lusts closing with his temptations which produce the sin; for God's commanding us to resist the devil, supposes that his temptations are not irresistible. Learn hence, That man's worst enemy, and most dangerous tempter, is the corruption of his own heart and nature; because it is the inmost enemy, and because it is an enemy that is least suspected: a man's lust is himself, and nature teaches us not to mistrust ourselves; what reason have we then perpetually to pray, that God would not lead us into temptation, but keep us by his good providence out of the way of temptation, because we carry about us such lusts and inclinations as will betray us to sin when powerful temptations are presented to us: there is no such way then to disarm temptations, and take away the power of them, as by mortifying our lusts and subduing our vicious inclinations. Note, 5. The account which our apostle gives of the pedigree, birth, and growth of sin: when *lust*, that is, our corrupt inclinations, and vicious desires, have conceived, that is, gained the consent and approbation of the will, it bringeth forth and engageth the soul in sin: and sin when it is finished in the deliberate outward action, and especially when, by customary practice, it becomes habitual, bringeth forth death, the wages of sin; the first approaches of sin are usually modest, but afterwards it makes bolder attempts: our wisdom is to resist the first beginnings of sin, for then we have most strength, and sin least; to suppress sin in the thoughts, to mortify lust in the heart, before it break forth in the life, and at last is-ue and terminate in death: *for when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.*

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

As if he had said, be not deceived about the causes of good and evil; sin and death are certainly from ourselves. Let us therefore never ascribe either our sins or our temptations unto God: but every good and perfecting gift is of God's free donation and grace, even from above, from the Father of lights, (both of the light of nature, and the light of grace,) *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* from good to evil; he is unchangeable in his nature and being, and in his attributes and properties." Learn hence, 1. That we are very prone to err in our notions and apprehensions, as touching the authors of good and evil; too ready to conclude either God or satan to be the author of the sin we commit, and ourselves the authors of the good we do: *do not err, my beloved brethren*, in this matter. Learn, 2. That as sin, which is nothing but evil and imperfection, is not from God, but wholly from ourselves, and our own corrupt hearts; so whatever is good, perfect, or praiseworthy, is wholly from God, and not from ourselves; we are neither by nature inclined to that which is good, nor

are we able of ourselves to perform it; both inclination and ability are from God, who is the fountain of goodness and perfection, and can never cease to be so, for with him is *no variableness nor shadow of turning*. Learn, 3. That God being the infinite Father of lights, he hath no eclipses or decreases, no shadows or mixtures of darkness, but always shines with a settled and constant brightness, always is, and was, and to all eternity will be, immutably the same, and never undergo the least change, either of his essence and being, or of his properties and perfections: "with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." As nothing argues greater imperfection than inconstancy and change, so the greater and more glorious the divine perfections are, the greater blemish and imperfection would mutability be; were God changeable, it would darken all his other perfections, and raise the foundation of all religion; for who could either fear or love, trust or serve that being who is fickle and inconstant! what security could there be in his promises? and who would regard the terror of his threatenings, were he not invariable, and without shadow of changing.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

These words are very expressive of four things, namely, of the efficient cause, the impulsive cause, the instrumental and the final cause of our regeneration. Observe, 1. The author and efficient cause of regeneration; he that is the *Father of lights*, mentioned in the foregoing verse, begat us. Note, That God, and God alone, is the prime efficient cause of regeneration; it is objectively in the creature, it is efficiently from God: *Christ* appropriates this work to God, Matt. xi. 23. The scriptures appropriate it to God, Psalm xxxiv. 9. called his saints, and God himself appropriates it to himself, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. "I will put my spirit within them, &c." Observe, 2. The impelling, impulsive, and moving cause of regeneration, *his own will*: of his own will begat he us; by his mere motion, induced by no cause, but the goodness of his own breast, of his own will, and not naturally, as he begat his Son from eternity; of his own will, and not necessarily, by a necessity of nature, as the sun enlightens and calwens, but by an arbitrariness of grace; of his own will, and not by any obligation from the creature; by the will of God, and not for the merit and desert of man. Observe, 3. The instrumental cause of our regeneration, the word of truth, that is, the gospel, which is the great instrument in God's hand for producing the new birth in the souls of his people. Here note, the gospel is called *truth* by way of excellency, *the word of truth*, that is, the true word; and also by way of eminency, as containing an higher and more excellent truth than any other divine truth; the gospel declares the truth of all the Old Testament types. Observe, 4. The final cause of our new birth, *that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures*, that is, of his new creatures, the chief among his creatures: the first fruits were the best of every kind to be offered to God, and were given as God's peculiar right and portion; thus the new creature is God's peculiar portion taken out of mankind, which being consecrated to God by a new begetting, they ought to serve him with a new spirit, new thankfulness, as lying under the highest obligations unto new obedience.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

As if the apostle had said, "Seeing God has put such an honor upon his word, the word of his truth, as by it to beget us to himself; therefore be swift to hear it, prize it highly, and wait upon the means of grace readily and diligently; but be *slow to speak*, that is to utter your judgments of it, much more *slow* in undertaking to be a teacher and dispenser of it; also *slow to wrath*, or to contentions about the words and points of divinity: wrath and passion hinders all profit by the word, either preached, read, or discoursed about; and a forcible reason is rendered why all wrath should be suppressed, because the *wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*; that is, man's sinful anger will never put him upon doing those things that are just and righteous in God's account: or there is a figure in the words; more is intended than expressed; the meaning is, that the wrath of man is so far from working the righteousness of God, that it worketh all manner of evil." Learn hence, that man's anger is usually evil, and very unrighteous; anger justly moderated, is a duty, but such a duty as is very difficultly managed without sin; rash, causeless, and immoderate anger, gratifies the devil, dishonors God, discredits religion, wounds our own peace.

21 Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own-selves.

These words are a direction given for the right hearing of, and due profiting by the word of God. In order to the former, our apostle shows, 1. What we must lay aside, namely, *all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*; that is, all sensual lusts, and angry passions. And, 2. *Receive with meekness, calmness, and submission, the ingrafted word*; that is, the word planted and sown in our hearts by the hands of Christ's ministers; *which is able to save our souls*, that is, from hell and damnation; yet does not the word save of itself, but God by the word; the power of the word is not intrinsical, but extrinsical, derived from God, whose the word is. Learn hence, 1. That as all sin in general, so anger, wrath, and malice in particular, ought to be laid aside by us at all times, but then especially when we go forth to hear the word of God, Learn, 2. That the word must be received with all meekness of spirit, if we would hear it with profit and advantage; there must not be found with us either a wrathful fierceness, or a proud stubbornness, or a contentious wrangling, but humility and brokenness of spirit, docibility and tractableness of spirit, under the word, otherwise all our hearing will be an addition to our sin, and an aggravation of our condemnation. Learn, 3. That the word must not only be apprehended and received by us, but implanted and en-

grafted in us, or it will never be able to save our souls; "re-
ceive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Quest. But how may we know when the word is an ingrafted word? Ans. When it is a fruitful word, Col. i. 6. "the word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit." Learn, 4. Though hearing of the word be a duty, yet it must not be rested in; be hearers, but not only hearers: alas! bare hearing of the word is the least part of christianity, and the lightest part of christianity; though we be intelligent hearers, though we be very diligent and attentive hearers, though we be affectionate hearers, yea, though we make great proficiency in knowledge by our hearing, yet all this will deceive us at last, if nothing farther be added to it. Therefore, learn, 5. That the doers of the word are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in God's account: not to hear at all is atheistical, and produces no religion; to hear, and not to know and be affected with what we hear, is stoical, and breeds a blind religion; to know, and not to do, is Pharisaical, and breeds a lame religion; the practical hearer is the only approved hearer in the account of God: "a good understanding have they that do thy commandments," Psal. cxl. Lastly, without this, all our hearing is but self-deceiving; and this is the most shameful deceit, the most dangerous deceit, and, if timely care and endeavours prevent not, an irreparable and eternal deceit: "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own-selves."

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

In these words our apostle declares the vanity and unprofitableness of a bare hearing of the word, by a similitude taken from a man looking in a glass; though he sees in a glass his own natural face, which he was born with, whilst he is looking in it, yet no sooner is he gone from it, but he forgets the figure and fashion of his own countenance, having had only a slight and transient view of it; so, in like manner, the preaching of the word has not an awakening influence, and leaves not an abiding impression upon most hearers, who are willing to be deceived, and to deceive themselves, by a bare and naked hearing of divine truths. Learn hence, That the word of God is a glass, or as a glass, in which the soul's complexion may be seen: in this glass we may see both God and ourselves. Christ's beauty, and our own deformity, both our disease and our remedy. Learn, 2. That the glass of the word must not be carelessly and cursorily looked into, with a slight and superficial glance, but if we desire to have all the spots and blemishes of our souls thoroughly discovered, we must keep it before our eyes continually, and daily dress our souls by it.

23 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the word of God, particularly the gospel, it is called *liberty*, a *law of liberty*, and a *perfect law of liberty*; partly because it calleth us to a state of liberty and freedom, and teacheth us the way to true liberty, and offers us the assistance of a spirit of liberty; partly because it spareth none, but dealeth with all persons freely, without respect of persons; the gospel or word of God, then is a law of liberty. Observe, 2. The duty here required with reference to this law of liberty, namely, to look into it, and continue therein, to look into it with an accurate and narrow inspection, as the disciples did into Christ's sepulchre, and as the angels look into the mysteries of salvation, 1 Pet. 4. 12. To look into the law of liberty implies, deepness of meditation, and liveliness of impression; and continuing therein, imports perseverance in the knowledge, faith and obedience of the gospel, in order to our fruitfulness in good works: "if ye abide in me, and my word abide in you, (says Christ) ye shall bring forth much fruit." John xv. 5. 7. Observe, 3. The reward promised and insured to such as look into the gospel, that law of liberty, that continue in it, and are doers of the work required by it, *they are blessed in their deed*: there is a blessedness annexed to the doing of that work which the word of God requires: yet mark the distinctness of scripture phrase; the apostle doth not say, that the doers of the word shall be blessed for their deed; but in the deed it is an evidence of our blessedness, not the ground of it, the way, though not the cause of blessedness.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Observe here, 1. That there have been, are, and ever will be, many professors of religion, who seem, and only seem to be religious. Observe, 2. That an unbridled and ungoverned tongue, is a certain sign and evidence of a man's being only seemingly religious; it seems there were many unbridled tongues in the apostle's days, amongst the professors of christianity, which put the apostle upon spending the whole third chapter about the government of the tongue: the grace and word of God are bridles, which we are to put on, to restrain us from sinful and excessive speaking. Observe, 3. That such a man as pretends to religion, and seems to be religious, without bridling and governing of his tongue, all his religion is but vain and self-deceiving: *Vain*, that is empty; in show and appearance only, nothing in truth and in reality. Or *vain*, that is, ineffectual; it doth not perform its office, it does not answer its end, their religion will do them no good, stand them in no stead; that faith, that hope, those prayers, which will consist with the reigning evils of the tongue, are vain and self-deceiving; that religion which cannot drive the devil out of the tongue will never prove Christ to be in the heart; that religion which cannot tame the tongue, will never save the soul; though some evils of the tongue may consist with grace, yet an unbridled tongue cannot consist with it; deceit in our lips is as bad as falsehood in our dealings, and violence in our tongue as bad as violence in our hands; and if thy religion be vain, all is vain to thee; thy hopes are vain, thy comforts are vain. The sum is, that an unbridled tongue, in a religious professor, is enough to prove that his religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Observe here, 1. That the apostle doth not set down the whole of religion, but an eminent part and instance of it only: *pure religion is this*, that is, this is the practice of religion, without which all religion is vain; this is an eminent fruit, which springs from the root of pure religion; if pure religion live in the heart the fruits of pious charity will appear in the life. Observe, 2. The acts of charity, when they flow from a religious principle, do commence acts of *ἑσπράσια*, *worship*; To visit the widow and fatherless, considered in itself, may be only an act of indifferency and civil courtesey; but when it is performed as an act of duty, in obedience to the command of God, or as an act of mercy and pity, for the supply of their wants by our purse, or for the comforting of their hearts by our counsel; being thus done out of conscience, it is as acceptable to God as an act of worship, *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. Observe, 3. How the apostle joins charity and purity together: a pretence to the one without the other discovers the insincerity of both; the relieving of the afflicted, and a life unspotted must go together, or God accepts of neither: "pure religion is this, to visit the widow, and keep himself unspotted from the world;" that is, from the defilement and pollutions of the world by the lusts thereof; plainly intimating, 1. That the world is a filthy place, a dirty defiling thing, What company almost can you come into, generally speaking, that is not sooty and leprous? How hard is it to converse with them, and not be polluted and infected by them? even as hard as it is to touch pitch and not be defiled. 2. That it is our duty, and ought to be our daily endeavour, to keep ourselves as unstained by, and unspotted from, the world as we can: and that we may escape the pollutions which are in the world through lust, let us be instant in prayer, diligent in our watch, that if we cannot make the world better, that shall never make us worse. 3. That we should more and more grow weary of the world, and long for heaven, where there is nothing that defileth, where we shall have pure hearts, pure company, every thing agreeable, and this not for a few years, but for everlasting ages. Lord! when shall we ascend on high to live with thee in purity?

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle's design in this chapter is two-fold, namely, first, to admonish against that common sin of respecting persons in religious matters because of worldly advantages. Secondly, to caution and warn against that fatal opinion of the sufficiency of a bare and naked faith, in order to salvation, without the presence and testimony of works to recommend it to God's acceptance. As touching the former of these, our apostle thus speaks:

MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place: and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

For the better understanding of these words, let us consider, 1. What the apostle doth not; 2. What he doth, condemn. 3. What is here not condemned, namely, 1. The paying of civil respect to all persons, according to their character, and a different respect to persons, according to their different qualities: honor is to be given to whom honor is due, and the rich are entitled to respect; and that they receive it from us is no ways displeasing unto God. 2. Much less does our apostle here speak against honoring magistrates, or paying respect to our ecclesiastical or civil rulers and governors in their courts of judicature: civility, yea, christianity calls for outward respect and reverence to them that are above us, especially if in authority over us. But positively, that which is here condemned, 1. In general, is partiality in our respect to persons in religious matters, for in the things of God all are equal; the rich and the poor stand upon the same terms of advantage; external relations and differences bear no weight at the gospel beam; therefore, to disesteem any of the poor members of Christ, as such, is to disesteem and undervalue Christ himself. Holiness is not less lovely to him, because clothed with rags, nor unholiness less loathsome because it goes in a gay coat with a gold ring. Wickedness is abominable to Christ, and ought to be so to us, though it sits upon a throne, and holiness shines in his eye, (and may it be in ours also,) though it lies upon a dunghill: 2. That which seems here to be condemned in particular, is the accepting of persons in judgment, upon the account of outward advantages, proceeding not according to the merits of the cause, in their ecclesiastical and civil judicatures, but according to external respects. Our apostle would by no means have them pay a deference to a rich man in judgment because of his riches, or gay attire: nor to pass over the poor saints in their assemblies, for want of the gold ring, and goodly apparel, seeing their faith clothed them with a greater and a more valuable glory, which renders them more honorable than any riches or gay clothing could do. And mark the apostle's vehement expostulation, which carries with it the force of a severe reprehension; "Are ye not partial, and become judges of evil thoughts?" As if he had said, Are ye not condemned in yourselves, and convinced in your own consciences that you do evil? Are ye not become judges of evil thoughts, that is, do you not pass judgment from your evil thoughts in thinking the rich worthy of respect in judgment for his gorgeous attire, and outward greatness, and the poor fit to be despised for his outward meanness? Is not this an evil, a very evil thought

in you, to think him the best man that weareth the best clothes, and him a vile person that is in vile apparel? From the whole learn, 1. That men are very prone to honor worldly greatness in general, yea, to give too great a preference to it, even in matters of judgment. Man is very often swayed in judgment by the power, pomp, and splendour, of men; we are apt to think that they that are worth most are most worthy: thus men, good men, may misjudge of men; but thus to accept the persons of men, either in spiritual or civil judgment, is a provoking sin.

5 Harken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

To prevent the growing evil condemned in the foregoing verse, of undervaluing those that are rich in grace, because poor in estate, the apostle in this verse declares how God himself gives countenance to the contrary practice; he confers a threefold dignity upon them; they are chosen by him, they are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven now: as if the apostle said, "Are they fit to be despised by you, that are thus highly dignified and enriched by God?" And to stir up their attention to what he speaks, he ushers in his interrogation with this, "Harken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world? &c." Learn hence, That such as are poor in this world, and disesteemed of men, may yet be chosen of God, rich in grace and heirs of glory. This he does to demonstrate the sovereignty and freeness of his grace, and the glory of his wisdom. The first choice that Christ made of persons to be his followers were poor men; and ever since, generally speaking, they are the poor that receive the gospel: God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smoky cottage than from many stately palaces, where men wallow in wealth, and forget God.

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?

Our apostle here charges them downright with that sin which he had been before condemning, namely, an undue respect of persons, despising the poor whom God himself had chosen and honored: *But ye have despised the poor.* Despising the poor, is a sin not only against the world, but against the works of God; it is against his word and express command, backed with a severe threatening, "enter not into the vineyard of the poor; that is, oppress them not, for his avenger is mighty and God will plead his cause for him." It is also against his works and his end in creation: for God never made any creature for contempt; he then that despiseth the poor reproacheth his Maker, that is, condemneth the wisdom of God: which is as much seen in making poor, as in making rich; in making valleys, as in making hills. Observe farther, The apostle shows them what futile reason and cause they had, as to vilify the poor, so to idolize and

adore the rich; do not rich men oppress you by tyranny, and draw you before the judgment-seat, like the vilest malefactors? Do not they blaspheme the name of Christ? that worthy name from which you are called christians, and sit in the very face of your holy religion? Learn, 1. That wicked rich men are oftentimes oppressors, sometimes persecutors; they have frequently both will and power, both disposition and occasion to do both. 2. That oppressors and persecutors are generally blasphemers; they blaspheme the name of Christ, that worthy name which whosoever nameth ought to depart from all iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

8 If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well;

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Observe here, 1. The honorable title put upon the law of God, a royal law: royal in its author, Jesus Christ, Heb. xii. 25. Christ's voice shook mount Sinai: royal in its precepts, the duty it requires of us is noble and excellent, nothing but what is our interest as men, our honor and happiness as christians, and what tends to the perfecting and ennobling of our natures; royal in its rewards: true our work can deserve no wages; however, our royal Master will not let us work for nothing. Satan, as a master, is bad, his work much worse; but his wages worst of all. Christ is a royal master, obedience to his law is royal service; and how royal is his reward, in making us kings and priests unto God on earth, and crowned kings and princes with God in heaven! Observe, 2. Our duty declared, with relation to this royal law, namely, to fulfil it; "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures," that is, if ye pay a sincere respect to the whole duty of the law, if ye come up in your obedience to that universal love of God and your neighbour which the law requires, ye do well; where, by neighbour, we are to understand every one to whom we may be helpful; the command to love him as ourselves shows the manner, not the measure, of our love; the kind, not the degree; the purity and likeness, not the equality of proportion; we must mind the good of our neighbour as really and truly, though not so vehemently and earnestly, as our own. Observe, 3. How the apostle convicts them for walking contrary to this law, in honoring the rich and despising the poor, and in judging according to men's outward quality and condition: *If ye have respect to persons in this manner, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.* How does the law convince? Not only by reproving, but by proving; it shows us a rule and faith, "There ye have departed from it; here is a line, and there ye have transgressed it; either gone over it, or gone beside it." Learn hence, That the rule of the word discovers wickedness fully to the conscience of the sinner, who winks hard, and is loth to lie under the conviction of it.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Here the apostle doth suppose a case which ought to make every person very conscientious in his obedience to the whole law of God, namely, that in case a man were careful to observe all the laws of God, except one, his living in the breach of that one shall be so far from being connived at upon the account of his obedience to all the rest, that he shall be liable to the punishment which is due to the transgression of the whole law; to the same punishment for kind, I say, not for degree; because the more and greater sins men are guilty of, the greater and severer shall be their punishment, which consists in being for ever banished from the presence of God, and in being imprisoned with devils and damned spirits, which is called *eternal death*. Learn hence, That whosoever allows himself in any one sin, be it either of omission or commission, willingly, constantly, and with allowance from conscience, and doth not convert and turn, from it unto God, he is certainly in a state of damnation because he affronts the sovereignty, and contemns the authority of that God that made and enacted the whole law, and also stands in a prepared readiness and disposition to break any other, yes, all other laws, in the grossest manner, whensoever any forcible temptation may assault him. Add to this, that living in the breach of any one law, will make a person unfit for the enjoyment of God as well as living in the breach of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery: said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty,

As if the apostle had said, "He that threatened adultery with death, threatened also murder with death; it is the same lawgiver that forbids both, and his authority is as truly concerned in transgressing one as both these laws. Disobedience to God in any one law, is a virtual denying of his authority to prescribe any law to us, and lays a foundation for universal disobedience; for if Almighty God's sovereignty be disowned in any one instance, it may as well be so in all others; the same reason that leads to the observation or violation of one law, doth oblige us to keep or break all the rest, and that is the authority of the lawgiver. The whole law hath an equal obligation upon the conscience." From hence the apostle draws this inference, that persons should so speak and so do, so order their speeches and their actions, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Note here, 1. That all we say and do, all our actions and expressions, do fall under the judgment and sentence of the law of God. 2. That the law of God, in the hand of Christ, is the law of liberty; we are freed from it as a covenant, freed from its condemnatory curse, freed from its rigorous exactions, bondage and terrors. The law to a believer is a law of liberty; and to others a law of bondage and death. 3. That it will be a great help to us in our christian course, to think often that all our words and actions must come into judgment; it is agreeable to the liberty of the gospel to believe and remember, that all we say and do must be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgement.

That is, He that whilst he lived *showed no mercy*, but had opportunity and ability to show it, *shall have judgment without mercy*; that is, shall be very severely handled by God in the great day, and the sentence that shall pass upon him will be insupportable; *but mercy rejoiceth against judgment*, or triumpheth over judgment; that is, mercy in some degree of exaltation; such a mercy as has covetousness, hard heartedness, and penuriousness, with all its enemies, under its feet; such mercy qualifies, strengthens, and enables the person in whom it is found, to be confidently secure that he shall receive no prejudice or hurt, by that judgment which God shall pass upon the world at the great day. Learn from hence, That merciful men, whose hearts and hands are much exercised in doing good, and showing mercy, by means of the consciousness of these God-like dispositions in themselves, are, or may be, full of a joyful and blessed security, that they shall stand in the great judgment of the world, and find favor and acceptance in the eye of the judge; when all unmerciful, covetous, and hard hearted persons shall fall under the sentence and be ground to powder by it; "He shall have judgment without mercy, that sheweth no mercy; but mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

14 ¶ What *doth it* profit, my brethren though a man say he hath faith, and have not works; can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food;

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Our apostle here enters upon the second part of his discourse contained in this chapter, namely, to show the vanity of a fruitless faith; that such a faith as is not the parent and principle of obedience, and productive of good works, is altogether ineffectual and unprofitable. Faith of no kind, when it is alone, is justifying; as there can be no good works without faith; so where true faith is, it will be fruitful in good works, otherwise faith is no more faith; no believing without obedience will avail us; therefore St. Paul and St. James both agree to render to faith the things that are faith's, and not to take away from works the things that are works. "What doth it profit a man to say he hath faith? &c." As if our apostle had said, "Let not any person think his faith sufficient to justify and save him without the works of charity and mercy." Alas! a mere worldly profession is a poor unprofitable thing! What will professing christianity, and saying we believe, avail to salvation, if we

obey not Christ, and live not according to the gospel? Will good works feed the hungry, or clothe the naked? Is it not like a mocking of them? Even so a notional knowledge, and a bare profession of faith, if it brings not forth the fruits of holiness and obedience towards God, of justice and righteousness, of love and mercy towards our neighbour, it is an effectual dead thing; like a dead corpse, without a quickening and enlivening soul; it is altogether dead as to our justification and salvation. Learn hence, 1. That a fruitless faith is certainly a dead faith. It is dead, because it does not unite us to Christ; it is lifeless, because there is no liveliness in such a person's performances; for though faith be not always alike lively, yet if sincere, it is always living, and enables the christian to live unto Christ, and to bear much fruit, John xv. 5. "He that abideth (that is, believeth) in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Observe, 2. The comparison which St. James here makes between faith and charity; from whence he draws this conclusion, "If charity towards the poor, professed in words, but without works, be counterfeit, then faith in Christ, professed in like manner, without obedience, is also counterfeit and false: but charity towards the poor in words, and not in deeds, is a counterfeit charity; accordingly faith in Christ, without obedience to his commands, is a false faith; a dead faith, in regard to the effect; because it will never bring them, in whom it is, to life and salvation."

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

St. James brings in these words by way of dialogue, between a sincere believer that has true faith, and a false-hearted hypocrite, that only pretends to it; thus, "Thou sayest thou hast true faith, though thou hast no works to evidence its truth; I say, I have true faith, because I have good works, which are the genuine effects and fruits of it. Come we now to the trial, and let it appear who saith truth, thou or I; if thou that hast no works sayest true, prove thy faith to be true some other way. Works thou hast none, show thy faith then by something else; but that is impossible, therefore thou vainly boastest of that which thou hast not; but, on the other side, says the sincere believer, I can make good what I say, proving the truth of my faith by the fruits of it in my works; this is a real demonstration that my faith is no vain ostentation as yours is." This way of arguing is very convincing; it gapes the conscience of the hypocrite, and covers him with shame and confusion of face. Learn hence, That good works are the evidences by which Christ will judge of our faith now, and according to which Christ will judge of us, and our faith at the great day. These two, faith and good works, ought to be as inseparable as light and the sun, as fire and heat. Obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience.

19 Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble.

As if the apostle had said, "Be thou either Jew or christian, thou believest that there is a God, and assentest to the articles of religion: herein thou doest well, but this is no more than what the devils do; for they also believe and tremble; and if thou hast no better faith, and no better fruits of thy faith than they, thou hast the same reason to tremble which they have." Observe here, 1. That a bare and naked assent to the truths of the gospel, yea, to the fundamental truths and articles of religion, is not faith that will justify and save. The devils have it, yet have no hopes of salvation with it; they believe that there is a God, and a Christ that died for others, though not for them, so that an atheist, that does not believe a God, is worse than a devil; for he believes that there is a God, whose being the atheist denies. Observe, 2. That horror is the fruit and effect of the devil's faith; the more they know of God, the more they dread him; the more they think of him, the more they tremble at him. O God! All knowledge of thee out of Christ is uncomfortable; thine attributes, which are in themselves dreadful and terrible, being beheld by us in thy Son, do yield comfort and sweetness to us; *the devils believe, but tremble.*

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called The Friend of God

24 Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Our apostle here goes on to prove, that a person is justified by works, that is, by working faith, from the example of Abraham; and the argument lies thus; "if Abraham of old was justified by a working faith, then we cannot be justified without it at this day; but Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, was justified by a working faith, therefore faith without works will justify no man. As Abraham was justified, so must we and all others be justified; because the means and method of justification were ever one and the same, and ever will be uniform and alike. But Abraham was justified by a working faith, his faith was full of life, efficacy, and power, in bringing forth obedience unto God; witness his ready compliance with that hard and difficult command, the offering up his son Isaac. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?" that is, how his faith did both direct and assist him in that work. Heb. xi. "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, and by works was his faith made perfect," that is, declared to be perfect; for Abraham was justified five and twenty years before he offered up his son,

but his conquering the difficulties of that work, showed the perfection of his faith: as the goodness of the fruit declares the excellency of the tree, so the fruit of obedience evidenced the sincerity of Abraham's faith." From hence then it may and must be concluded that a barren and empty faith is a dead faith; dead, because it may be found in and with a person dead in trespasses and sins; dead, because it receives not the quickening influences of the Spirit of God; dead, because it wants operation, which is the effect of life; dead, because unavailable to eternal life. Observe farther, The honorable character and noble testimony here given of Abraham, for and upon the account of his faith and obedience; *he was called the friend of God.* All true believers are God's friends, as friends they are reconciled to him; as friends they enjoy communion with him, and communications from him; as friends there is a conformity of wills and affections between them, they like and love, they will and choose the same things; as friends they desire and long for the complete fruition and enjoyment of each other. Observe lastly, The inference which St. James draws from this instance of Abraham, "ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith." By *faith only*, he means faith that is alone, solitary, and by itself, without works.

Quest. But does not St. James, by affirming, that *by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*, contradict St. Paul, who says, *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight?* Rom. iii. 20. *Ans.* Not at all, 1. Because they do not speak, *ad idem*, to the same thing; St. Paul speaks of justification before God, St. James of justification before men: St. Paul speaks of the justification of our person, St. James of the justification of our faith. 2. They do not speak *idem* to the same persons: St. Paul had to do with false apostles, and Judaizing christians, who sought to substitute the works of the law, and a righteousness of their own, instead of, or at least in conjunction with, the grace of God; but St. James had to do with hypocritical professors, who abused St. Paul's doctrine of free grace, and took encouragement to sin, affirming, that if they believed, it was sufficient, no matter how they lived; therefore St. James urges the necessity of good works, as evidences of the sincerity of our faith. The sum of the matter is this, what God has joined none must divide, and what God has divided none must join; he has separated faith and works in the business of justification, according to St. Paul, and none must join them in it; and he has joined them in the lives of justified persons, as St. James spake, and there we must not separate them. St. Paul assures us, That works have not a co-efficacy in justification itself; but St. James assures us, that they may and ought to have a co-existence in them that are justified.

25 Likewise, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

Here the apostle declares, that Rahab was justified by a working faith, as Abraham was before her, which appeared in her entertaining the spies, lodging them in her house, and dismissing them with all possible privacy, which was a notable evidence of her faith in the God of Israel, her faith

being accompanied with great self-denial, and exposing her to a mighty hazard. Indeed, Rahab's faith was mixed with great infirmity, she told a lie; but that is overlooked by God, and her faith only recorded, not her failing divulged. Rahab's lie, Sarah's laughter, Job's patience, are not mentioned: we discover corruption in the very exercise of our graces; but Oh! how good a master do we serve, that pardons our infirmities, and accepts our sincerity! Learn hence, That the duties and services of believers, though blemished with many defects, do find acceptance with God, and shall not fail to be rewarded by him. Rahab's faith was seen in receiving the spies, her weakness and infirmity appeared in her lying; God pitied and pardoned the one, and accepted and rewarded the other.

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

In this verse the apostle sums up the whole matter, by comparing a dead faith to a dead corpse; as that is imperfect, wanting its best and noblest part: so faith without works wants that which dignifies and completes it. Faith, without holiness to enliven it, is a dead body, without the spirit to quicken it. Again, as a dead corpse is useless as well as imperfect; though it has eyes, it sees not; feet, it walks not; mouth, but speaks not; thus it is with a dead faith, being unaccompanied with a good life; no believing, without obedience, will avail us; for though there is no merit in our obedience that we should be saved for it, yet is there such a necessity of obedience, that we shall never be saved without it. Again, as a dead corpse is noisome to us, so is a profession of faith without obedience loathsome to God: he says to all the workers of iniquity, *Depart, from me, I know you not, I approve you not. As the body without the spirit is dead, that is, as the body is known to be dead, if we perceive no vital actions flowing from the soul, so is faith dead, if we see it not demonstrated by effectual operation: as it is necessary to the being of a living body that it be united to the soul, so it is necessary to the being of a living christian's faith, that it bring forth works of obedience in the christian's life; "for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle had, at the latter end of the first chapter, discoursed concerning the evil of the tongue, showing that man's religion to be vain, which doth not teach him to bridle and govern that unruly member, and keep it within the bounds of reason and religion: in this chapter he returns to the same argument, and shows the great necessity we lie under to watch over our words, and to avoid the sins of the tongue, and this both as an argument of our sincerity, and as an ornament of our profession. Accordingly thus he speaks:

MY brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

For the clearer understanding of these words, let us consider, 1. What the apostle does not forbid, namely, private and brotherly admonition, which proceeds from christian love one towards another, much less does he condemn public and authorized reproof: God has made it the duty of all to admonish and reprove each other charitably; he has made it the duty of others to admonish and censure evil-doers, authoritatively; this, therefore, is not forbidden. Observe, 2. What it is that is here forbidden, namely, such a reproving of others as is supercilious and masterly, managed with sharpness and severity, rashly and rigidly. As if the apostle had said, "be not magisterial and censorious towards your brethren, as if every one of you had many masters in them:" censuring of others is an arrogation of mastership over others, and the assuming of a power over them which God never gave us, it is a bold usurpation of God's authority; we may admonish, reprove, and warn; but it must not be in a lordly manner, in a masterly way, which is reviling rather than reproving; we must consider what may stand with charity, as well as what will consist with truth; every evil must not be divulged, but some must be covered with a cloak of love; there may be, and oftentimes is, a great deal of malice in reporting truth. Observe next, The remedy prescribed against censuring others, namely, the considering ourselves that we shall thereby receive the greater damnation; sharp reprovers in judging others, pronounce a doom upon themselves; such as reprove either out of office, or out of charity, ought to look to themselves, lest in reproving others they condemn themselves.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

As if the apostle had said, "We had need be very candid in censuring others, for we all of us offend in many things ourselves, especially with and by our tongue, which is an engine of more mischief, both to ourselves and others, than any other member of the body; and accordingly he is called here, not a gracious man, but a perfect man, one that has attained to the fullest measures, and highest degrees of grace, that can bridle his tongue: to be able to bridle the tongue is an argument of considerable growth, and happy progress in grace; he that can bridle his tongue, can bridle his whole body, that is, govern all the other actions of his life; he is a very extraordinary christian."

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us: and we turn about their whole body.

As we rule the whole body of an horse by a bridle in its mouth, so by bridling our tongues, we shall rule and govern all the actions of our lives. Note, That as hot and hard mouthed horses, so the tongue of man is apt to run out unless well bridled; nor is any bridle strong enough to hold it in, but the bridle of grace; nay, not that at all times. The grace of God is both spur and bridle to the tongue of man: grace like a spur, provokes to speak for God, and for the good of others; and grace, like a bridle, stops us from speaking what may grieve the Spirit of God, and justly

offend others. None rule their tongues well without grace and every one that has grace doth not rule them well; it is a great part of perfection not to offend in word.

4 Behold also the ships, which, though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

The design of our apostle, by this and the former similitude, is to show, that little things well governed can govern great bodies; as the rider by a small bit can govern the horse at pleasure; and the pilot, by a small rudder, can manage the ship with ease; so the government of that little member the tongue, is a special mean for governing the whole man. Next he compares the tongue to fire, in regard to the danger that attends it: will a spark of fire set on house, a town, a city in a flame, and lay it in ashes? In like manner will a fiery tongue inflame a family, a society, a church, a kingdom: yea, the whole world, by strife and contention, putting all into combustion; such a tongue being set on work by the devil, and kindled by that fire which came from hell; but verily, a tongue set on fire from hell, shall, without repentance, be set on fire in hell. Learn hence, That a wicked tongue is of an hellish original, the fire of such a tongue is blown up by the breath of hell; let us abhor contentions, revilings, and reproaches as we would hell itself.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame: *it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

Our apostle here goes on in showing how difficult it is to govern the tongue; it is wilder than the wildest beasts, they are more tractable, and may be sooner tamed than a tongue be governed: it is an *unruly evil*, that will not be held in. Nature has set a double guard about the tongue; namely, the teeth and the lips, and grace has laid many restraints upon it, and yet it breaks out *full of deadly poison*, intimating, that the tongue is as deadly as a venomous beast. In the wild desert there are lions, bears and tygers, but they assault us but now and then, and can only rend the skin, but a contentious tongue is always troublesome to the soul and spirit:

man tameth the beast, and God tameth man: and the apostle's calling the tongue *an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*, plainly imports, that a wicked tongue is venomous and hurtful; a slanderous tongue is a deadly poison, nothing can secure against it but innocency and a good conscience; if we fall by it, let this comfort us, that there will be a resurrection of our names, as well as our persons, let us always, then, keep in the way of our duty, and commit our good name to God's care and keeping.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

12 Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle informs us what is the proper use of the tongue: namely to bless and praise God; speech being the most excellent faculty, is to be consecrated to divine uses: it is both a good man's work and his recreation to bless and praise God. Observe, 2. The sinful use which some men put the tongue unto, and that is, to curse with it, to curse men that have the natural image of God upon them, yea, holy and good men, that have the divine image of God instamped upon them; this is the abuse of some men's tongues, *their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*. Observe, 3. The same tongue cannot, should not bless God and curse men; to pray and brawl with the same tongue is shameful hypocrisy; to go from worshipping to railing and reviling, to speak to the God of heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell, is a monstrous impiety. Observe, 4. How the apostle discovers the mighty absurdity of blessing and cursing with one and the same tongue, and of putting the best member to the worst use; the good aggravates the evil, and the evil disparageth, yea, disproveth the good; to suppose that the same tongue should acceptably bless God, and at the same time sinfully curse men, is as irrational and absurd, as to imagine that the same fountain should send forth salt water and fresh, sweet water and bitter; and, as if a fig-tree should bring forth olives, or a vine bear figs: our apostle argues and reasons from what is impossible in nature, to what is absurd in manners; contrary effects from the same cause are against the order of nature; in like manner grace is uniform and always acts like itself: to bless and curse, to pray and revile, is wholly inconsistent with grace: nature always abhors contradictions, and so does the grace of God: though a christian has a double principle in him, the *flesh* and the *spirit*, yet he has not a double heart; his spirit is single and sincere in what he does, in all he does both for God and man.

13 Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him

show, out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.

As if our apostle had said, "If any among you desire to approve yourselves more knowing than others, wiser and better than others, as you would be thought when you censure and despise others, show it to the world by a better conversation, by your abounding fruitfulness in good works and by such meekness of spirit as will be an evidence of true wisdom." Hence we learn, That the wise man is a meek and patient man; as pride and folly, so wisdom and meekness, are companions; the more wisdom a man has, the more he can check himself, and curb his passion; Moses is renowned in scripture for his wisdom, and for meekness; we all affect the reputation of wisdom, let us discover it by humility, in being lowly within ourselves: and by our meekness in bearing with and forbearing one another; yet must our meekness be a wise meekness, it must be a meekness of wisdom; our meekness must be opposite to fierceness, but not to zeal; Moses was very meek in his own cause, but as hot as fire in the cause of God; meekness and zeal are consistent, let us then "show out of good conversation our works and meekness of wisdom."

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle points at the root of all tongue evils; we pretend zeal and justice, zeal for God, and doing right to ourselves; but the true cause is *envy*, called *bitter envying*, as being bitter in its root, bitter in its fruit, bitter to others, bitter to ourselves; this is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a foolish, sinful evil; it makes another's good our grief. But why so! The good of another is no hurt to us; we have not the less because another has more; Leah's fruitfulness was no cause of Rachel's barrenness; why then should it be the occasion of Rachel's envy? Thy portion is not impaired because thy brother's is increased. Observe, 2. How envy and strife are here joined together; if you have *envying and strife* in your hearts; when envy is found in the heart, strife will soon be found in the tongue, for envy is the mother of strife; natural corruption doth most of all bewray itself by envy; it has an early spring, and a late autumn; we have it as soon as we come into the world, and it is an hard matter to leave it before we go out of it again; children suck it in with their milk, and the old man buries it in his coffin. Observe, 3. What are the bitter effects and fruits of envy and strife, namely, *confusion, and every evil work*; an envious spirit is an unquiet and wicked spirit; the devil worketh by no instruments, more than by envious, discontented, and malicious persons: pride and envy were the two first sins that crept into the world; the first man was ruined by pride, the second destroyed by envy, the whole world could not hold two brothers when the one was envied by the other; Cain's envy tasted blood; and verily the sinner's envy thirsts after it;

well, therefore, may the apostle say, "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Our apostle here enters upon a comparison between earthly wisdom, and spiritual heavenly wisdom; between wisdom that is not, and wisdom that is from above. Observe, 1. That wisdom that is not from above characterised and described. 1. It is *earthly*; it is suited to earthly minds, and it is employed about earthly things; earthly wisdom is mere folly; it is said to be wise only for this world, and to have such an unsavory spirit as will relish nothing but what is earthly. 2. *Sensual*; such wisdom as tendeth only to gratify the senses, and is conversant about outward pleasures, which are the pleasures of the beast, and not of the man: such sensual satisfactions do only please the sensitive appetite, which is the highest rational pleasures to mortify and subdue. 3. *Devilish*; because it is such wisdom as is found in the devil; he is only wise to do mischief. As a man has a fleshly part in common with the beast, so there are some sins which the scripture calls fleshly and beastly lusts, as uncleanness, riot, excess, and the like; but as man has somewhat in common with the angels, namely, his spirit and soul, so there are some sins which are called satan's lusts, John viii. 44. *His lusts he will do*: Thus envy, pride, wrath, revenge, malice, slander, these sins make a man devilish, like unto satan; hence is St. Paul's exhortation, 2 Cor. vii. 1. "To cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." Lord, pity the deplorable ruins of mankind, compassionate fallen man, who hath not only somewhat of the beast, but also somewhat of the devil in him by nature! O deplorable degradation! And should he sacrifice himself, he could not save himself without a sanctifier; he must be restored to the divine likeness here, or never enjoy his Maker hereafter. Observe, 2. He next describes *spiritual wisdom* to us, and that, first by its original, it is from above: all wisdom is known by its descent; carnal wisdom is of the earth earthly; spiritual wisdom is from above, and has a heavenly Author, and its original and descent is heavenly: *the wisdom that is from above*. Secondly, He describes spiritual wisdom by its effects and fruits, by its properties and qualities, and reckons up eight of them. 1. True wisdom is *pure* and holy wisdom, and sinless craftiness: the heart of such a person is clean, though not wholly free from sin, and his way is undefiled: this pure wisdom will not brook the filthiness either of error in judgment, or sin in practice: error is a blot as well as sin, and is as damnable as sin; the one is an open road, the other a secret path to hell and destruction; he that is wise, and has a due care of his soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles, as he is of debauched practices. 2. *Peaceable*: true wisdom teaches to avoid all strife and contention: there is a sweet connection between wisdom and peace; the wisest are the meekest men; they are peaceable and peace-makers; not ready to

provoke others, nor easily provoked themselves: such as see most need of pardon from God, are most ready to pardon others, to live peaceably with all: yet note, Though wisdom be pure and peaceable, yet it is first pure, then peaceable: as God is the first and best of Beings, so purity is the first and best of blessings; the chief care then must be for purity and truth; but next to purity we must regard peace; truth must be preferred, but peace must not be neglected; we must treat with God by prayer, and treat with man by condescension, as far as a good conscience will suffer, for obtaining and preserving peace: "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable." 3. True wisdom is gentle, in opposition to strife and contention; the word also signifies moderate and patient, Phil. iv. 6. 1 Tim. iii. 3. Such a christian is moderate in doubtful opinions, moderate in his judging of others, moderate and patient in his whole conversation, receding sometimes from his own right for peace sake. 4. Easy to be entreated; not inflexible, but persuadable: he that has an inflexible will, had need have an infallible judgment. Indeed there may be a flexibility and easiness to a fault; some good natures (as they are called) are easily drawn away to sin by evil company, and wicked counsel; in such a case, to turn a deaf ear to all entreaties is not obstinacy, but religious resolution. 5. Full of mercy: this has a double object, such as want, and such as offend: and so there is mercy in giving and in forgiving: it is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression, and the honor of a christian to put on bowels of mercy: without this garment we shall appear naked at the bar of God. 6. Full of good works. Religion is not a dry rod, but it blossoms and brings forth fruit; fruits of humanity and civil courtesy, as well as fruits of piety and pious charity: when we begin to be religious, we must not leave off to be kind and courteous: Be pitiful, be courteous, 1 Pet. iii. 8. 7. Without partiality; that is, without making any difference between person and person, because of outward respects, which is an high point of wisdom; folly discovers itself in nothing more than by doting upon outward splendor. Fools, like children, account nothing good but what is gay; but wisdom teaches us to value and put an estimate upon persons and things, according to their intrinsic worth, and doth nothing by partiality. 8. Without hypocrisy: in true wisdom there is no prevailing guile, but a true simplicity, and godly sincerity found with it, and this is the highest piece of wisdom; the hypocrite is the greatest fool; the sincere christian is the truly wise, and the only wise man. "The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Our apostle here concludes his discourse, by showing the happiness of those who are possessed of that wisdom from above which is pure and peaceable, &c. They sow a seed which will yield them present fruit, and bring sheaves of joy and comfort into their bosoms, and also entitle them to an everlasting reward in that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness. Learn hence, 1. That all the actions of this life are as seed sown for the life to come; and every one's harvest hereafter will be according to his seed-time here; our rewards shall be according to our works. Learn, 2. That the rewards of righteousness and peaceableness are

reaped and received here initially, and shall be ere long enjoyed perfectly: "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that love peace." Learn 3. That true lovers of righteousness ought to be lovers of peace, and peaceable persons lovers of righteousness; mercy and truth must meet together, righteousness and peace must kiss each other: peace without righteousness is but a sordid compliance; righteousness without peace is but a rough austerity; our duty is to couple a sweet goodness with a severe righteousness.

CHAPTER IV.

Our apostle having showed in the foregoing chapter the exceeding evil of strife and contention, he comes in this chapter to discover the root from whence all this proceeds, namely, from men's carnal lusts and corrupt affections; accordingly thus he speaks:

FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

The Jews, to whom St. James directed this epistle, had at that time great wars and fightings, not only with their neighbours, but even among themselves: in every city there were wars and fightings among them. Now, the apostle here puts it to their consciences to tell and declare whence these animosities and contentions, those wars and fightings, did proceed; come they not hence even from your lusts? Plainly intimating, that the cause of all civil dissensions are men's corruptions; war stirs first within, before it breaks forth without; were there not a fight in ourselves, there would be no fighting with others; lust within is the make-bait in all societies and communities without: pride and covetousness, envy and ambition, making men injurious to one another; worldly and sensual lusts first war in ourselves, before they disturb the common peace.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not,

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

The Jews, at the writing of this epistle to them, did vehemently lust after liberty, and freedom from the Roman yoke, and for dominion and government over other nations; believing that their Messiah was to be a temporal prince, who should enable them to lord it over the heathen world; "Now, says our apostle, though you lust for liberty and dominion, yet you have it not: and though, in an eager pursuit after these things, ye kill and slay, yet you do but lose your blood and labor, for ye cannot obtain what you thus inordinately seek, and irregularly covet; you should go to God in prayer for what you desire: but if at any time you do pray, it is not in a right manner, with a right intention

and for a right end. It is to consume it upon your lusts; namely, that having the liberty you desire, you may possess the good things of this world you lust after, and may lord it over the heathen world." Learn hence, That we pray amiss, when our aims and ends are not right in prayer. Learn, 2. That then our aims and ends are not right in prayer, when we ask blessings for the use and encouragement of our lusts. Learn, 3. That prayers so framed are usually successful; what we ask amiss we are sure to miss, if the Almighty has any kindness for us. In prayer we must consider three things, the object, the manner, and the end: We must not only guard our affections, but secure our intentions; for prayers that want of a good aim, do also want a good issue: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

4 ¶ Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, now ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.

It is spiritual, not corporal adultery, which these words take notice of: the inordinate love of this world is called spiritual adultery; because it draws away the love of the soul from God, and dissolves the spiritual marriage between God and the soul; "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world," which stands in competition with, and indisposes you for doing of God's will, *is enmity with God?* and that whosoever will be thus a friend of the world, is the enemy of God? To love the world as God's competitor, is enmity to God, and he is God's enemy that loveth it predominantly. Learn we to love every creature with a creature love: for God reckons we love him not at all, if we love him not above all.

5 ¶ Do ye think that the scripture saith in-vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,

Some by the Spirit here understand the holy Spirit of God, and make the words run in the form of an interrogation, thus, "The Spirit, that dwelleth in us christians, lusteth to envy as yours doth? Nay, rather is he not the Spirit of love and goodness?" Others understand our own spirit; our corrupt nature is mightily carried forth this way, even to envy the good of others; it is usual in scripture to call the bent and propensions of the soul, either to good or evil, by the name of a Spirit. Note hence, that God's own people have much, too much, of a spirit of envy remaining in them, unmortified and unsubdued by them; "the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy."

6 But he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

The sin of envy being censured before, our apostle next condemns the sin of pride; he uses a military term when he tells us, that *God resisteth the proud*; it signifies, that he sets himself as in battle array against the proud, in a direct opposition to him; there are no sort of sinners whom God sets himself so much against to punish and plague as proud sin-

ners: such are wholly out of his favor; he beholdeth them afar off, and they are the subjects of his high displeasure, like naked men in an army, they stand exposed to his wrath they have no shelter, nothing to keep off the threatening from them; for there can be no shelter from divine wrath, but in divine love. There are two eminent works of divine providence in the world, the one is to lift up and exalt the humble, the other is to abase and pull down the proud; some pride themselves in their natural parts, others in their acquired parts; some in their moral virtues and evangelical graces, others in their holy duties and spiritual performances; we seldom do well, but we think too well of ourselves. Learn hence, That pride is a common sin and provoking; yea, a very provoking sin, and so must needs be, because it is an usurpation of the place and power of God, and sets itself against all the commands and threatenings of God: "God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble:" *grace*; that is, 1. Favor; the humble shall have his favor, and the proud his frowns. 2. God giveth grace, that is, more grace, farther measures of grace; to the humble; as we lay up our richest wines in the lowest cellars, so does God lodge his choicest graces in humble and lowly hearts; he giveth not only grace, but more grace, to the humble; such as are low in their own eyes, are under the special protection and direction of the Most High God.

7 Submit yourselves, therefore, to God, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

That is, "Submit to his government and authority, to his preceptive and commanding will, and to his providential and disposing will: submit yourselves to the guidance of his word, to the direction of his Spirit, to the conduct of his providence; submit your whole selves to the whole law and will of God; let all your thoughts, affections, words, and actions, be guided according to the strict rules of the word of God; but *resist the devil*, by no means do not submit and yield an inch to him: the only way to overcome satan is, not by yielding to him, but by resisting and opposing of him; satan is both a conquered enemy and a cowardly enemy, though he has a bold face, yet a faint heart; *resist him, and he will flee from you.*" Observe here, 1. The devil's active enmity and continual hostility against man, implied and supposed: satan is continually busy with us, that is, the apostate spirit, and the spirit of apostasy lodged in our natures: wherever we see malice, revenge, envy, hatred, pride, and self-love, there is that evil spirit which is so inimical and injurious to us, that is, *Venum serpentis diabolici*, "The sting and poison, the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature." Observe, 2. The christian's duty discovered, and that is, not to yield but resist and oppose; we must either resist him, or be taken captive by him; if we do not resist him, we shall never get rid of him; if once we parley and treat with him, we must expect to be triumphed over, and trampled upon by him. Observe, 3. The certainty of success declared, *he will flee from you*; every denial is a discouragement to satan, the strength of his temptations lie in our treachery and falseness; we are false within ourselves, otherwise all his power and malice could not hurt us; however, if we continue our resistance, the holy Spirit will come in with his assistance, he will be

our second in the field, and we shall find, that stronger is he that is in us, than he that is in the world; the God of peace will bruise satan under our feet shortly.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.—

Observe here, 1. Man by nature, since his fall, is afar off from God, not barely by a natural distance as a creature, but also by a moral distance as a sinner; God made man near him, but when man sinned, he departed from him; now we draw nigh to God by conversion, and in all the actings of repentance; there is a first and a second conversion; a first conversion from a sinful state, a second conversion from sinful acts, by both we draw nigh to God; but the drawing nigh to God here principally intended, is by approaching to him in prayer, and in the use of every holy ordinance: and humbling of the soul before God, is a drawing nigh unto him; hence it is that good men delight so much in prayer, and other holy duties; they meet with God in them, and draw near to God by them; and they that meet with God, meet with all delights. Observe, 2. As the duty required, *draw near to God*, so the encouragement annexed, *he will draw nigh to you*: God will certainly draw nigh to that christian, in a way of mercy, who prepareth his heart to approach and draw near to him in a way of duty; the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him; nigh to comfort, nigh to quicken, nigh to guide, nigh to support.

—Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.

Mark! to signify to us our deep pollution, and universal pollution; we are called upon both to cleanse and to purify, and that both our hands and our hearts. *Quest.* But why is cleansing of the hands set before purifying the heart? must we sweeten the streams before the fountain? *Ans.* It is not unusual in scripture to put that first which is visible first, as *calling before election*, 2 Pet. i. 10. And because grace (having once entered the heart) discovers itself by an immediate cleansing of the hands; so that if we would have an holy life, we must get a clean heart. Learn, 1. That unclean persons can have no communion with God. 2. That they who draw nigh to God, must cleanse their hands; because the sins of our hands do keep us at a distance from God, and God at a distance from us. Commerce with God in an ordinance is one thing, and communion with him is another; a man may have a commerce or trade with an enemy for profit sake, whilst he refuses to hold communion with him in a way of friendship and intimacy of acquaintance. Learn, 3. That double-minded men have corrupt hearts: double-mindedness is a dividing of the heart between God and something else: whereas God calls for the whole heart, the whole mind, the whole soul, the whole strength. Learn, 4. That this double-mindedness hinders both our drawing nigh to God, and God's drawing nigh to us; an heart divided between God and the world, between conscience and lust, between religion and self-interest, will hinder all intercourse and sweet communion betwixt God and us in the duty of prayer. "Cleanse therefore your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep;

let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The next duty we are exhorted to by the apostle, is a deep humiliation, and a voluntary afflicting of our souls before God for sin, and upon the account of any calamity, either on ourselves or others. Learn hence, That as the afflicting hand of God does increase upon a person, a family, or a people, so ought the humiliation and mourning of that person, family, or people, to increase; we ought not only to be humbled when God afflicts, but also to be humbled in proportion to what God inflicts: great afflictions call for great humiliations; woe to that person, that family, or that people, who will not be afflicted when God afflicts them, nor humble themselves, when God humbles them; who, when God casts them down, will hold up their heads in mirth and jollity; God loves to see us bear our cross, but he cannot endure to see us make sport with it, or slight of it. If God once perceives us driving away our sorrow with harp and viol, or drowning it with wine, he can quickly turn our wine into water, and our laughter into the voice of weeping. Now is it not better to turn our mirth into mourning, than to have God turn it into mourning? they who turn their mirth into mourning, shall find comfort after their mourning; but they shall know nothing but mourning, whose mirth God turns into mourning; *be afflicted*: therefore, and *mourn and weep*. *Quest.* But how comes the apostle to make use of so many words, to one purpose, *be afflicted, mourn, weep, humble yourselves*, &c. *Ans.* All these heaps of expressions do import and imply, 1. The necessity of the duty. 2. The difficulty of the duty. 3. The continuance of the duty, and accordingly much enforcement is necessary; flesh and blood loves pleasure, but declines sorrow and heaviness; nature loves no bitter draughts, though bitter things are sometimes the best things; therefore the apostle's call to afflict our souls, and humble ourselves in the sight of God, is repeated; and mark the encouragement given thus to do, "humble yourselves in the sight of God, and he shall lift you up:" submission and humility is the true way to exaltation and glory: the way to rise is to fall: "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," Luke xiv. 11. "He shall lift thee up in due time," 1 Pet. v. 6. Wait God's leisure, and the promise shall surely be fulfilled; the world looketh upon humility as the way to contempt, but God pronounces it the way to honor; *before honor is humility*.

11 ¶ Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth *his* brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?

These words; as generally delivered by our apostle, are

dissuasive from the sin of detraction, or speaking evil of one another, either by secret whispering, or open backbiting; a very common but most unbecoming sin amongst christians. What pleasure do some persons take in divulging the faults of others, in aggravating their faults, and defrauding them of their necessary excuse and mitigation, though at the same time they are conscious of it, by lessening their good actions through the supposition of their false aims and ends! it is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions, by mentioning his failings, but suppressing his worth and excellencies: it becomes christians neither to give way to this growing evil themselves, nor give ear to it in others. But there seems to be something special and particular in these words which respects the Jews, to whom this epistle is directed; as if the apostle had said, "give over your reproach and censoriousness against the Gentile christians, who do not observe your ceremonial law, your feasts, your sabbath, your circumcision; for both the law of Christ, and the law of Moses, which you profess to own, do bind you to love your neighbour as yourself, and forbids such uncharitable censures: so that by condemning your brethren, you condemn the law, and set yourselves above it; and all this in contempt of the law, and the lawgiver, who is one, and is able both to save and to destroy." There are some that are neither able to save or destroy; there are others able to destroy but cannot save. Satan is a destroyer, but he cannot save any, nor can he destroy all; if he could, none should be saved. But there is a lawgiver, who can save and destroy, who can give life, and take it away, and both as often as he will: he can save those that obey his laws, and destroy all those that transgress them: therefore, seeing Christ, and none but Christ, has authority to give laws, it is not for you to impose ceremonial observances upon your brethren, and to censure and judge them for not observing them, when Christ has set them at liberty from the observation of them.

13 Go to know, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain.

14 Whereas ye know not what *shall* be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boasting. All such rejoicing is evil.

For the clear understanding of these words, consider, 1. What is not here forbidden or condemned by our apostle; namely, prudential resolutions for a right management of human affairs: it is lawful for men to take up a purpose to go to such a place, and follow their trade there, to buy, and sell, and get gain in an honest way; but no man must be per-

emptory in this, because we know not what shall be on the morrow, such determinations must be made with submission to divine providence: "if the Lord will, we shall do this, or that," referring all to his pleasure, who alone doth whatsoever pleaseth him. Consider, 2. What is hereby intimated to us, and what is the duty incumbent upon us, namely, 1. That we have no assurance of our lives, nor any of the comforts of our lives, for one day, and therefore ought to refer all our actions, our enterprises, and undertakings, to the will of God. "What is your life? It is but a vapor; therefore ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall do this, or that." 2. That in regard of the great frailty of our lives, and the great uncertainty of issues and events, it is the height of presumption to promise ourselves great things, without the leave of God's providence; as our times are in God's hand, so are our actions also in God's power, both as to the performance of them, and as to the success of them: "say not then, To-day, or To-morrow, we will go into such a city; for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall do this, or that."

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Observe here, 1. That sins of ignorance are sins, and render men greatly culpable, though ignorance will in some degree lessen their punishment. Observe here, 2. That to sin against light and knowledge is a very heinous aggravation of sin; because the knowledge of our duty lays as under the greatest obligation to do it. 3. That the greater advantages and opportunities any man has of knowing his duty; and the more knowledge he sins against in not doing of it, the greater is his sin, and the more grievous will be his condemnation.

CHAPTER V.

GO to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

These words may be considered either relatively or absolutely. Consider them, 1. With relation to the Jews, to whom they were written immediately, and they are a prediction or denunciation of that judgment which was coming upon the rich men in the Jewish nation; which prediction, Josephus assures us, was fulfilled by the slaughter and spoiling of the rich Jews throughout Galilee and Judea, the zealous sparing none but the poor and low. Thus did the vengeance of God, and does to this day, pursue and follow that

wicked people, who killed the Lord of life, and their own prophets, who brought judgment on themselves to the uttermost. Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and they are a severe and cutting reprehension to covetous rich men, for their sordid sparing of that wealth which God had given them for public service. And the apostle gives us, 1. A description of their sin. A declaration of their punishment. Observe, 1. A description of the sin of the covetous rich worldings, they choose rather to have their goods to be corrupted and spoiled, than to be employed to good uses; their victuals might have refreshed the bowels of the hungry, but they rather suffered them to putrefy and stink; the garments which lay useless in their wardrobes, might have clothed the backs of their naked brethren, but they had rather let them be moth-eaten; their gold and silver might have been applied to many good uses, but they had rather it should be cankered, and rust in their chests. Observe, 2. The punishment denounced against them for this their sin, the rust of their gold and silver *shall witness against them*; that is, their consciences shall at once convince them of their base covetousness, and torment them for it; and this corroding of their consciences shall have an impression upon their bodies, it shall eat their flesh as it were fire; and all their treasure which, with wrong to others, and violation of their own consciences, they had heaped together, was but heaped up for the spoiler, and the violence of the last days. Learn from the whole, 1. That it is hard to possess riches without sin; an hard matter to have them, and not be hindered from heaven by them. Learn, 2. That a covetous hoarding, and sordid sparing of wealth, which our suffering brethren want, brings a curse both upon our persons and estates. 3. That more miseries and dreadful judgments, shall come upon wicked rich men, which, if believably apprehended, would cause them now to weep and howl. We do no hurt with our wealth, say some; aye, but what good do you do with it? where are the poor members of Christ, whom ye have relieved with the superfluities of your table? but can many say, truly, they have done no harm with their estates? Lord! what carelessness in religion, what contempt of God, what riot and excess is found among many that abound in wealth, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than would maintain a poor family many years. Learn, 4. That in the day of judgment, not only our actions, but all the circumstances of our actions, shall be brought forth and produced as arguments of conviction; the rusty iron, the cankered silver, the moth-eaten clothes, shall be produced; the stones of the wall built by oppression, shall cry, "Lord, we were built by oppression and violence;" and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, *True Lord, even so it is*, Hab. ii. 11. The circumstances of men's sins at the great day, will be as so many memorials to put them in mind of guilt, and God in mind of vengeance; "Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall witness against you."

4 Behold the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them, which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

The next sin which our apostle convicts the rich of, and condemns them for, is the sin of oppression. and that of the worst sort, even of laborers and servants: their covetousness was the cause of this oppression. There is no sin so heinous and base but covetousness may be a mother or a nurse to it: what more sordid than for the rich master to detain the wages of the poor laborer? *Yea, Behold the hire of the laborers crieth*: though they did not, durst not complain, yet their hire kept back did complain. Learn hence, That as all oppression is very sinful, so especially the detaining of the laborers' wages when their hire is delayed or denied, both are exceeding sinful; and accordingly we find oppressors in scripture joined with the vilest of sinners, even with sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers. And to testify that God cannot want witnesses against oppressors, he tells us, their hire shall cry as well as the poor themselves: "the beam, and the stone out of the wall shall cry," Hab. ii. Remember we then that secret wrongs are known to God; the poor may not always know who wrong them, but the Lord fully knows, and their wrongs and oppressions will cry against us, when they know not against whom to cry. And note, The person gloriously described, who is the poor's avenger; he is the *Lord of Sabaoth*, or the Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his command. How bold and daring then is the oppressor to afflict the poor who have the Lord of hosts for their avenger? "their cry is entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

The next sin he charges upon them, is sensuality, luxury, lasciviousness, their eating and drinking to excess in their feasts, pampering themselves for the slaughter and the shambles. These are sins very natural to corrupt nature, but chiefly incident to the rich. Pride, idleness, fulness of bread, and living in pleasure, are too frequently sins that do abound in rich men's houses: though their abundance is no excuse, but rather an aggravation of their sin. God allows us to use pleasure, but not to live in pleasure; and by calling it pleasure upon earth, he intimates, 1. That sensual delights are only enjoyed here in this world: 2. That their desires ran after these earthly pleasures only: the pleasures of the beast only pleased them; whereas the delights of sense are so far from being the chief pleasure for which God designed us, that, on the contrary, he intended we should take our chief pleasure, not in gratifying but in restraining our sensual appetite, in reducing that rebellious power under the government and dominion of reason and religion.

6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

By the *just* may be understood *Jesus Christ*, that *just One* whom the nation of the Jews condemned and killed; and also such of his members, orthodox christians, whom the judaizing christians persecuted. By their *condemning the just*, understand how they proceeded against them under a

pretence and color of law; before they would actually kill, they pretended legally to condemn. Learn thence, That God takes notice not only of the open violences offered to his people, but also of all the injuries done unto them under the form of a legal procedure; it is a mighty provocation when public authority, which is the defence of innocence, is made the pretence of oppression: it follows, *Ye have killed the just*: This is added, to let us know that oppression will proceed as far as death. Wickedness knoweth no bounds: good men are oftentimes arraigned, condemned and killed; they fall a sacrifice to the rage of their persecutors and oppressors. It is added, *He doth not resist you*; which if applied to Christ, points at his meekness; he was slain without resistance: he came to suffer, therefore would not resist. If applied to the suffering christians, it points at their weakness and inability to make resistance, as well as at their meekness and patience under sufferings: "Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you."

7 ¶ Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord, Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and bath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to, *patience*: *Be patient brethren*. Patience is a sense of afflictions without murmuring, and of injuries without revenge. It is the duty of christians to be patient under their sufferings, though they be long and sharp. Observe, 2. The argument to enforce this duty, *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*. This may be understood of Christ's particular coming to judge his murderers at Jerusalem, which was then at hand, or of his general coming to judge the world at the last day. As if our apostle had said; "Have a little patience, and when your Lord cometh he will put a period to all your afflictions; with desire long for his coming, and yet with patience wait for it. Observe 3. A pattern of patience propounded in the husbandman, he waiteth, and waiteth long for the time of harvest; and in order thereunto, for the former and latter rain, to prepare the corn for the day of a joyful harvest. Now, in imitation of the husbandman, the patient christian thus argues with himself; "If the husbandman waits with patience for the coming of the harvest, shall not I wait with perseverance for the coming of my Lord? The approach of harvest is precious to him, and shall not the appearance of Christ be so to me? Shall he endure so much for a little corn, and not I much more for an heavenly kingdom? Observe, 4. The direction given, in order to the obtaining of this patience and long-suffering, *stablish your hearts*: that is, in a firm expectation of Christ's coming, believe that he will come certainly, and may come suddenly, and sooner perhaps than you may apprehend. Learn hence, That it is the duty of christians, in and under their afflictions, to stablish their hearts in a firm belief of the coming and appearance of Christ, to put a final period to all their sufferings,

and to reward their victorious faith and patience: "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door.

Observe here, 1. A prohibition, *Grudge not one against another*; that is, do not murmur or repine, groan, or grieve, as impatient men use to do under their pressure; complain not of God, because the time of your deliverance is delayed: thirst not after revenge against your persecutors, and envy not those who are exercised with fewer troubles than yourselves; *grudge not*. Observe, 2. The enforcement of this prohibition from the danger of the fact, *lest ye be condemned*. As if he had said, "Impatience and discontent, envy and distrust, will expose you to greater miseries than you complain of: your sufferings here are but for your probation, but your grudging and repining will be your condemnation." Observe, 3. The anticipation or forestalling of an objection, which some might make. What! must we suffer, and may we not complain! Must we, by tamely hearing many affronts, invite more, and revenge none?" Yes, says the apostle, be patient, and commit your cause to him that judgeth righteously; for, *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door*. Where note, 1. A Judge, the supreme and universal Judge, Jesus Christ, who was here judged by his creatures, but now is coming to judge his judges. 2. His posture, *He standeth*, which is the Judge's posture when he executes judgment. St. Stephen saw Christ standing, Acts vii. 55, at God's right hand; not as an advocate to plead his cause, (Christ is said to sit at God's right hand when he does that); but he stood now as a judge, to take speedy vengeance on St. Stephen's murderers for that bloody act. Note, 3. The place where the judge standeth, *before the door*; that is, he is coming to judgment, and he is just at hand; he has put on his robes, and is ascending his tribunal. Observe lastly, The note of attention, *Behold!* this ushers in the whole, *Behold, the Judge standeth at the door*. Learn hence, That the consideration of Christ's near approach to judgment should awe the consciences of men, and mould their conversation into a dutiful compliance with divine commands.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Here the apostle exhorts suffering christians to patience, by the example of the Old Testament saints, who were exceeding dear to God, employed in special services for God, yet exercised with long and sharp afflictions from him. Now, their nature was as tender and as frail as ours, and we have the same blessed Spirit to comfort and assist us with them. Note thence, 1. That the examples of excellent persons who have gone in the thorny path of affliction before us, and beaten it for us, are of excellent use to suppress our fears, to support our spirits under all our conflicts, and to rouse our courage in all our encounters. Note, 2. That it is our great

duty to eye the encouraging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before us, and strive to imitate and follow such worthy patterns. The first sufferers had the hardest task; strange and untried torments are most terrible: they knew not the strength of their enemy which they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy that has been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us; certainly we that live in these last times have the best helps that ever any had to subdue their fears: *Take we then the prophets, and primitive saints, for an example, both of grievous sufferings, and of great patience.*

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure.—

That is, All persons do judge and pronounce those that have suffered death, for righteousness' sake, to be in a very happy condition; though they live persecuted, yet they die sainted. Living saints are an eye sore; by the strictness of their lives, and the severity of their reproofs, they torment a wicked world; but dead saints do not stand in the way of their lusts, they will therefore have a good word for the dead saints, whilst they hate and persecute the living; *Behold, we count them happy which endure.*

—Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

That is, "Ye have heard how eminent Job was, both for his sufferings and his patience, and you have seen (it is set before your eyes in his story) what an end the Lord made with him, giving him double in this world for what he lost; therefore, though you may be losers for God, yet fear not that you shall be losers by him." Learn hence, 1. That it is good and useful in our afflictions, to propound Job's pattern and example to our own imitation. He was famous for his suffering, and as famous for his patience; do you suffer various kinds of affliction? Do you suffer in your body, in your spirit, in your nearest relations, in your dearest earthly comforts? And under all these do you suffer the heaviest censures for hypocrisy? It is but Job's portion, and if you compare notes, not half of his condition neither: so for his patience, let us propound that for our pattern too, and take this encouragement to do it, namely, that though Job discovered much impatience, cursing the day of his birth, &c. yet that is not here mentioned, but mercifully pitied, and pardoned, and graciously overlooked. Where the heart is upright with God, infirmities are not mentioned by him. Learn, 2. That our afflictions ought not so much to be considered in their nature and beginning as in their issue and end. *You have seen the end of the Lord.* God gives always a gracious end and a glorious end, to the afflictions of his people, and sometimes a temporal end also. Job had all these: let us, under the rod, wait upon God with Job's patience, and he will give us Job's end. Learn, 3. What an affectionate regard God bears to his children, in and under all their heavy sufferings; he is full of bowels, as the word signifies, truly compassionate, *very pitiful and of tender mercy.* As he has pardon for their sins, so he has pity for their afflictions; he is pitiful as well as merciful, yea, very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Observe, lastly, that the book of Job

is a real history not a parable. There was such a man as Job, how else could his patience be propounded as a pattern? And whence is it that we find him numbered with Noah and Daniel? Ezek. xiv. 14. As they were real persons, and truly prevalent in prayer, so was he, Job xlii. 10.

12 ¶ But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

Observe, That an oath here is not absolutely forbidden, but restrained: *Above all things, my brethren,* Note, with what vehemency and earnestness the apostle speaks, *Swear not*, that is, swear not vainly and rashly, swear not lightly and profanely, swear not unduly, by any of the creatures, (but by the Creator only,) which was a sin that the Jews were differently guilty of: *But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay;* accustom yourselves to a true simplicity and plainness of speech, in affirming or denying, letting oaths alone, *lest ye fall into condemnation;* that is, plainly, into the condemnation of hell. Learn hence, 1. That rash and vain swearing, or profane oaths, are an high abuse of the dreadful name of God, and a mighty provocation to him; verily there is no sin that doth more weary the patience of God, because there is no sin that doth more banish the fear of God out of our hearts. Learn, 2. That the great end of speech being to communicate the sense of our minds to each other, we ought to use such plainness and simplicity in speaking, that we may believe one another without oaths, or more solemn religious asseverations. But yet, 3. To take an oath upon a solemn occasion, when lawfully called thereunto, is a christian and necessary duty.

13 ¶ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.—

Here Observe, 1. That affliction is a praying season. Prayer is a duty never out of season, but never more in season than in and under affliction. Observe, 2. That though the time of affliction be a special time when a saint prayeth, yet it is not the only time, he prays at all times, because he loves to pray; he prays then, because he especially stands then in need of prayer. A carnal heart has no mind to the duty; he visits not God unless God visits him; but a good man prays continually, prays without ceasing, in health and sickness, in poverty and want; when the candle of the Lord shines about his tabernacle, as well as when he walketh through darkness.

—Is any merry? let him sing psalms?

He that prays makes music in the ears of God; he that sings psalms, performs a duty suitable to his condition. Several conditions require several duties, and all duties are to be performed suitably to our several conditions. Singing is proper to a prosperous state; both to sing God's praises, and to sing to his praise: prayer is proper to an afflicted condition; it is our best remedy, because it leads us to God our best refuge: therefore if any be afflicted, let him pray to God to alleviate and sanctify his affliction. *Is any merry? let him sing psalms* of praise to that God who hath given him this cheerfulness of spirit.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him.—

Some observe, 1. That St. James doth not say, "Is any man sick? let him pray;" but let him send for others to pray with him, and for him; plainly supposing, that the sick man is very unfit to pray himself, or to pray for himself; in other afflictions let him pray, but in sickness let others pray for him, he having enough to do to grapple with his grief, and to conflict with his affliction: a diseased body unfits the mind for holy duties. Yet observe, 2. It is one thing to want an heart in sickness to pray for ourselves, and another thing to want ability to pray for ourselves. Many desire the prayers of others in sickness, who wanted hearts to pray for themselves in health. This is a sad symptom that the soul is as sick, yea, more dangerously sick than the body. Add to this, that the prayers of others are very rarely beneficial to us, unless we pray, or have a desire to pray, for ourselves. Observe, 3. This sick man's duty, not only to desire prayer, but to send to the elders of the church to pray for him, and with him. *Quest.* But if the sick neglect to send, may the minister neglect to go, if he knows of the sickness? Doubtless we ought to go, if we know of it, whether they send or not, for they want our prayers and help most when they desire it least: and by refusing to go, we may lose the last, and perhaps the best opportunity of doing good unto them. If our people through stupidity and insensibleness, omit their duty in sending for us, God forbid, that either through pride or sluggishness, we should neglect our duty in going to them; too, too often we never hear our people are sick, till the bell tells us they are dead: if therefore by any means we gain the knowledge of their condition, let us apply ourselves with all our might to their condition, lest God be more angry with us for not going to them, than with them for not sending to us, imitating our Lord, who was found of them that sought him not.

—Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Some make this anointing with oil to be medicinal practice among the Jews, and that they administered it physically: but why then must the elders administer it? The physician might have done it as well as they. True, but the elders are sent for, that they, applying this corporeal remedy, might join with it spiritual physic of prayer, good admonition and comfort. As if a sick person should send for the minister at his taking of physic, that he might then pray with him, counsel and comfort him. Others make this anointing with oil a religious act. Christ empowered his apostles to work miracles, and amongst others, they had the gift of healing the sick, whom they anointed in the name of the Lord, or by the authority of the Lord; but the gospel being sufficiently confirmed, this gift of healing is ceased and therewith the right of anointing; therefore the church of Rome keep up an idle ceremony in anointing the sick, unless they had a miraculous power to heal the sick: to keep up the rite, unless they could produce the effect; to pretend to the anointing, without the power of healing, is a mere piece of pageantry; besides they anoint those that are given over for dead, and the apostle's anointing was for the benefit of the living, as appears by the following verse.

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;—

Here our apostle shows the good effects of this anointing and praying; yet note, that he ascribes the sick man's recovery, not to the oil, but to the prayer; *the prayer of faith shall save the sick.* The moral means is taken notice of before the ritual and ceremonial: *the prayer of faith shall save the sick.* There was required to the miracle faith, both in the elder, and in the sick person, to save, that is, to recover the sick; yet mark, it is said, *The Lord shall raise him up,* to note, that the efficacy of faith lies in the object of faith; it is not faith properly, but God called upon in faith, that saveth the sick: the efficacy of faith is not from its own merit, but from God's power and grace.

—And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

If he have committed sins: why, is there any question to be made of that? No; but if he has committed such sins as brought this sickness upon him, they shall be forgiven him, upon this prayer of faith; if any special or particular sin has drawn down this disease upon him, it shall be remitted, and the disease removed; where the sickness is by way of chastisement, the healing is a testimony of God's forgiveness. Learn hence, How absurd is the popish sacrament of *Extreme Unction*: how can they gather a perpetual ordinance from an action that was extraordinary and miraculous, and long since ceased? Or apply a sacrament to dying persons, from a rite used upon persons who were not to die, but to be raised from sickness? Or how can they promise to him forgiveness of sins, to whom they cannot promise that recovery which was the token of it?

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.—

Note here, 1. That there is a time and season when it is our duty to confess our sins, not only to God, but to one another, to a pious and prudent minister, to an injured and wronged neighbour, to those that have been tempted by us, and have consented with us in sinning. Note, 2. How absurdly the papists ground their practice of auricular confession upon this text, here is not one word spoken of a priest, nor of our confessing to him; and if so, the text proves it the priest's duty to confess to the people, as much as the people's to confess to the priest, for the duty required is mutual, *confess one to another*; accordingly the words are generally understood of confessing private injuries one to another; that the sick person must reconcile himself to his neighbour as well as to God, that he may recover; for so it follows, *pray for one another that ye may be healed*; intimating, that it is the duty of christians to confess their miscarriages and private injuries one to another, and by their prayers, to succour, help, and relieve each other; it is the duty of the strong to pray for the weak, and the strong may be strengthened by the prayers of the weak.

—The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,

Observe here, 1. The qualifications of that prayer, which at that time was effectual for the recovery of the sick person in a miraculous manner, it may be rendered an inspired prayer; as they that were actuated by the evil spirits, so such as were moved by the impulses of the Holy Spirit, were called *Ενεργούμενοι*, in a good sense, the phrase properly signifies a prayer inwardly wrought and excited, and implies the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, and the force and vehemency of a christian's spirit and affection exerted and put forth in the duty; in-wrought prayer, or prayer that works in and upon our own hearts, has a mighty prevalency with God. Observe, 2. The qualification of the person praying, a *righteous man*, not legally righteous, one in a state of sinless perfection, but a person justified by faith, and whose faith is fruitful in good works. Observe, 3. The prevalency and efficacy of such a person's prayer; it *availeth much*: he doth not say how much, that is better experienced than expressed; it *availeth much* for ourselves, sometimes more for others than for ourselves. Note, That the fervent prayers and intercessions of the righteous have a mighty prevalency with God, both for themselves and others.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Our apostle in these words proves the general proposition he had laid down, that the fervent prayer of a righteous man *availeth much*, by a particular instance, the example of Elias: who seemed to carry the keys of heaven at his girdle, to shut and open the heavens at his pleasure, 1 Kings xvii. 1. "As the Lord liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain, but according to my word:" the apostle here tells us what word this was, namely, a word of prayer, and not a word of command; *Elias prayed, and the heavens gave rain*; he *prayed in prayer*, so the original; that is, he prayed with faith and fervency, according to the will of God revealed

to him; though he was a man subject to the common infirmities of human nature with ourselves, yet his passions did not hinder the prevalency of his prayers; nothing has wrought such wonderful effects in the world as prayer; it made the sun stand still in heaven, it brought fire out of heaven, 1. Kings i 10. and here it shut up the windows of heaven, that it rained not for the space of three years and six months: it has a divine kind of omnipotency in it.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with an exhortation to the duty of fraternal correction and christian admonition: "If, says he, any one among you, who hath made an outward profession of christianity, shall, for fear of persecution, or otherwise turn aside from the rule of the gospel, whether in matters of faith or practice, such a person, either minister or private christian, as shall be instrumental, by prayer, reproof, or counsel, to recover him out of that wandering and backsliding condition, shall have the honor to *save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*; that is, he shall be a means of bringing him to a sight of his sins, and to seek a pardon of them, which is the only true and happy way of hiding and covering of them." Learn hence, 1. It is not sufficient that every one takes care of his own soul, but he must also watch over the souls of others; there is no brother so mean in the christian church, but the care of his salvation belongeth to all in christian communion. Learn, 2. What great honor God puts upon the creature, in calling him a Saviour to a restored and converted brother, *he shall save a soul from death*; but when God puts the glory of his own work upon the head of the creature, what cause has he to lay the crown of his excellency at the foot of God? When the honor of the supreme cause is put upon the instrument, the instrument ought to ascribe all the efficacy and efficiency to the first cause, saying, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise. Amen.*

THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
SAINT PETER.

The writer of this and the following epistle was St. Peter, who styles himself an Apostle of Jesus Christ, not the Universal bishop and head of the church; no where do we find this holy and humble apostle assuming, though we often find the apostate church of Rome giving him an uncontrollable monarchy, and sovereign dominion, over the whole church of Christ, and over the apostles themselves, and their successors: and accordingly to interpret those words of our Saviour to St. Peter, St. John xxi. Pasce oves, Feed my sheep, in such a rampant sense as they have done, could never with any confidence have been offered to the reason of mankind, had not these men subdued their reason to their interest, and subjected both to an implicit faith and blind obedience. Saint Peter, being the apostle of the circumcision, writes this epistle to the believing Jews, and proselyted Gentiles, who were of the dispersion, scattered abroad in divers countries, of whom he had an especial charge, and of whose conversion he had been a principal instrument.

The design of the epistle was to confirm them in the Christian religion, to encourage them to constancy under the sharpest persecutions and fiery trials for the same, and to excite them to the practice of particular duties incumbent upon them in every capacity and relation in which they stood, beautifying and adorning their holy profession by an holy and becoming conversation. And accordingly thus he writes unto them:

CHAPTER I.

PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

Observe here, 1. The penman of this epistle described by his name, *Peter*; by his office, *an apostle*; by the author of his office, *Jesus Christ*. This name *Peter* was given by him our Saviour, and signifieth a stone, a rock, probably for his confession and acknowledgment of Christ, the Rock upon whom the christian church was built; his call to the office, first of a disciple, and then of an apostle, was from Christ himself. It is a singular support to the ministers of the gospel of Christ, under all their discouragements, to consider whose officers they are, and from whom they have both their mission and their message; their authority and their abilities for the sacred function; *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Observe 2. The persons to whom the epistle is di-

rected, to the strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, &c. that is, to such of the converted Jews and proselyted Gentiles as were dispersed into several countries exiled and banished from house and home, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion, which they make a faithful profession of. Learn hence, That a state of exile and banishment from outward comforts and privileges, has been, and may be, the lot and portion of a people that are exceeding dear to Almighty God; "To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Observe, 3. How he comforts them in this their persecuted condition, by declaring to them the great things which God has done for them in their *election, vocation, and sanctification*; assuring them that God had chosen them out of the world according to his foreknowledge and unsearchable counsel, and effectually called them to the participation of his grace, sanctifying them by his Spirit, that they should obey the truth, and by faith be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and thereby be brought into a state of perfect peace and reconciliation with God. Learn hence, 1. That God has certainly chosen some to eternal salvation, 2. That such as are chosen to happiness as the end, are also chosen to holiness as the mean; "Elect through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience." Sanctification is the fruit of our election, and obedience the end of our sanctification. Learn, 3. That sanctification and justification always accompany one another; here is sanctification and sprinkling with the blood of Christ, joined together; where note, Christ, as Mediator, has blood; his blood was shed, his blood that was shed must be sprinkled, and by faith applied; and we can never discern our interest in the blood of Christ, till we are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and our hearts and lives wrought unto obedience. Justification and sanctification, though distinct in their nature, yet are inseparable in their subject. Observe, lastly, The salutation here sent to these dispersed saints, *Grace and peace be multiplied*. Where note, 1. The connection, *grace and peace*. 2. The order, first grace, and then peace. 3. The option, *be multiplied*. The blessings prayed for, are the choicest, the sweetest, and the best of blessings; *grace and peace*; together with the augmentation, and abundant increase of both. *Grace and peace be multiplied*. Learn, That there is nothing that the ministers of Christ do more passionately desire, and more earnestly endeavour, than to see their people brought into, and preserved in a state of favor and peace with God, and enjoying a multiplied increase of all spiritual and temporal blessings from him.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle breaks forth into gratitude and thankfulness to God, for those special blessings, which by his ministry, were conferred upon these converted christians, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Blessing and praise are due to God for

the least mercies received from God, because we are less than the least, much more for spiritual and eternal blessings, which are the greatest mercies that either God can give, or we receive. Observe, 2. The special mercy which he thus solemnly blesses and gives thanks to God for, namely, their regeneration; "For begetting them to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, &c. according to his abundant mercy." Where note, 1. The benefit declared, they were begotten again to a hope of salvation; by means of sin, all influences of grace were suspended, and all hopes of salvation were cut off. Christ's interposition for us makes our condition hopeful, and the fallen angels hopeless. Note, 2. The qualification of that hope which christians are begotten to, it is a *lively hope* in opposition to a dead hope, and to a languid and languishing hope; the christian's hope is an effectual hope, which proceeds from faith, and promotes holiness. A *lively hope* is a hope that makes us lively, joyful and comfortable in our lives: a hope that puts life into us. Note, 3. The means whereby we are begotten to this hope, and that is, *by the resurrection of Christ from the dead*; not by the bare act of his resurrection, but by the virtue and power of it, we are raised to a spiritual life by it, and our hopes of eternal life are thereby strengthened and confirmed. The justification of our persons, the regeneration of our natures, the resurrection of our bodies, the glorification of our souls and bodies, are singular fruits and benefits of Christ's resurrection. Well might the apostle then say, that we are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Note, 4. The moving and impulsive cause from which regeneration, and all other spiritual blessings, do proceed and flow: the mercy and goodness of God. "According to his abundant mercy he has begotten us again." In the matters of salvation nothing is owing to our merit: for demerit cannot merit, but all is due to divine goodness, and undeserved mercy; this is the fountal cause of all our favors. Note, 5. The nature of that happiness which believers are begotten to a lively hope and expectation of; it is here styled an *inheritance*. Heaven is an inheritance, and as such it is given to children, to all God's children, to none but his children; it is an inheritance dearly purchased, yet freely given: Christ is the sole purchaser of it; no joint purchasers with him: the saints are called joint-heirs with Christ, but never joint purchasers; yet remember, that though we cannot purchase this inheritance in a way of merit, we may forfeit it by our demerit, and provoke our heavenly Father to disinherit us. Note, 6. The properties and excellencies of this inheritance which believers are raised by Christ to the expectation of; it is an inheritance *incorruptible*; an enduring possession; not subject to decay, having nothing in it that can corrupt it, or corrupt us in the enjoyment of it. *Undefiled*, heaven is an holy habitation: the holiness of heaven is the most considerable part of its happiness. Sinners, therefore, that despise holiness, despise the richest jewel in the crown of glory. *It fadeth not away*, it withereth not; glory is a flower which will eternally retain its freshness and verdure. *Reserved in the heavens for us*: heaven is a country where the saints' inheritance lies: here it is reserved or laid up safe, by the purpose and pleasure of God, by the purchase, possession, and intercession of Christ; and to be able to say [for us,] and be particularly assured of heaven, is a special comfort.

5 Who are kept by the power of God

through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Here the apostle seems to pre-occupate and prevent a objection. Some might say, "Though the saints' inheritance be safe in heaven yet are they in danger here on earth;" be it so, as if our apostle had said, yet they are and shall be kept by God's power and their own faith to eternal salvation. Note here, 1. *We are kept*; it implies, we are in danger, in great danger of missing salvation, by reason of the number, power and policy of our spiritual enemies, corruption and sin within, the devil and the world without; but we are kept as in a garrison; so the word signifies: saints are preserved like walled cities; the general whom they fight under, and hold out for, preserves them, by sending in fresh recruits, supplies from the Holy Spirit, and by cutting off such succours as our lust and spiritual enemies would send forth against us, so that they starve, and shall not vanquish us, but we them, *We are kept*; eternal thanks for such a keeper! Note, 2. What it is believers are kept and preserved to, namely, *salvation*: he does not say they are or shall be kept from trouble and affliction; that their fingers shall not ache in this world; he has made no such promise, and we must expect no such preservation, but the contrary; *in the world ye shall have tribulation*, says Christ, the captain of our salvation, John xvi. But safety and rest, happiness and ease, shall be our portion in the coming world. Note, 3. The means by which we are thus kept unto salvation. 1. On God's part, *almighty power*. If left one moment to ourselves, we become a prey to every temptation. How did the devil baffle and befool Adam in innocency, when he had his wits about him, by being left in the hand of his own counsels? Lord, in a worse hand thou canst not leave us than our own. 2. On our part we are kept through faith. Our own endeavour must accompany God's power, in order to our preservation. *We are kept by the power of God through faith*; by both jointly, by neither singly, God's power will not keep us without our care, neither can our care secure us without the help of his power. We and our faith must be kept by the power of God; what God does for us, he does by us: he requires the use of our faculties, and the concurrence of our own endeavours in order to our salvation. Note, 4. The time when the saints' complete salvation shall be revealed to them, and they have the full and final fruition of that;—*Ready to be revealed in the last day*. Mark, The saints' salvation in heaven is a mystery, an hidden mystery, not yet revealed; revealed only to saints on earth by faith, to saints in heaven by sight; but the full revelation is not to be expected and enjoyed by glorified saints before the day of judgment, called here *the last time*; *ready to be revealed in the last time*. Our apostle told us, ver. 4. it was reserved in heaven for us, kept safe for us, but kept close in heaven; it is an inestimably rich treasure; they that are heirs of it on earth, yea, they that are possessed of it in heaven, do not as yet fully understand and know the transcendency of it, but it shall be revealed to them at the last day.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice; That is, in the belief and expectations of which glorious and incorruptible inheritance in heaven, ye now joy and rejoice here on earth: plainly intimating, that a believer may be assured of his title to the glorious inheritance above, and both may and ought to rejoice in it abundantly below. Observe farther, by what way and method God brings his people to heaven, it is by *heaviness*, by afflictions, yea, by *manifold afflictions*. As if he had said, "you that are the present candidates for heaven, the heirs of salvation, must not think yourselves past the rod and the ferula; and that you are to expect nothing but comfort, and to do nothing but rejoice in the hopes of your salvation. But I tell you, you may have need of heaviness before you get to heaven, and of manifold temptations for the mortifying your corruptions, before you enter upon an inheritance incorruptible." Observe, 3. The supposition made concerning the necessity of a believer's afflictions, *If need be*, intimating, 1. That we should never feel any affliction from the hand of God, never be in heaviness, if there were not need. And, 2. That there is need that the holiest in this world should sometimes be made heavy, and that heaviness should be upon them for a season. We should always have calms and fair weather, never any storms or tempests from God, did not our needs call for it. As we need our daily bread, so verily do we need a daily rod: both the rod of God's mouth to admonish and reprove us, and the rod of his hand to chasten and correct us: "Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be, through manifold temptations." Hence learn, That the trials and afflictions which God exercises his children with, are many, yet they never feel them but when they need them, and then only for a season. As the coldness of the winter kills the weeds in our grounds, so the cold blasts of affliction (under the mortifying influences of the Holy Spirit) kill our corruptions in our souls. Perpetual shinings, and fair seasons, are reserved for heaven; cold blasts, and nipping frosts, are needful and useful here on earth; *Ye are in heaviness for a season if needs be*. Learn farther, That as God doth not afflict us but when there is need, so he will not afflict us more than there is need. *Ye are in heaviness for a season*: we shall not be afflicted an hour longer, nor shall our cross be a drachm or a grain heavier than God thinks needful. Observe, 4. The happy effect and fruit of the saints' manifold temptations: they all work for their advantage; they receive good, and not hurt by them; no more hurt than the gold receives by the fire; *That the trial of your faith*; that is, that your tried faith, being more *precious than gold*, faith is more precious than gold, because more pure, more durable, especially when purified in the furnace of affliction. A good man is no loser, but a great gainer by being tried. He, who before had much dross in him, comes out of the furnace as gold, without losing any thing either of its weight or worth; nothing is consumed but the dross and rubbish of his corruptions. O happy consumption! grace

is not only grace still, but more gracious, yea, glorious after trial, "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth." Observe lastly, That faith must be tried on earth, before it be crowned in heaven; and after it is tried, it shall certainly be crowned, and found unto praise, honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That the trial of a christian's faith in their manifold afflictions and temptations now, will bring abundance of honor and glory to God in the day of Christ; yea, not only to God, but to ourselves. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment now, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory then."

8 Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory :

In these words our apostle commendeth the faith and love of those Jews to whom he wrote: that although they had never seen Christ in the flesh, as others did, yet they did truly love him, and their faith caused them to triumph and rejoice in him. Learn hence, That it is the property and practice of a believer to love an unseen Saviour, and to rejoice in him, and in the hopes of eternal life by him. Inference, If such as never saw Christ but with a believing eye, do yet love him superlatively, and rejoice in him unspeakably, how will they love him and rejoice in him, who shall see him with a glorified eye, and behold him face to face.

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10 ¶ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you :

11 Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Observe here, 1. The end, that is, the reward of a christian's faith, it is the salvation of his soul; of his soul eminently, but not exclusively of body and soul both. The complete salvation of soul and body both with Christ in heaven, shall be the end and reward of the believer's faith. Ob-

serve, 2. The diligent search into, and enquiry after the nature of this salvation, which was made by the prophets of the Old Testament. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently:" that is, by prayer, meditation, and study, they searched after the farther and clearer knowledge of this great salvation, and the kingdom of the Messiah, when should be the time of his sufferings and humiliation, which were to precede his glory and exaltation. Observe, 3. The success of this their enquiry and search, they were answered by God, and received this revelation from him, that they themselves were not the men that should see the Messiah, and his special kingdom; and that the things which they prophesied of, were not to be fulfilled in their own times, but in after times; and accordingly the things foretold by the prophets, he assures them, were clearly manifested to them by the apostles, which were endued with an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, sent down upon them at the day of Pentecost: "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things now reported unto you." Observe lastly, The sublimity, and transcendent excellency of those gospel mysteries which are now revealed; they are so ravishing and transporting, that the holy angels desire to pry into them, *Which things the angels desire to look into.* Learn thence, That the glorious mystery of man's redemption and salvation by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is an object worthy of the admiration and contemplation of the adoring angels. They admire the person of the Redeemer, they admire the author and contriver of the work of redemption, they admire the subjects redeemed, they admire the manner and method of our redemption, they admire the finally glorious state which the redeemed are brought into, and possessed of, and they pry into these things, as the cherubims looked upon the ark, with a curious and accurate inspection, with an earnest and affectionate inspection; they holily admire the wisdom of this glorious contrivance, though even their raised and enlarged capacities can never be able fully to comprehend it.

13 ¶ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Our apostle, having laid before them their high and glorious privileges in the foregoing verses, comes now to excite them to the practice of several needful and important duties in this and the following verses: The first of which is vigilance and watchfulness; preparation and readiness of mind; *Gird up the loins of your mind*; an allusion both to runners and waiters; to such as run in a race, and to such as wait upon their master who both gird up their clothes (which in those eastern countries they wore down to their heels) that they might not hinder or trouble them either in running or waiting. Next, to be sober, and keep up their hope steadfastly and perseveringly to the end, for that grace and salvation, for that perfection in holiness and glory, which God will certainly give us at the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. Here note, 1. The grace and duty which they are exhorted to be found in the exercise of, and that is *hope*, to persevere in hope unto the end: That is a divine grace, and

necessary duty, whereby a believer for Christ's sake expects and waits for all the great and good things which God has promised; but the christian at present not received. Note, 2. The direction given in order to the exercise of this grace and duty of hope, *Gird up the loins of your mind.* Habits of grace are altogether unprofitable to us, without they be excited by us, and stirred up in us. When we pray, when we hear, we must gird up our loins in praying, and hearing; or, in the prophet's phrase, *Stir up yourselves to take hold on God.* A man upon his sick bed must gird up the loins of his mind to bear his affliction, else he will never profit by it, nor answer the end of God in it. No grace can be exercised, no duty can be performed by a soul ungirded; *Gird up the loins of your mind, that ye may hope, &c.*

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance;

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

The next duty he exhorts them to, is to answer the engagements which their adoption laid them under; they were now the children of God, and as such must, 1. Be obedient to their heavenly Father, walking in the path of his commandments, and no longer according to the former lust, which they were captivated by, and enslaved unto, in the time of their ignorance, when they knew not God. And, 2. They must imitate their heavenly Father in the love and practice of universal holiness: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy." Observe, 1. Christians must make God the pattern of their holiness, and be holy as God is holy, though not as holy as God is; the command obliges to a conformity, not to an equality; as God is really holy, positively holy, strictly and exactly holy, universally holy, unchangeably holy, so must we labor to be holy both towards God and man, which is to be *holy in all manner of conversation.* Observe, 2. Christians are here required not only to make God the pattern of their holiness, but the motive of their holiness; *be ye holy, for I am holy.* Seeing our God is an holy God, therefore we that are his people must be holy also. Our apostle here represents the holiness of God both as a rule and as a motive of that holiness which should be acted by us. And whereas the apostle says, *It is written be ye holy;* It plainly intimates, that God has in all former ages obliged all persons, who pretend any relation to him as his children, to be holy as he is holy: though not as to equality, yet as to imitation; though not in measure and degree, yet in quality and kind. God is the original of all holiness, and the first man he created was after his own likeness; and every one that is renewed, is said to be *created after God in righteousness and true holiness.* What is godliness but God-likeness? And what is holiness but the conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and the conformity of our lives to the will of God?

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;

If ye call on the Father, that is, if ye call God your Father, and call upon him by worshipping and owning of him, who without any respect of persons, or any regard had to nations, Jew or Gentile, judgeth of every man now, and will judge every man according to his works hereafter, see that you pass the time of your pilgrimage and sojourning in this world in holy and obedient fear. Learn, 1. That such as call God Father, ought to walk in obedience before him as his sons: *If ye call on the Father.* Learn, 2. That he whom we call Father, is, and will be our Judge, not a short-sighted, but a sharp-sighted Judge, impartial in judgment, judging all persons according to their works, and judging all works as they really are, and not as they outwardly appear to be. Learn, 3. That christians here in this world are but strangers, and their life upon earth a pilgrimage, which they are daily passing. Learn, 4. That the whole time of a christian's pilgrimage ought to be passed in an holy, cautious, reverential, and obedient fear of God. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers:

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20 Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you:

21 Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

Still our apostle is pressing christians to the love and practice of holiness, and a reverential fear of God, by fresh arguments and motives, particularly from their redemption; saying, that they could not but be sensible that they were redeemed with very costly price, not with silver and gold, which yet would ransom kings, but by the precious blood of Christ, whom the paschal lamb typified, and who was from eternity fore-ordained to the office of a Mediator, though he was not manifested in the flesh till these last days, for the good and benefit of those who by him do believe in God that raised Christ from the dead, and gloriously exalted

him at his right hand, upon which account their faith and hope may safely and comfortably rest in God. Note here, 1. That thralldom, bondage, and slavery of our sinful state, before we were redeemed. Note, 2. The impotency and inability of all outward things, be they never so rich, precious, and costly, to redeem and ransom an enslaved sinner, 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold.' All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul, nay, the blood of all the creatures in the world offered up in sacrifice to the justice of God could have been no sufficient compensation. Note, 3. That the redemption of every soul cost no less than the precious blood of the Son of God, that spotless Lamb, who, by the sacrifice of his death, atoned divine displeasure. Note, 4. That God the Father fore ordained Jesus Christ his Son to this blessed office of a Redeemer before the foundation of the world, though he was not manifest in the flesh till these last times. Note, 5. That by Christ the Redeemer we are taught to know God, and to believe in him who raised Christ from the dead. Here observe, How the Socinians wreat and misapply this text, where we are said by Christ to believe in God. Thus they argue, "He by whom we believe in God, is not that God in whom we believe, because the means of faith can never be the object of faith: but Christ is he: The apostle says here by whom we believe in God, therefore Christ is not God." *Ans.* Christ considered in his human nature, in which he died, and was raised for us, is he by whom we believe in God, that is, own him to be able to raise us from the dead, but this hinders not his being God according to his divine nature, by which he did actually raise himself from the dead, John x. 18.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently;*

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

The next duty which our apostle exhorts these christians to, is the duty of brotherly love, to a gracious propensity of heart which a christian bears for Christ's sake to his neighbour, whereby he wills, and to his power procures all good for him, a brotherly affection which every true christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ for grace sake. This duty of brotherly love is often urged and enforced by Christ and his apostles. St. Peter here tells them, that seeing by the power of Christ's Spirit, and the obedience of the gospel, they had purified themselves in some measure from self love, they should now labor to grow in the fervency and sincerity of their love one towards another. And the argument he uses to persuade them to love one another, is drawn from their relation to each other; they are all born again, and born alike; not brethren by corruptible generation only, but begotten of incorruptible seed, the word of God; therefore should they live in love together, as children of the same Father. Note here, The commendation given to the word of God, not to any inward word infused, but to the outward word preached, it is styled *incorruptible*

seed; from whence it follows, that the ministry of the word is the ordinary mean of the new birth, and the instrumental cause of our regeneration: "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, the word of God." Note farther, That such as are born of this incorruptible seed, ought to bear an incorruptible love to each other, as an evidence of their incorruptible and gracious nature; "See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently."

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away:

Our apostle closes the chapter, by setting before them the excellency of their spiritual regenerate state compared with all other excellencies and endowments whatsoever: *all flesh*, that is, flesh with all its glory, is a fading, dying, perishing thing; it flags like the grass, and fades like the flower. There are three excellencies in a flower; sweetness, which affects the smell; beauty, that affects the eye; softness and smoothness, which affects the touch: all these our apostle passes over, and speaks of the flower, not as flourishing, but as withering: not as springing up, but as fading away; "The grass withereth, the flower falleth away." Learn hence, That man when most flourishing, with all the ornaments of wit and wealth, beauty and honor, is fading, and near to withering. Thus David describes him, Psal. ciii; 15, 16 *As for man his days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth; the wind passes over it, and it is gone.* Though the flower be neither cut nor cropt, yet a breath of wind blasts it, and blows away the beauty of it: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass."

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

That is, the word of God, the mind of Christ, contained in, and revealed by the gospel, that abide and last for ever, and never be abrogated; the word of God is everlasting truth; it is so in its nature, and also in its effects upon the regenerate, it abideth for ever, and so doth their estate who are begotten again by it: The word of God is the incorruptible seed, or principle of regeneration; it is called *the word of eternal life*, because it brings those that love and obey it to eternal life, John vi. 68. Observe lastly, That the same word of God is now preached unto us, which was so highly commended by the prophets, apostles, and by Christ himself: *This is that word, the same word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle having, in the former chapter, made mention of their regeneration, or new birth, and taken notice of the instrumental cause of it, namely, the word of God, he comes, in the beginning of this chapter, to give several directions for our profitable hearing and receiving of the same; which having compared to milk, he shows how,

and after what manner, it should be desired, tasted, and digested by us, that we may grow thereby. And accordingly he thus bespeaks us:

WHEREFORE, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakingings;

Here we are first directed what to lay aside, in order to our fruitful and profitable entertainment of the word of God, namely, these five sins, *malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil-speaking*. Whence not in general, That an sin, much more if many sins, be kept close, and lie dormant within us, they will certainly hinder the efficacy of the word upon us. As the foulness of the stomach hinders the natural digestion, till it be purged out nothing can nourish within: In like manner, our apostle here advises to purge out these pestilent lusts of malice and guile, of hypocrisy and envy, &c. before we hear the word of God, as ever we expect to be nourished with it, and grow thereby. As sin hinders good from coming to us, so it hinders the word from working good in us, particularly *malice*, or inveterate anger harboured in the heart; *guile*, or deceit in words or actions; *hypocrisy*, or an appearance of friendship, when the heart is otherwise affected: *envy*, or grieving at another's good; and *evil-speaking* of all kinds, by lying, by slandering, by back-biting, by detracting, all which are contrary to the great command of love, and obstructive of the word of truth, by which we are born again, but it is observable, particularly, concerning *malice*, and *guile*, and *evil-speaking*, that our apostle puts the note of universality to them, *lay aside all malice, and all guile, and all evil-speaking*; importing, that though some other sins will stick close unto us, yet not a jot of malice or guile should be found in us, at least prevailing in us, of any kind, or in any degree or measure, for one drop of this deadly poison may destroy us; therefore lay aside *all malice and all guile, and all evil-speakingings*, &c.

2 As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

St. Peter having directed us, in our preparation before we come to hear the word, and shewn the necessity of laying aside an evil frame of spirit, he now directs us what we are to do when under the word, namely, that there be found with us a spiritual appetite to it, and that we have the same longing desires after it, that the child has after the breast; *As new born babes desire the sincere milk*, so desire you the incorrupted word of God, *that you may grow thereby*. *Quest.* How does the new-born infant desire its natural nourishment, its mother's milk? *Ans.* These four ways: First, It covets it with vehement and impatient desire, nothing will so well satisfy and please it as the breast, this will quiet it when nothing else will; thus the new-born christian hungers after the word with a vehement desire, nothing will content and satisfy him, neither gold nor silver, in the absence of the word of God. Secondly, The new-born infant

desires the milk from a deep sense of its inward wants, it is pinched with hunger and parched with thirst, and therefore cries for the breast; so is the christian sensible of his wants, of his want of knowledge, want of grace; "It is little, says he, that I know of myself, less of God, least of Jesus Christ! Oh! that by conversing with his word, I might know him more, and serve him better." Thirdly, The infant desires its mother's milk unmixed, as nature has prepared it without any artificial sweetening of it. Some little regard the wholesomeness of the food, but only admire the dexterity of the cook: They applaud the part of the preacher, when the word flows from the golden mouth of a celebrated orator; but the new-born christian desires the sincere milk of the word, without any composition of error, and without any such mixture of wit and eloquence as is inconsistent with the gravity and simplicity of the word they hear. Plain truths without art or varnish, may be conveyed with more warmth and vigour to the conscience, than all the charms of human eloquence from the most fluent and popular tongue, yet always remembering, that though the ministers of God must come in plainness, yet not in rudeness of speech. Fourthly, This desire of the babe after the sincere, unmixed and uncompounded milk, is always accompanied with endeavour, it hunts for the breast, and is not satisfied that the breast is in its eye, but is impatient till it sucks and draws, that nourishment may be conveyed and it grow thereby: Thus active and operative are the desires and endeavours of a sincere christian after the word of God; that which was seed to beget they find food to strengthen, they can never be satisfied without it, they cannot be satisfied with a little of it.

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

In these words our apostle declares the condition whereon our profiting, growing, and thriving by the word doth depend, namely, upon our tasting and experiencing its power, as it is the great instrumental cause both of our spiritual birth and growth. This taste is a spiritual sense of the goodness, power, and efficacy of the word, in conveying the grace of God unto our souls; in a taste there is sweetness and refreshment, but not fulness and satisfaction. Learn hence, 1. That God doth graciously sweeten the word to such a soul as doth desire sincerely to taste the sweetness of it. 2. That is but a taste of the sweetness of God and his word, which a christian partakes of in this life, satiety and satisfaction is reserved for another state.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Observe here, 1. The denomination, or title given to Christ, he is styled a *living stone*, and the *chief corner-stone*. 1. A *living stone*, that is, a lively stone, no dead foundation: and a life-giving stone, having not only life in himself essentially, but communicatively, imparting spiritual life to the whole building. Christ is not only a Head of authority, but a Head of vital influence to all his members; because he lives, they shall live also. 2. He is styled also the chief corner-stone, but in regard of sustentation, the corner-stone supports the whole building, the church's grace, the church's peace, the church's consolation, the church's salvation, are all upheld and maintained by him; and in regard of union, the corner-stone unites, ties, and knits the other stones together, that they should not drop out of the building. Christ alone unites the several stones of the spiritual building to himself, and one to another. And this corner-stone is of God's own immediate laying, *Behold, I lay in Zion a corner-stone*. Christ was first manifested and offered to the church of the Jews, and then to the rest of the world. Observe, 2. The titles given to believers. 1. They of lively stones are built a spiritual house. Believers are God's temple, dedicated to, and set apart for his special service, and also enjoying his gracious and special presence. "This is my rest for ever, says God, concerning the believer's heart; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." 2. They are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Christ. Learn, hence, That every christian in this life is a priest, and ought to offer up himself as a spiritual sacrifice or oblation unto God. In a sacrifice, there was a separation of the thing sacrificed from common use; the beast was separated from the rest of the flock, so must the christian be set apart from the rest of the world. There was an addition or dedication, or solemn consecration of the thing set apart to some holy and special use and purpose. Thus the christian that presents himself a living sacrifice unto God, does not only separate himself from sin, the world, and the flesh, but does addict and devote himself to God, to serve and please him, to honor and glorify him. Observe, 3. The application which believers make to Christ, in order to their being his spiritual temple, and a royal priesthood. To whom coming as unto a living stone; the particle denotes a continual motion, by which the soul gains ground, and gets nearer and nearer to Christ, they are daily coming by faith to him, and gradually advancing in the knowledge of him, and love unto him. Observe, lastly, The sweet fruit and blessed effect of their faith, whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded; that is, not ashamed, as a person who is disappointed of his hopes and expectations, he shall not be ashamed of his choice, he shall not be ashamed of his profession, he shall never be ashamed of the cause and interest of Christ, which he has espoused, and at all times appeared for; nor of the work and service of Christ; nor of the time and pains expended in that work and service; nor shall he ever be ashamed hereafter that he never was ashamed here.

7 Unto you, therefore, which believe, *he is precious* :—

To you belongs the honor of being built a spiritual house upon Christ, the chief corner-stone, which renders him deservedly precious to you, and of very high estimation with you: whatever mean, low and undervaluing thoughts the

wicked world have of Jesus Christ, yet he is highly esteemed by, and deservedly precious to, every believing soul; he is precious in the several relations he stands in to them, precious in regard of the great things he has done for them, precious in the rich supplies of grace he bestows upon them, and will be eternally precious to them, upon the account of those glorious mansions he has purchased and prepared for them.

—But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence *even to them* which stumbled at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

These words discover the great sin and danger of those who slight and neglect our Lord Jesus Christ, who stumble and take offence at him, either at the meanness of his person, or at the ignominy of his cross, or at the holiness and strictness of his doctrine, or at the freeness of his grace; whatever the occasion of their contempt may be, Christ will prove to them a burthensome stone, a rock against which they will split to their utter confusion; they will, in the close, bring ruin upon themselves, as a mad man do that dashes himself against a stone. Observe, next, How this contempt of Christ has prevailed in the world ever since his first coming into the world; how did the Jewish rulers, called here the builders, set him at naught; *the stone which the builders disallowed and stumbled at*; that is, the high rulers, whose office and duty it was to build up the church, having power in their hand to do it, but instead of building upon this corner-stone, they stumbled and took offence at him, and accordingly Christ is called *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*; yet this does not imply that Christ was the cause of their stumbling, but only the occasion of it, the object at which they stumbled without any cause but their own wickedness; for though it be said in the next words that they were appointed thereunto, the meaning is not, that God ordained them to disobedience, for then their obedience had been impossible, and their disobedience had been no sin; but God, in his just decree, appointed that destruction and eternal perdition should be the punishment of such obstinate and disobedient persons. Learn hence, that christians have no reason to be offended at the great number of unbelievers that are in the world, and at the sight of Christ's being rejected by multitudes in the world, it having been long ago foretold in scripture that thus it would be, and consequently it ought to be no occasion of offence that thus it is, Matt. xxi. 42. *Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner?*

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

10 Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

In these words our apostle acquaints these believing Jews, who were built upon Christ, the foundation-stone, that the same titles did now belong to them in a more excellent manner as christians, which were formerly given to their ancestors of the Jewish nation by God himself, Deut. viii. 6, 7. As the Jews of old were a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that is, they were a people chosen by God, before all other people whatsoever, to bear his name, and to bear witness to his truth; they were a people in covenant with him, and so inexpressibly dear unto him, that he that hurt them touched the apple of God's eye; in like manner these Jews, and proselyted Gentiles of the dispersion who were converted to christianity, have all the forecited titles belonging to them. *A chosen generation*, by effectual vocation separated from the world to the service of Christ, whose name they bear. *A royal priesthood*, that is, kings and priests: kings to reign with him, and priests to offer spiritual sacrifices to him. *An holy nation*: so are all the professors of christianity federally holy, and for that reason all the christian churches called out of the world, and dedicated to the service of Christ, are styled *saints* in all St. Paul's epistles. *A peculiar people*, in covenant with God, purchased by the blood of Christ. Next the apostle declares the end of all these distinguished favors being granted to them; namely, *that they might show forth the virtues*, that is, publish and proclaim the wisdom, power, goodness, and mercy, the righteousness and truth of God, who hath called them out of the darkness of sin, ignorance and misery, into the marvellous light of knowledge, faith, holiness, and comfort. Lastly, To enhance their thankfulness for all these distinguishing favors, he puts them in mind of what they were before their conversion to christianity; in times past they were not a people, that is, not a people beloved of God, and in covenant with him; the Lord having given the Jews a bill of divorce, and said to them, *Loammi, Ye are not my people*, Hos. i 9. but now, upon their believing in Christ, they were restored to all their church-privileges, by the special mercy and grace of God. Learn hence, that till persons subject themselves to the government of Christ, and become obedient to the gospel, they are all in God's account no people; to live without Christ in the world is a life worse than death. Learn, 2. That when a people are brought near to God by Jesus Christ, and partake of all the rich and invaluable blessings and privileges of the gospel, they are exceedingly indebted for all to the rich mercy and free grace of God. *Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

11 ¶ Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Observe here, 1. A dehortation, *Abstain from fleshly lusts*. *Quest.* What is here meant by *lusts*? *Ans.* Lust is either

habitual or actual; habitual or original lust is the corruption and depravation of the faculties of the soul, an aversion to every thing that is good, and a proneness to evil: actual lust is original sin put in motion; by fleshly lusts understand in particular those lusts which are conversant about sensual and fleshly objects. *Quest.* But what is it to abstain from fleshly lusts? *Ans.* It implies a total forbearance of all wilful sins: and at all times there is great difference between temperance and abstinence; the temperate man eats little, the abstinent nothing at all; every one then that would be accounted a christian, is to account it his great duty and interest to abstain from all fleshly lusts. Observe 2. The arguments which our apostle here makes use of to persuade christians to abstain from all fleshly lusts: the first is implied or included in the compellation. *Dearly beloved*, not of the apostle only, or chiefly, but of God, *Ἀγαπητοί*, the same word that Almighty God makes use of in expressing his love to his dear Son: as if he had said, "You that are so dearly beloved of God, look you to it that you abstain from what you know will be displeasure to him." The second argument is drawn from their present state and condition in the world; ye are *strangers and pilgrims* in the world, and therefore should act as strangers, who are not wont to be over much affected with objects that they see abroad, in their travels, no more should you. The third argument is taken from the peril and danger of these fleshly lusts to our precious souls, they *war against the soul*; that is, they war against the purity of the soul; they war against the dignity of the soul; against the peace of the soul; against the liberty of the soul; yea, against the life of the soul.

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by *your* good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

From the apostle's dehortation in the former verse, he comes to an exhortation in this, and the duty exhorted to is strict godliness, or holiness in all manner of conversation, *Having your conversation honest*; it is not a single action, but our general course and conversation, that denotes us either good or bad; and the word translated *honest*, signifies fair and amiable, beautiful and adorning, the doing nothing that is unseemly, or a blemish either to our person or profession; christians should not only live free from evil, but as much as may be from the very suspicion of evil. It is added, *among the Gentiles*, that is, amongst the idolatrous nations and people, who had not received the christian faith: great care must be always taken by the professors of christianity, that they do nothing which may increase the prejudices of the wicked world against religion and the ways of godliness, but remember that they are our watchful observers and bold censurers, and accordingly, endeavour that by a regular piety, a strict sobriety, a diffusive and extensive charity, we may render religion venerable to the world, and stop the mouth of slander as much as in us lies, by cutting off occasion from them that seek occasion. Observe farther, The apostle exhorts them to have their con-

versation *honest among the Gentiles*: he doth not say religious, though that be included, but outwardly square, strictly just and honest: this is that which the world judges us by; vain are all our pretences to piety, if we fail in honesty; we must make conscience of the duties of the second table, as an argument of our sincerity, and as an ornament to our profession. Observe next, What was then, and is now the lot and portion of good men, namely, to be evil spoken of as evil-doers: *Whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers*: Christ himself did not escape the scourge of the tongue, he was charged with gluttony, blasphemy, imposture, with having a devil, and with working miracles by the power of the devil; and it is sufficient for the disciple to be as his master was; yet mark, they speak evil of you, says the apostle, *as evil-doers*: to be an evil-doer is miserable, but not to be spoken of as an evil-doer, *Nemo miser sensu alieno*, no man is miserable in another man's evil opinion of him: a bad report, much less a bad opinion, makes no body a bad man; if it be enough to censure and accuse, who can be innocent? Observe again, The apostle exhorts these believing Jews to a conspicuous fruitfulness in good works, *that they may by your good works, which they shall behold*: implying that christianity sets men to work; (though we shall never be saved for our works, yet without working we can never be saved) and that good works may and ought to be so done, that men may behold them; though we must not do good works to be seen of men, yet we ought to do good works that we may be seen of men, Mat. v. 16. how else can men be patterns of good works, as they are required, Tit. ii. 7. if their good works be not conspicuous, and exposed to the world? Observe lastly, The blessed fruit and effect of good works, they cause such as behold them to *glorify God in the day of visitation*. This may be understood two ways, 1. With respect to believers, your good works will cause the wicked world to glorify God in the day of your visitation, that is, in the day of your persecution and affliction; though they afflict and persecute you, yet they shall glorify God when they behold your faith, your patience, your constancy in and under sufferings, in the day of your visitation. 2. With respect to the wicked; and so the day of visitation is the day of their conversion; and then the exhortation is to be so conspicuous in good works, that their adversaries may praise and glorify God, when he shall visit them with his grace, and draw them by his gospel, to believe in his Son: the day of saving conversion is a day of gracious visitation.

13 ¶ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Our apostle having exhorted them in general to take care that their conversation be honest among the Gentiles, he

now descends to particular duties, which he advises them to be very exemplary in the performance of. And the first is, in their subjection to governors and government; submit yourselves says he, to every civil ruler, both supreme and subordinate. Where observe, 1. How the apostle calls magistracy and civil government though originally of divine institution an *ordinance of man*: First, As to the end of it, being appointed and ordained for the good and benefit of man. Secondly, In reference to the kind of it, every nation having a liberty to choose what kind and form of government human prudence shall direct them to, as most agreeable to, and commodious for the people. Observe, 2. The quality of that obedience and subjection which is to be given unto magistrates, it must be *for the Lord's sake*, that is, in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye at the honor and glory of God. Christianity is no enemy to the civil rights of princes, it requires subjection for conscience' sake, Prov. viii. 15. *By me*, says God, *kings reign*; some read it, *for me*, kings reign; both are true: princes then hold not their crowns either from the pope or from the people, to be kicked off by the one, or to be plucked off by the other, at their pleasure: *Submit yourselves*, says our apostle, *to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*. Observe, 3. The reasons assigned why magistrates should be thus subjected and submitted to; namely, 1. Because *they are sent by God, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well*: the magistrate's office is to punish evil-doers; the fear of the magistrate's sword awes many men more than the fear of God's hand. If some men were not gods among them, many men would be devils among them; there would be no living among those who fear not the invisible God in heaven, if there were not some visible gods on earth to fear. 2. Because God will, by this their subjection given to magistrates and governors, silence, or as the word signifies, put a muzzle upon the mouth of the foolish and unreasonable men, who rage against his people, as if they were enemies to order and government: by this kind of well-doing in particular, namely, by subjection and obedience to rulers in the Lord, and for the Lord's sake, we put to silence the foolishness of wicked men.

16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Here our apostle answers an objection which he foresaw the christian Jews ready to make against this duty of subjection, namely, "that they were a free people, as Jews, and ought to preserve their liberty, and own no governors that were not of their own nation; and as christians they looked upon themselves as Christ's freemen." Whereas christian liberty exempts no man from the duty of civil subjection; the liberty Christ has purchased for believers, is a freedom from sin and satan, from sinful servitude; Christ makes all his subjects free, but it is with a freedom from spiritual bondage, and not from civil subjection; consequently to plead our christian liberty in bar to that obedience which we owe our superiors and governors, either civil or ecclesiastical, is to use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness; and as a covering for that disobedience which is hateful to God, and injurious to mankind, as being destructive of order and government, which is the beauty and the bond of human society.

17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood, Fear God, Honor the king.

Here are four very important duties recommended to us in this short verse. 1. To *honor all men*; no man is to be despised by us, but every man duly respected, according to his place and station. There is a common honor, and a tribute of civil respect, payable to every man, though some men forfeit it, by acting below men; a vile person is contemptible, though great; bare greatness is no guard against contempt; but the rage of a good man cannot obscure his worth, nor hinder him from true honor in the hearts, and from the tongues of wise men; honor all men, but especially good men. 2. *Love the brotherhood*; as there is a general respect due to all men, so there is a special love due to the brethren; to all the saints of what nation and country soever, of what estate and condition soever, high and low, rich and poor, of what judgment and opinion soever; therefore the apostle calls upon us to love the brotherhood, the whole fraternity and society of christians, by what unhappy names and characters of reproach soever distinguished; there is no better evidence of the life of grace in ourselves, than the love of grace in another. 3. *Fear God*; that is live in a religious dread of his name, as a glorious God, and a gracious Father: have a reverential awe and fear of his majesty immoveably fixed and implanted in your souls; to the production of which a double apprehension is necessary, namely, the inconceivable majesty of God, and the miserable vileness of the sinners. 4. *Honor the king*; this duty consists in reverencing their persons, in obeying their lawful commands, in a cheerful payment of their dues, in praying affectionately for them, and in praising God for the blessing of their government. Nero, the worst of kings, and the persecutor of christians was now on the throne, yet the command is express to honor him: and if we consider the words in their connexion and conjunction one with another, *Fear God, and honor the king*, we learn, that religion and the fear of God, do best qualify persons to be good subjects; this is the true and steady principle of loyalty, that obedience to governors that is lasting, is for conscience' sake to the command of God; where there is no fear of God in the heart, there will be no regard to the command of God in the life. Lastly, these words may be considered as in their conjunction, so in their order in which they stand: first, *Fear God*, and then *Honor the king*; intimating, that the fear of God must be the rule and guide of our subjection unto governors; it is no disparagement to our superiors to be under God, and so to be looked upon by their subjects; let such as pretend to fear God, show it, by being loyal subjects; and let such as would be thought most loyal subjects, evidence it by their awful and religious fear of God.

18 ¶ Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what glory is it, if when ye

be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently? this is acceptable with God.

Observe here, 1. The order and method of our apostle in the exhortations given to christians in this epistle; he first excites them to the general practice of their duty, and *to be holy in all manner of conversation*; and next binds upon them the performance of relative, and particular duties. In the foregoing verses he insisted upon the duties of subjects towards magistrates and governors; in this verse he propounds the duty of servants towards their masters. Thus let christian servants be subject to their masters, whether christian or heathen, giving due reverence and respect, not only to such as are kind and gentle, but to such as are froward and wrathful. Learn hence, that such as are in the lowest condition, being servants, yea the meanest of servants, may glorify God in that condition. Learn, 2. The servants, to the end that they may glorify God in their servile condition, must be subject to their masters with all fear: yea, even to wicked and froward masters: because the ground of their obedience is the will and command of God, which binds them to their duty to their masters, though their masters fail and fall short in their duty to them. Observe, 2. The several arguments made use of by St. Peter to enforce this duty upon servants. 1. This is highly acceptable and well pleasing unto God, and will procure a gracious reward. We shall certainly receive a glorious reward from God, for what we suffer wrongfully and unjustly from men. This is thank-worthy, and this is acceptable with God. 2. From the indecency of the contrary; because it is no virtue, but a just punishment, for evil-doers to suffer for their evil deeds: though to suffer patiently when we suffer justly is praise-worthy, yet not comparable with the praise of suffering patiently when we suffer unjustly. To do well, and then to suffer patiently, as for ill-doing, will meet with a gracious, yea, with a glorious reward. "What glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God."

21 For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps:

Observe here, Two farther arguments to excite and move christians to patience under unjust sufferings. 1. *Hereunto*, says the apostle, *are ye called*; that is, by your profession of christianity; religion obliges you to suffer, and to suffer with patience; you must bear the cross, before you wear the crown: to this you are called, and with this you have been acquainted. 2. You should not think much to suffer patiently, when you suffer unjustly, because Christ, your Captain and Guide, did so before you: he was the most meek and patient endurer that ever was, of the greatest and most wrongful sufferings that ever were. Note here, That although the example of our Saviour be here propounded to us with a special regard to the particular virtue of patience under unjust sufferings, yet it ought to be extended to all graces and duties, and improved as a pattern for the love and practice of universal holiness; *Leaving us an ex-*

ample, that we should follow his steps: the practice and example of the holy Jesus, in all ordinary acts of his obedience, ought to be propounded by all the disciples and followers as the grand pattern of our imitation: it being a safe and unerring example, an easy and familiar example, a powerful and encouraging example, and the most instructive and universal example, that ever was given to the world, being a most absolute and perfect pattern of holiness.

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Our apostle proceeds to represent and recommend our Lord Jesus Christ as a mirror and perfect pattern of patience under the sharpest sufferings: he acquaints us, 1. With his pure and spotless innocency; he did no sin, therefore could not suffer for doing evil; *No guile was found in his mouth*, neither in his expressions, nor in his actions; he never did ill either in word or deed, but was a perfect pattern of unblameable holiness. Next our apostle recommends to us his invincible patience under all his sufferings, telling us, that although Christ was most shamefully *reviled*, having the dirt of a thousand scandals, slanders, reproaches, and blasphemies cast upon him, yet *he reviled not again*, not giving them one ill word for all: and *when he suffered* all manner of injuries and indignities at once, being buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and crucified, though he had power sufficient to look them into nothing, to frown them into hell, yet *he threatened them not* with the least revenge, but prayed for his murderers, and committed his cause to a just and righteous God; "He threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Blessed Jesus! help us to imitate thy patience under sufferings and reproaches, and never let us be found rendering to any evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing for cursing, courtesies for injuries, affability for affronts; let us at no time be overcome of evil, but labor at all times to overcome evil with good. Note lastly, how our apostle takes notice, that the sufferings of Christ were not only exemplary but satisfactory; he did not only suffer patiently, but meritoriously: "He his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree." Note here, 1. What was born, *our sin*, that is, the guilt and punishment of our sin. 2. Who bare it, Christ *his own self*. This imports, 1. The singularity of his sufferings, he had no partner nor sharer with him in what he bare, *he trod the wine press alone*. 2. The sufficiency of his sufferings, *he himself bare our sins*; he who was God-man, the Lamb of God, and as such took away the sin of the world. 3. How he bare it, *in his own body upon the tree*; that is, in his human nature upon the cross; Christ suffered in his soul as well as in his body, and both were satisfactory to divine jus-

tice; but his bodily sufferings are only mentioned, because these were most visible. 4. The great ends of his sufferings, namely, expiation of sin, and mortification of sin; our sins were expiated on the tree by Christ's suffering for us in his own body; and by his death he also purchased virtue for mortifying sin in us, and for quickening us unto holiness of life, that, as he died for sin, we should die unto sin, and as he rose again and revived, never to die more, so should we, being dead unto sin, live no longer therein; "he himself bare our sins in his own body upon the tree; that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes," that is, by whose expiatory sufferings, *we are healed*; the wounds made in our souls by the guilt and power of sin, are mercifully and meritoriously healed; the guilt of sin is pardoned, the power of sin subdued, and all the invaluable fruits and benefits of the Redeemer's death obtained. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Observe here, 1. The state and condition in which both Jews and Gentiles were found before their conversion to christianity, they were like sheep going astray and lost: wandering in the ways of sin and unbelief, to their threatened ruin and destruction. Observe, 2. The tender care of Christ, that great and good shepherd, in bringing home these lost sheep upon his shoulders, (Isa. xl. 11.) into his fold of the church; *Ye are now returned to the shepherd*, to him that will feed you in green pastures, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom: the shepherd gives life to his sheep, and also lays down his life for his sheep. Observe, 3. The additional title given to Christ, he is styled *the bishop of our souls*; he that with tenderness, care, and diligence, doth inspect and visit all his charge; he is the universal Bishop, the Bishop of bishops, who has the charge of all the flocks, and of the shepherds too, and to whom all bishops and shepherds must become accountable. God Almighty give them all such grace to be faithful, such wisdom to be prudent, that love to him-self, that zeal for Christ, that tenderness for souls, such meekness and humility, such patience and charity, such mortification and self-denial, as become persons of their holy character and profession; always remembering, that the salvation of one precious soul, for which the great Shepherd died, is infinitely worth the most indefatigable labors of their whole lives: that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

LIKEWISE, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives:

2 While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear:

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, entered upon an exhortation to the practice of relative duties, particularly of subjects towards their rulers, and of servants towards their masters, he continues here his exhortation to husbands and gives in the former part of this chapter, beginning first with the wives' duty, (as did St Paul, in all his epistles,) because their duty of subjection is the most hard and difficult duty; "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." Observe, here, 1. The duty enjoined, *subjection*, that is, a loving and delightful obedience to the husband, owing of, and submitting to his authority, in compliance with the command of God. Observe, 2. The persons from whom and to whom this subjection is due, from every wife to her own husband, believer or unbeliever, christian or infidel; it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatever, for the wife to cast off this duty, which, by the law of her creation, and the express command of God, is bound upon her. Observe, 3. One especial reason assigned why such wives as have unbelieving, wicked, and unconverted husbands, should take particular care to express that fear and reverence toward God, that subjection and obedience, that chastity and conjugal affection towards their husbands, which the word of God calls for; namely that such husbands, as obey not the word, may without the word (preached) be won to the faith, by observing the efficacy and power of the word in the conversation of the wives. Learn hence, That the wives' holy and humble, pious and prudent, meek and patient, chaste and unsuspected conversation before God, and the world, does recommend not only their persons to the love and esteem of their husbands, but also their faith and holy religion, (which produces such good fruits,) to their approbation and choice; "if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

3 Whose adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Our apostle's next advice, here given to wives, is concerning their attire; this is laid down, first, negatively what it should not be, not an outward adorning, attended with great curiosity, and exactness in dressing the body with plaited hair, gold chains, gay and gaudy apparel, and such like. Where note, That plaited hair, gold chains, and costly attire, were then the attire of lewd women, whores only, and chiefly, were so decked and adorned, and therefore absolutely forbidden to the christian women by our apostle; but, when such attire ceases to be a mark of such distinction, it may be worn by christian women, provided it be done without pride, and without too great expence both of time and treasure: always remembering that gravity in apparel, and wearing such address as is soon put on, is most honorable, and best becoming christian wo-

men. "I had rather, says one, go like the wild Indians than have those thousands of hours to answer for, which some have spent between the glass and the comb." Observe here, that this text doth not absolutely forbid the wearing of ornaments, or costly apparel, by such persons whose quality will answer it, but only forbids pride and vanity, affectation and ostentation in the wearing of them; it is not only lawful to cover the body, but to adorn the body; Abraham had never sent ear-rings and bracelets to Rebecca, had they been sinful in their use; to wear such things beyond our purse and place, and to make ourselves or others poor by making ourselves fine, is very sinful, but otherwise lawful. Observe next, Our apostle's affirmative precept for the woman's adorning, with the reasons of it, ver. 4. "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, &c." Where note, 1. What must be apparelled and adorned, *the hidden man of the heart*, that is, the soul which wants both covering and adorning as well as the body, sin having made both naked to their shame. Note, 2. With what the hidden man of the heart must be apparelled, not with fine clothes, they will not cover a naked soul, but with the sanctifying graces of the spirit of God, with humility and meekness, with piety and prudence, which ornaments will never wax old, nor grow out of fashion, as others do, and are also of precious esteem with God himself, they are *in the sight of God of great price*; These are virtues in themselves, and render the possessors of them truly valuable in the sight and esteem of God. Upon the whole then, it evidently appears, that the negation here is not absolute, but comparative: as if the apostle had said, "God will have the hidden man of your heart adorned with grace, and delights more to see that, than your bodies adorned with precious jewels and costly apparel; and accordingly, if women affect finery, and would appear beautiful, let them choose the best ornaments, those of the mind and heart, which will attract the eye of God towards them, rather than those external ones, which serve only to draw man's eye to an admiration of them."

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Our apostle in these two verses enforces the exhortation and advice given to women in the foregoing verses, namely, to attire themselves with outward modesty and inward meekness, by a twofold argument: 1. From the example of holy women in general under the Old Testament, whose praise is in the Scripture, not for the external adorning of the body, but for their affiance and trust in God, and their subjection paid to their own husbands. Here note, 1. That holiness, or the duties of the first table, are required of women as well as of men: and God accepts holiness in them as well as in men, *the holy women*. Note, 2. That all holy women of old did, and always ought to make conscience of their duty to their husbands, particularly of subjection, that so good an example may be given by them, and

taken from them, for others to do the like; the virtue of good example is lasting, it may do good many years after the example is given; the example of these holy women had a fresh power to do good many thousand years after it was given, and will still have to the world's end. 1 Another argument is taken from the example of Sarah, who meekly obeyed Abraham, acknowledging him to be her lord; the daughters of whose faith, and the heirs of whose blessing, such wives will appear and prove themselves to be, who do as Sarah did, not suffering themselves by any fears or terrors to be diverted from, nor by any fits of passion and grief, to be disturbed in the performance of that duty which God requires, and the husband expects; *Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.* Observe here, 1. That the faithful practice, and conscientious discharge of domestic and relative duties is much taken notice of by God, and had in remembrance with him, particularly the wife's duty, faithfully discharged to the froward husband, is and shall be had in everlasting remembrance with God. Observe, 2. That the same duty and reverence, the same objection and obedience which Sarah gave to Abraham, is due and payable to every husband, else the apostle's argument is of no force. Some might say, Abraham was a great man: *Ans.* True, but Sarah obeyed him as her husband, as all wives ought to do, because the command of God requires honor and reverence to be given to all husbands, as husbands. Observe lastly, With what great and wonderful goodness and clemency the Lord is pleased to overlook the failings and infirmities of his upright servants. We find in Sarah's story, Gen. xviii. that she spake very unhandsomely and laughed indecently, when the angel came and told her she should have a son, but all that is passed by in silence, and that one good word she gave her husband, calling him *lord*, is mentioned here by St Peter to her eternal honor; the *Lord* has a gracious respect to a little pure gold, though mingled with much dross, and in a great heap of sin: if he can espy, he will accept of, a little spark of pure grace: O Lord, thou wilt not bring our infirmities and slips to account against us, nor rigidly reckon with us for the same, if our hearts be upright with thee; make us then sound in thy statutes, that we may not be ashamed.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Next our apostle proceeds to direct and exhort husbands to the practice of their respective duties: the general and comprehensive duty of the husband here mentioned is cohabitation, under which all matrimonial duties are contained; *Dwell with your wives according to knowledge*, that is, as becomes wise and understanding men, that well understand their duty, and, as the rule of christianity directs, giving just honor and due respect unto them, and exercising great tenderness towards them. Next observe, The reasons subjoined to enforce this duty upon husbands: 1. Because wives are the weaker vessels, subject to infirmities, and more liable

to contempt; therefore their husbands should contribute their wisdom and authority to support their honor, and preserve them, from being despised either by children or servants. 2. Because wives are not only co-partners with their husbands in their temporal good things, but also co-heirs of saving grace with them, *Heirs together of the grace of life.* 3. Because otherwise their prayers one with, and one for another, would be obstructed and disturbed, *That your prayers be not hindered.* Note here, That all sinful walking in general, but discord and discontent between husband and wife in particular, doth exceedingly hinder prayer, and it oftentimes hinders from the very act of prayer, that the duty is laid aside; it flats and deadens our spirits, and straitens our hearts in prayers, and it hinders the effect, fruit, and success of our prayers; it makes persons in that condition, that they have no heart to come before God, nor care to lift up their faces to him. From the whole learn, That it ought to be the mutual care of married couples so to order all their carriage towards each other, that in their houses they hinder not any holy duties; to hinder the practice of religion is repugnant to the great ends of this relation; some hinder by their wickedness, others by their discontent and frowardness; take we care that neither the husband nor wife's heart be deadened, nor their heart damped to holy duties by either of their sinful or froward behaviour; that family will be little in praying that is much in squabbling and contending one with another.

8 ¶ Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous;

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile;

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good: let him seek peace and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

Our apostle having finished his exhortation to relative duties, namely, of husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, he now enters upon another subject, namely, that of sufferings, showing a prudential way and manner how to avoid sufferings, that they may not come upon us; and next, how to avoid impatience under sufferings, if it be the will of God that they do come upon us. The former of these is spoken to in the verses now be-

fore us, in which he exhorts us to practise all those virtues which are apt to reconcile and gain the affections of men towards us, particularly he exhorts to unity and concord. *Be all of one mind*, to sympathize one with another in and under sufferings, and to bear with one another's infirmities, to be courteous towards all, sweet and affable in our demeanor, provided our courtesy be neither a snare to ourselves, nor an encouragement to others in their sins, abstaining from all injuries not provocations, from all revenge both in act and in desire, and reviling them that rail against us, but giving good words for bad ones, *For we are hereunto called that we should inherit a blessing*; that is, Christ by his gospel hath called, and by his example encouraged us to do, that we may be blessed. Next observe, That to encourage us to the perpetual practice of these virtues, our apostle assures us, that thereby we should most effectually consult the safety and comfort of our lives: *For he that loveth life*, that is, quietness and peace, which is the comfort of life, the likeliest way to obtain it is, to keep his tongue from speaking evil of others, and his lips from uttering falsehood and deceit; plainly intimating, that it is men's unbridled tongues which bring most of their troubles upon them. He advises also to *eschew evil*, to avoid and to abhor every thing that is vile and sinful; and to *do good*, that is, all the good we can to all men; to *seek peace*, and *ensure it*, that is, to depart sometimes from our own right to obtain peace, and to follow hard after it, though it flies before us. And farther, our apostle assures us, that this innocency of conversation is not only the way to gain the friendship of man, but to obtain the favor of God, and to engage his providence for our protection, "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry;" as if they had said, "The eye of God's special care will be continually watching over you for good, to save you from unreasonable men, and he will hear your prayers in all your distresses; and the face of the Lord, his angry countenance will be against them that wrong you, and do evil to you, to return it upon their own heads." So that the sum of all is, that an innocent and harmless, a quiet, peaceable and obliging deportment, doth naturally tend to preserve us from evil, and from evil men; for *who is he* that can be so unnatural and ungrateful as to harm us, if we be followers of that which is good? that is, if we be civil and obliging to them, they cannot find it in their hearts to be injurious and unkind to us. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Here note, That the apostle doth not absolutely say none will harm us, but he speaks of it as so very unreasonable and improbable a thing, that we may presume it will not ordinarily and often happen: but not that good men are obnoxious to harm; the most unblemished and shining virtue will not at all times, and in all cases be exempt from injury and ill treatment; but following of that which is good doth in its own nature tend to secure us from the malice and mischief of men, and very frequently does it, and is the best and most effectual means in order to it: he must love mischief for mischief's sake, that will be mischievous to him who never offered him any occasion, or gave him any provocation; therefore let us never be weary of well doing seeing doing good to men is ordinarily a security against injuries from men, by recommending us to the favor and protection of God, and to the esteem and good-will of mankind; none shall harm them that do good, for all harm shall tend to their good.

14 ¶ But, and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled:

As if the apostle had said, "Though following that which is good be, generally speaking, a sure and certain way to keep you from harm, yet should it so happen, that notwithstanding all your piety and prudence, you should suffer for well-doing, ye are happy, and not miserable; therefore be not afraid of their terrors and threatenings, neither be ye troubled for what they can afflict upon you." Note hence, 1. That to suffer affliction and persecution for righteousness' sake, doth not hinder, but further our happiness; *If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye*, for so suffered your Saviour that went before you. Note, 2. That when God calls us forth to suffer for righteousness' sake, we must fortify ourselves against all fear; no terrors must trouble us, no apprehended dangers or difficulties must dismay us; *Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled*.

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:—

This phrase in scripture imports, 1. A firm belief of God's almighty power, that he can protect from sufferings: and a full alliance in his goodness and providence, that he will do it, if it be good for us. 2. It is from the heart to own and believe the truth of all that God delivers in his word by way of promise to his people, and by way of threatening to their enemies that his eyes are over the righteous and his face against them that do evil. 3. To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, is always to maintain upon our minds such an holy fear, and awful reverence of God, as will effectually prevail upon us to dread more the displeasure of God, than any thing we can suffer at the hand of man. Learn hence, 1. That when sufferings are approaching, we ought to strengthen our hearts against all fears of suffering, by putting our trust in God. 2. That by this trust and confidence in God in a suffering hour, we do eminently sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, Isa. viii. 13. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and your dread."

—And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

As if the apostle had said, "If you be christians indeed, you are not without hope, an hope of everlasting bliss and happiness, which will infinitely recompense you hereafter for all the hard things which you suffer for the sake of christianity here; and forasmuch as this your hope is not in vain and groundless expectation, but a rational hope, *Be always ready to render a reason of that hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*." Learn hence, 1. That the christian's hope is a rational hope, he has a reason to hope for what he hopes, his hope is well grounded upon the promise of God, upon the purchase of Christ, and upon the operations of the Holy Spirit quickening him by its renovation, leading him by its manuduction, actuating him by its influence, animating him in his devotions by its assistances, by being the Author of all that grace that is in him, and of all that good

that is done by him. Learn, 2. That it is a christian's duty to be always ready to render a reason of this hope, when the glory of God, the honor of religion, and the good of others, do require it. Learn, 3. That this must not be done with vanity and ostentation, but with meekness and fear; "Be always ready to render a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

Here our apostle adds his advice to christians, that they silence and put to shame their adversaries, by their works as well as by their words, by their holy conversation, together with their rational disputations; he required them in the former verse to be always ready to make a profession of their faith, and to render a reason of their hope: here he bids them confute gainsayers by a good conversation, and in order thereunto, to keep continually an innocent mind, and a clear conscience, pure from guile, and clear of guilt: "having a good conscience, that such as speak evil of you as evildoers may be ashamed." Note here, 1. That let the servants of Christ be never so innocent in their lives, and circumspect in their carriage, yet there are those that will censure them as bad men, and slander them as evil-doers. Note, 2. That a good conscience, accompanied with a good conversation, is the most effectual mean to stop the mouth of slander, and to put such as accuse us falsely to shame. Note, 3. That when sufferings and persecutions do come, after all, the consideration that we suffer not for evil but for well-doing, will be a sufficient support and consolation to us. *It is better, if God will have us suffer, that it be for well-doing:* better for us, but worse for our persecutors; for now the body only suffers, while the soul is free.

18 For Christ, also, hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

These words are brought in as a strong argument, why christians that suffer wrongfully should bear it patiently; it was our Saviour's own case, he that had perfect innocence and unspotted righteousness, suffered in the severest manner, for us that were unrighteous, that he might reconcile us to God, being put to death in the flesh, that is, in our human nature, but quickened by the Spirit, or raised to life again by the power of his Godhead; it doth therefore well become all his followers cheerfully to undergo all manner of sufferings for him, which they meet with in their duty to him. Note here, 1. Christ did not barely suffer for our good, but he suffered in our stead: he is not only said to suffer for us, but to suffer for our sins, that is, the punishment of our sins; for no man was ever said to suffer for sin that did not undergo and endure the punishment of sin. As the sin offering under the law is called an offering for sin, because it

did expiate the guilt of sin, by dying in the place and stead of the offender: in like manner, when the death of Christ is called an offering for sin, what can it import, but that he suffered to make atonement for sin in our place and stead? *The just for the unjust;* If these words do not imply the substitution of Christ as our surety, and his sufferings the punishment due to our sins, what words can express it? Note, 2. That the great end of Christ's bitter death and bloody sufferings was, to bring all those for whom he died unto God: now Christ's bringing us to God imports our apostacy from him, our inability to return to him; that sin unsatisfied for, which was the great bar to keep us from him, is mercifully removed by him, and that our chief happiness consists in the enjoyment of him.

—Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 ¶ By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

As if St. Peter had said, "Though Christ suffered for our sins, and was put to death in his human nature, or flesh, yet he was quickened and made alive by the Spirit, in which, or by which Spirit he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which in the days of Noe were hardened into sin and disobedience, whilst the long-suffering of God endured them, and waited for their repentance no less than an hundred and twenty years, while the ark was making and preparing, and Noe preached to them; yet so impenitent were they to the very last, that only eight were saved in the ark." Note here, 1. That the old world before the flood were in prison whilst here on earth, being in bondage and captivity to sin and satan, held in the chains of their lusts, and in the bonds of their iniquity; such as are in bondage to sin, are captives in satan's prison: the old world was also in prison whilst on earth, as having received from God, the sentence of destruction, and were reserved, as in prison, against the day of slaughter, if they repented not within 120 years. Note, 2. That Christ by his Spirit, did preach to the old world in the ministry of his prophets, Enoch and Noe; and his Spirit did chide with them and reprove them, in order to their bringing to repentance. Note, 3. That those refractory and hardened sinners, for despising the offers of grace made to them, were for their disobedience clapped into the prison of hell, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; such as were cast into prison in Noah's time, were all fast in St. Peter's time: there is no picking the locks of hell gates, no breaking through the walls of the fiery Tophet; hell has a door to take in, but none to get out. Note, 4. That though Christ, by his Spirit, preached to the spirits in prison, yet it was not when they were in prison, I mean in the prison of hell, but when here on earth; there are no sermons in hell, no conditions of happiness proposed, no tenders of salvation propounded there: Christ preached to these prisoners to prevent their imprisonment; Christ preached to these men, who were

now in prison, that they might not have been imprisoned. Note lastly, that the obstinate infidelity, and sottish stupidity, of the old world, was amazing, that after 120 years preaching, no more than eight persons should be persuaded into the belief of the world's destruction. From the beginning we find, that the prophets of God had cause to complain, that *few have believed their report*: do the ministers of God now moan to God, that they run in vain, and labor in vain, and spend their strength for naught? From the beginning it has been so. Lord! if thou honorest any of us with better success, and givest us to see the fruit of our labors in the lives of our people, help us to set the crown of praise on the head of thine own grace, and say, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, &c.* "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

21 The like figure whereunto, *even* baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Observe here, 1. The type and the antitype, the ark and baptism; their salvation from the deluge, by the ark prefigured our salvation from God's wrath by baptism. As all that were without the ark perished, and all within the ark were saved: so all that are engrafted into Christ by faith, whereof baptism is a seal, are saved, whilst the unbelieving and unbaptized part of the world perish. Baptism is such a mean of spiritual salvation now, as the ark was of Noah's and his family's temporal salvation then; *the like figure whereunto baptism now saveth us*. Observe, 2. How our apostle expresseth himself, and plainly declares what he means by that baptism which is saving: negatively, it is not the outward ceremony of sprinkling the face, or washing the body with water, that is saving, or any ways pleasing unto God, save only as it is an act and exercise of our obedience to his command and will; but positively, it is *the answer of a good conscience towards God*, that is, the faithful answer of a resolved soul in the covenant of baptism, who gives up himself to the obedience of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil; this covenanting is the condition of salvation, and baptism but the sign. Learn hence, That outward baptism alone saves none, but the inward only; and the sign and singular effect of inward baptism, is *the answer of a good conscience towards God*. Yet must we not conclude, with the Anabaptists, from this text, that baptism can be of no saving advantage to infants, because they cannot at present make this answer of a good conscience: for in the same manner speaks St. Paul of circumcision, that the true circumcision before God, is the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit, and not the outward circumcision of the flesh. But who dare argue from thence, that the Jewish infants, for want of the inward circumcision, must not be admitted to the outward; the argument is the very same: will you say that the answer of a good conscience is absolutely necessary, and expressly required, that baptism may be beneficial; therefore they only are to be baptized that can make this answer? The same may we say, that the inward circumcision of the heart was required as the only acceptable circumcision in the sight of God; therefore they

only are to be circumcised, who have this inward circumcision of the heart. But as the one was the will of God, so is the other. True indeed the Jews did not admit proselytes to circumcise then, no more will we admit adult persons to baptism now, without the answer of a good conscience, or a solemn stipulation to be the Lord's for ever; but they admitted infants to circumcision without it; in like manner, the christian church now admits the children of christian parents to baptism, without any such answer made by them, but for them only.

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

Our apostle having, in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in the verse 1. Of his going into heaven, there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people. 2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honor; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned King, imports sovereign honor and supreme power; and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven. 3. It is asserted, That angels, authorities and powers, are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool. For though his victory is yet incomplete, and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, and that is enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength. Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him.

CHAPTER IV.

The argument which our apostle pursues in this chapter, is the same which he had prosecuted in the former. The first part of the chapter is exhortatory, urging all the professors of christianity to the love and practice of universal holiness and purity. The second part is consolatory, against persecutions and sufferings for the cause of Christ, which were then inevitably coming upon them from the enemies of christianity. The exhortations unto, and the arguments for holiness, are many, contained in the first verses of the chapter, in which our apostle thus bespeaks them:

FORASMUCH then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm your-

selves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

These words may be considered, 1. As an inference drawn from what the apostle had asserted in the foregoing chapter, namely, That Jesus Christ suffered for our sins, *the just for the unjust*, v. 18. Now, says the apostle, forasmuch as Christ had suffered for us, first as our surety and representative, in a way of satisfaction. Secondly, as our pattern and example, in order to our imitation; *let us arm ourselves with the same mind and resolution to be conformed to him in his death, dying to sin as he died for sin; for he that hath crucified the flesh, and mortified his corrupt nature in imitation of Christ's sufferings, in our flesh and nature, that man hath ceased from sin, that is, from living unto sin, observing sin any longer, but spends the remainder of his life wholly according to God's will, not according to his own, or others lustful desires and inclinations.* 2. These words may be considered as an argument to excite christians to eschew evil and do good, which he had pressed upon them in the former chapter, from the example of Christ. And the force of the argument lies thus: "All christians should be armed with the same mind and resolution against sin, and for holiness, that Christ was. But Christ having suffered in the flesh for sin, and ceased from sin, lived in the spirit unto God: therefore all christians should wholly endeavour all they can to cease from all sin, and live no more *to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*"

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles; when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Observe here, 1. That this epistle was written, and directed not only to the Jewish natives, but to the Gentile proselytes and converts: this is evident from the apostle's putting them in mind that there was a time, namely, before their conversion, *when they wrought the will of the Gentiles.* Observe, 2. The black and dismal sin which the Gentiles were guilty of, and wallowed in, before their conversion to christianity, namely, all manner of sensuality, uncleanness, excess in drinkings, revellings, banquetings, and idolatries, joined with the rest of their abominations. Lord! how endearing are

our obligations, *who were sinners of the Gentiles*, for calling us out of this darkness (worse than Egyptian) into marvellous light by the go-pel. Observe, 3. The argument used to excite them to quit and abandon the forementioned sins now in their converted state, which they had before indulged themselves in the practice of, in their heathen state. The time past may suffice *to have wrought the will of the Gentiles*; as if he had said, "Surely you have had enough of sin, and too much in your unregenerate state; your lusts have taken up too much of your lives, and had too much of your love." Learn hence, that the true penitent, and sincere convert, is one that has had enough of sin, yea more than enough; one moment's service of sin is more service than we owe it; we can never serve Christ too long, and our lusts too short a time. Learn, 2. That this consideration, how long some of us served sin before conversion, should be a forcible argument to excite and quicken us unto greater measures and degrees of holiness in our regenerate and unconverted state. Observe, 4. What usage such christians must expect from the men of the world, who come out from among them, and refuse to run any longer into the same excess of riot with them. 1. *They think it strange*; they admire and wonder at them, as we do at strangers that come out of another country. And, 2. *They speak evil of them*, because they will not be as bad and as mad as themselves. "They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." Learn hence, 1. That wicked men are excessively riotous, or that there is an excess of riot and sin which wicked men upon all occasions run into. Learn, 2. That such men wonder and think it very strange, that good men are not as excessively riotous as themselves. 3. That because they will not so run, therefore they speak evil of them." Observe lastly, the impartiality and severity of that account which the wicked men of the world must render to God, the universal Judge, for all their hard speeches which they have uttered against the righteous: "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Note here, 1. There must and shall be a day of account: There must be one, because God has made man an accountable creature; he can give and therefore he shall give an account of his actions; for he has a principle of reason to know what he does, and a liberty of choice to govern himself, and a rule to direct him what to choose, and what to refuse; and consequently the actions proceeding from him, must and shall be accounted for by him. Note, 2. That this account must be given to Christ, the supreme and universal Judge both of quick and dead; partly as the fitting reward for his great humiliation and sufferings; and partly that the world may see what a great and excellent person he was, who came to visit them in great humility: and partly, to give advantage to the future judgment, in that God has appointed a man for our Judge, who is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone; one that is sensible of the follies, temptations, and infirmities of mankind, and pities them, and will make favorable allowance for them; nay, one that is God as well as man, from whom we may expect all the goodness of a God, and all the tender compassion of a man, in their utmost perfection, so that no man need fear such a Judge, who has not outsigned the mercies of a God, and the tender compassions of a man; for if either God or man can help us, we are safe in that day, when we "shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

By the dead here some understand the Gentile world, dead in trespasses and sins, to whom the gospel was preached when they were thus spiritually dead and buried in sensuality, that they might judge and condemn, oppose and strive against, mortify and subdue, those sensual desires and carnal appetites which they indulged, whilst they lived as natural men, without the knowledge of God's will, and the assistance of his grace and spirit: others do understand the words of such as are naturally dead, that the gospel was preached to them who were long since dead, even our forefathers, that lived and died before Christ's coming, and that they had the gospel preached to them, while they were alive, that so they might mortify all their sinful lusts and corrupt affections, and live new lives, according to the direction and command of God in his holy word. Learn hence, That the condition of men now living, and of those that lived heretofore in all ages, is one and the same, having the same gospel, for substance preached to them, and accordingly the same duties of mortification and holiness required of them.

7 But the end of all things is at hand; be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer.

These words are brought by our apostle as a fresh argument to persuade the christian Jews to the practice of sincere holiness: *the end of all things*, that is, of the Jewish state and polity, their city, their temple, and worship, is *at hand*: the fatal destruction of Jerusalem is now very near, therefore be ye sober and temperate in all things; *watch*, that the day of visitation overtake you not unawares, and pray for the averting of God's wrath, and that ye be not overwhelmed in it. Learn hence, that sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer, are very requisite and needful qualifications to prepare and fit persons for every coming and appearance of Christ to judgment, be it his particular coming to some, or his universal coming to all at the end of the world.

8 And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

The next grace and virtue exhorted to is that of charity, or mutual love amongst themselves; and observe with what special care and particular regard it is recommended to us, *above all things*; and note also the intense degree of it, it must not barely be charity, but, "fervent charity; above all things have fervent charity among yourselves." Learn, That christians ought to take care, above all things, that their love to one another be sincere and fervent. But how may it be known to be such? Answ. If it be active and operative; if we love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; if it be not weakened by time; if it be not hindered by remoteness of place; if it be a sympathizing and compassionate love, a forbearing and forgiving love, then have we *fervent charity among ourselves*. Observe next, the argument or reason to enforce the duty, *for charity shall*

cover the multitude of sins. This may be understood two ways, 1. With respect to ourselves. Charity or true love to our brother, will cause us not strictly to take notice of, but silently to overlook and pass by the faults and failings of others towards and against ourselves. 2. It will cover the sins of others from the eye of the world, and keep us from blazing abroad the infirmities of others, to their prejudice and disgrace: it is both unwarrantable and unsafe to cover the sins of others, either by flattery or falsehood; but to cover a sin by charity, to conceal it from public notice, is a great piece of christian duty, unless when the concealing of it will do apparent mischief: love looks upon great wrongs as small, and small wrongs as none at all; he most have no friends that will have a friend with no faults, Prov. x. 12. "Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins."

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

As a principal act, an eminent exercise of charity, the apostle advises to *use hospitality* to their poor brethren, *without grudging* or murmuring at the charge; hospitality is a necessary, a commendable, and a commanded duty; St. Paul requires, Rom. x i. 13. *that we be given to hospitality*. Observe farther, the apostle doth not barely say, *use hospitality*, but, *use it one to another*; it is a mutual duty; whence it appears, that though hospitality towards the poor be a commanded duty, yet hospitality among the rich is no sin, but a duty likewise to give reciprocal entertainments; for though our Saviour says, Luke xiv. 12. "When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends and rich neighbours;" the prohibition is not absolute; he doth not forbid the inviting of the rich, but chargeth us not to forget the poor; we may treat both as we have enough for both; but if not, what we have to spare must be for them that have nothing, not for them that have enough already, for we must prefer works of pious charity before acts of civil courtesy: "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging."

10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

His next exhortation is, That they endeavour rightly to employ, and wisely to improve, their spiritual gifts, (as well as their temporal, mentioned in the foregoing verse,) which they had received for the good and benefit of others, in their respective places in the church, looking upon themselves not as proprietors, but as stewards, of the various gifts bestowed upon them by the free favor of God, and of which they must give an impartial account. Learn hence, 1. That several men have their several gifts, as it pleaseth the gift-giving spirit to give unto them: *As every man has received the gift*. Learn, 2. That gifts are given for the benefit of others, we are *to minister one to another*, that is, to improve our gifts to the mutual edification of each other, Learn, 3. That such as look upon themselves, as *stewards of the manifold gifts of God*, will wisely improve them for his glory and the good of others, the great ends for which he has conferred them.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God: if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—

If any man speak; that is, 1. As a public minister, or teacher, let him speak as he is instructed from the oracles of God. Or, 2. If he speak as a private christian, let his discourse be grave and serious, for mutual edification, especially when ye speak divine things; speech is a noble and advantageous benefit to man, by which he excels the whole creation: our tongue is our glory, the instrument of our Creator's praise; and there is no subject so sublime and honorable for the tongue of man to be employed about, as the word and oracles of God, but then we must never mention them but with reverence: woe be to those men that bring forth scripture in their discourse, as the philistines brought forth Samson, only to make them sport, rendering it the theme of their giddy mirth and profane drollery: but these men ere long will find Almighty God in earnest, though they be in jest; such men forget this injunction of the apostle's. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.*

—If any man minister,

To supply the necessities of others, either as a deacon, whose office it then was to take care of the poor, or as a private christian by charitable contribution, let him perform that duty readily and cheerfully, *according to the ability God hath given him.* Where observe, that he that with his wealth administereth to the necessities of others, if he doth it not according to the ability which God hath given him, his charity is no acceptable charity in God's account; not acceptable to God, because not proportionable to what he has received from God; the reason of this injunction is added in the next words,—“that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ;” in whose strength these gifts are rightly employed, and by whose merits and intercessions, our intention to glorify God by them is accepted.—*To whom*, that is, to which Jesus, as to God blessed for evermore, be all honor and dominion everlastingly described. Amen.

12 ¶ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Observe here, 1. The metaphor which the apostle uses to set forth the christian's afflictions and persecutions by; he calls them *fiery trials*; burnings, because very painful and afflictive, very grievous and burthensome to sense, and also because men are tried by them as metals are by fire. Observe, 2. The warning given by the apostle to all christi-

ans, not to think strange concerning these *fiery trials*; that is, not to look upon them as unusual things, but to expect them, and prepare for them; for unexpected trials fall upon the soul in their full weight, and suddenly overthrow it; what we fear, for that we prepare, but when trials come, and we never looked nor prepared for them, they strike us to the heart, because not armed to receive the blow. Observe, 3. The gracious end that God has in the afflictions and persecutions which fall upon his people, *they are to try them*, not to consume them, to try their graces and destroy their corruptions, to give them opportunity to make proof of the truth of their faith, sincerity, and constancy. Observe, 4. The high honor which God puts upon his suffering saints and servants: they are said to be *partakers of Christ's sufferings*, because they suffer for him, and he suffers with them, and in them; and also because he suffered the same things before them, and much worse things for them. Observe lastly, The duty which God expects and requires from them who suffer these fiery persecutions for the sake of his Son, and that is to *rejoice and be exceeding glad.* From the whole learn, 1. That no afflictions or persecutions should seem new or strange things to sincere christians. 2. That the end and use of all afflictions is the trial and improvement of the christian's graces. 3. That believers in suffering afflictions and persecutions are partakers of Christ's sufferings; he suffers in them and they are made conformable to him by them. 4. That it is the will of God, that such as suffer for him, should not only be meek and patient, but be joyous and cheerful. 5. That at the great day when Christ's glory shall be revealed, then especially will the suffering saints *rejoice, and be glad with exceeding joy*, when they shall see their dear Redeemer coming in the clouds, with an human body shining brighter than ten thousand suns; a body which still retains the mark of his sufferings, and the tokens of his love. O joyful day of Christ's appearing, when this royal bridegroom shall take his suffering spouse the church by the hand, and present her to his Father, own his in the presence of men and angels, bestow a kingdom upon them, that they may be with him where he is, eternally to behold his glory, to feed upon an happiness as large as their capacities, and as lasting as their beings; such honor have all the suffering saints, and therefore ought greatly to “rejoice inasmuch as they are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

Another argument is here offered by our apostle for glorying in sufferings and reproaches for Christ, taken from the happiness of those that are so reproached, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” Note here, that the reproaches which the saints suffer for the sake of Christ, are reckoned persecutions, and yet at the same time are esteemed a part, as well as a prognostic of their happiness: “happy are ye, if ye be reproached for the name of Christ.” Observe, 2. The reason assigned why christians, under reproach for the sake of Christ, are to be esteemed thus

happy, namely, because the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them;" that is, the glorious Spirit of God, which is both the mean and evidence of your happiness, who is glorious in himself, and also a glory to you, upon whom he rests, and in whom he dwells. Two things are implied by the Spirit's resting upon a reproached christian: 1. Complacency, that he is well pleased where he is; men do not rest where they do not like. 2. Permanency, he abides where he rests, and dwells there with delight. Some take the expression to be an allusion to Noah's dove, that hovered about, but could not rest till returned to the ark. Thus the Spirit of God, called here a Spirit of glory, from its effects and fruits, namely, from his cheering, sealing, and reviving influences, which make christians glory in tribulations; this Spirit flies from place to place, and from person to person, hither and thither, but rests upon and takes up his residence and abode with such christians as suffer for the name of Christ: "If ye be reproached, &c. happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:" It follows,—"On their part he is evil-spoken of, but on your part he is glorified;" that is, by their reproaches cast upon you, they blaspheme the Holy Spirit, as the word signifies; but he is eminently glorified by your patience and constancy of mind under all your pressures, which shows the power of the Spirit resting upon you, and mightily working in you. Learn hence, that in those reproaches which good men suffer for the sake of Christ, the Spirit of God in a special manner is blasphomed on the one side, and glorified on the other. O sinner! know, that all the reproaches thou castest upon religion and religious persons, as such, reach the Holy Spirit that rests upon them, and resides in them as his temples: but, O christian, remember thou, that by thy patience and constancy under sufferings, thou glorifiest the Holy Spirit eminently, abundantly showing that, by his help, afflictions are not only tolerable, but joyous.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Observe here, 1. What it is that the apostle calls upon them to avoid and shun: it is sin, not suffering: evil doing in general, murder and theft in particular, sins that were then very much practised among the Jews: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or as an evil-doer;" by suffering as evildoers, we lose the comfort and reward of all our sufferings. Observe, 2. What sufferings he bids them not to be ashamed of, but glory in, namely, when they suffer as christians, and purely as such. *Quest.* But what is it to suffer as a christian? *Ans.* 1. When we suffer for a good cause. 2. From a christian principle. 3. In a christian manner, with meekness, patience, and self denial. *Quest.* 2. What is it to glorify God on the behalf of our sufferings? *Ans.* Afflictions and sufferings, considered barely in themselves, are far from being glorious: but consider them in their cause, as sufferings for righteousness' sake, and so they are glorious; and God honors us greatly, when he calls us

forth to suffer, and furnishes us with courage and resolution for sufferings, and it is our duty to give glory to him who enables us thus to do: "If any man suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this behalf."

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Observe here, 1. The apostle does not say, If judgment begin at the temple of idols, but, "if it begin at the house of God;" God will not spare his own house, nor his own household; he will not spare his children, or servants when they sin, he is no cockering Father to indulge his children to their ruin. Nay, observe, 2. Judgment first begins at the house of God; God will not bear so long with his own people sinning as with strangers; they shall be corrected sooner and sorer than others; the Lord will first punish them who have been forgetful of him, and trifled with him, who have been formal in their profession, and vain in their conversation. Observe, 3. That when we see with sorrow God contending with his own people for their sins, we may with astonishment expect what will be the end of them that obey not the gospel, when God brings such troubles upon his own house, what troubles may they expect from God, who are but a den of thieves, and a cage of unclean birds? O what appearances shall they have of God! And how shall they appear before God! Observe then, what little cause wicked men have to rejoice at the church's sufferings, when it presages a far more heavy judgment coming upon themselves; for "if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?"

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

As if he had said, "When the day of visitation comes, which is verily at hand, and God shall begin to punish the Jews, his own people, called his house in the foregoing verse; if then the righteous among them escape the common calamity with great difficulty, and are scarcely preserved, how shall the ungodly and sinners think to escape unpunished in the day of Jerusalem's calamity; that day of vengeance, when Christ shall come to plead with them? If then the righteous be scarcely saved, that is, with great difficulty preserved from that desolating calamity, that fiery trial spoken of, ver. 12, "where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" And how shall they hope to escape in safety from that dreadful judgment now ready to come on the Jewish nation!" There have been those that have made use of this text to show the difficulty of eternal salvation; and that the best and honestest of saints, even those who are most eminent in grace, are very difficultly saved; which, though a truth in itself, yet is scarcely deducible from this text, which certainly speaks of temporal preservation.

19 Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the

keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Observe here, 1. A cautionary direction given, that in all our sufferings, we take care that we *suffer according to the will of God*: that is, for what is according to God's will, either to be believed or practised by us, for asserting and maintaining the purity of the christian doctrine and worship: and when our patience under such sufferings is as extensive and intensive as God requires, when our patience is as large and as lasting as our troubles, then may we be said to *suffer according to the will of God*. Observe, 2. The special privilege allowed to such "sufferers as suffer according to the will of God, they may commit the keeping of their souls to God in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Learn hence, 1. That when men suffer really and truly for well-doing, they may with confidence and great assurance commit their lives, and all that is dear unto them, to the special care of the divine providence; either God will keep us from, or support us under, trials, when we thus commit ourselves to him.

CHAPTER V.

St. Peter closes his epistle with an exhortation to the spiritual guides and governors of the church, to discharge their duties faithfully, in feeding and ruling of the flock of God committed to them; and this exhortation is enforced with several weighty arguments in the four first verses of this chapter.

THE elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;

Observe here, 1. The persons exhorted, *The elders that are amongst you*, the guides and governors of the church: elders by age and office, who were both to rule well, and also to labor in the word and doctrine; and for doing both faithfully, were to be accounted worthy of double honor. Observe, 2. The person exhorting, *I exhort, who am also an elder*. Mark, he says, "Not I, who am the universal head of the church, Christ's vicar upon earth; but I, who am an elder by age, and by apostleship, who have been long the minister of the circumcision; I exhort, beseech, and entreat you as my brethren, fellow-laborers in our Lord's vineyard." Observe, 3. The humble testimony which St. Peter gives of himself; he doth not say, "I command, who am the chief of the apostles, with whose confession of faith Christ was so well pleased, That he said, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church,'" but, "I exhort, who am a witness of the sufferings," and eye-witness of what our dear Lord and Master suffered in the faithful discharge of his office, both in his life, and at his death: and "also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed," I was also an eye-witness of Christ's glory in his transfiguration

here on earth, and hope to be partaker of that glory which shall hereafter be revealed in heaven." Learn hence, That such exhortations to duty, are likely to be most effectual and successful, which are propounded in the humblest manner. St. Peter was placed in an high degree above these elders, being an apostle, a chief apostle; yet he gives himself no such title, but says, "The elders I exhort, who am also an elder;" not an apostle, much less the head and chief of the apostles.

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind:

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Observe here, 1. The title given to the church, it is the flock of God; denominations are given in scripture to persons and things proper to the state of things and persons: thus here the church is called a flock, and sometimes a little flock, in opposition to the herds and huge droves of the men of the world; yet the flock consists not of a few absolutely, but comparatively only; a flock contains a multitude. Again, As the church is called a flock for the number, so for their order: a flock is under inspection and government continually; Christ Jesus is the great overseer of this flock: and farther, it is a flock in respect of the unity and love that is amongst them; though the church be scattered over the world, yet there is an holy combination, and sweet communion of the members amongst themselves. Observe, 2. The duty exhorted to, and that is double, to feed the flock, and to be an example unto the flock. 1. *Feed the flock, taking the oversight of it*; feed it with wholesome doctrine, guide and govern it by strict discipline, overlooking it continually, and watch over it with unwearied diligence; and that you may do so, be perpetually resident, feed the flock that is among you. How can the flock be duly watched over, when the shepherd lives several miles from the fold, and is following his pleasure, when he should be feeding his sheep; feed the flock among you. Observe, 3. The manner directed to, how, and after which, the shepherds should feed and watch over their flocks. 1. *Not by constraint, but willingly*: that is, not as a burden, but a pleasure, with a free and ready mind; what men do out of compulsion from base fear, they do with no satisfaction either to God or man. 2. *Not for filthy lucre*; to feed the flock purely for the sake of the fleece, and to take a living only to get a living, is an horrid impiety: to be driven into the ministerial office by necessity is bad, but to be drawn by covetousness is much worse. 3. *Not as being lords over God's heritage*. Where note, The title given to the church, they are God's heritage, his people, not our own, his lot and portion; he having a special and peculiar right unto them, and property in them: therefore they are not to be lorded over, not to be treated with insolence and imperiousness, ruling them by the sword, and outward force, which has made many hypocrites, but not one convert. Lastly, He requires that they be ensamples to the flock; that is, in their daily conversation. Now, how can they be

examples to them, if they live not amongst them? they must be examples of such meekness and humility, of such patience and charity, of such mortification and self-denial; as becomes persons of their holy character and profession: and be patterns of those virtues amongst their people in conversation which they recommend to them from the pulpit. This duty of ministerial exemplariness in conversation is bound upon us by innumerable arguments taken from the command of Christ, from the glory of God, from the preciousness of the soul, from the dignity of our office, from the success of our ministry, which depends more upon our practice than upon our preaching; from our own interest, with respect to our present comfort and future happiness; from the influence it has upon our people, an encouraging and confirming influence.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

As if our apostle had said, "It is possible you may miss of your reward here from the hands of men, but when Christ, the great and good Shepherd, shall appear, when the owner, ruler, and lover of his church, shall come to judgment, you shall have from him your full reward, a never fading, ever flourishing crown of glory, for faithfully discharging your duty to God and his people. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd, will at length appear. 2. That, when he doth appear, he will call the under shepherds to account, how they have discharged every part of their ministerial office, as well private inspection, as public preaching. 3. That to all such, and to only such as have been faithful to the interest of Christ and souls shall the reward be assigned, even a crown of glory that fadeth not away: "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, &c."

5 ¶ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, yea, all of you be subject one to another,—

Having laid down the duties of pastors in the former verse, he points out the duties of the people in this, whom he calls the *younger*, either because they were generally younger in years than their spiritual guides, or because they ought to show that reverence and obedience to them which is suitable in young ones towards their elders: these young ones he exhorts to submit themselves to the guidance of their elders and teachers: likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: instruction and jurisdiction belonged to the elder, subjection and obedience to the younger. Note here, That the duties of pastor and people are mutual and reciprocal, not that their duties are alike, but because there is a like reason for the performance of their respective duties, a like engagement and obligation upon both; the duty of the one is subjection; of the other ministerial direction. He adds, *yea, all of you be subject one to another*; intimating thereby, that there is a duty of mutual subjection, which all christians owe to one another in love; they ought to condescend to the meanest offices one towards another; to bear with the infirmities of each other.

—And be clothed with humility: for

God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

The original word, rendered clothed, signifies, first, an upper garment, a frock, or a cloak, put over all the rest of our clothes; and so imports, that we should be wrapped up all over with this grace, that this should be most visible in our conversations, words, and actions, and conspicuous beyond all other virtues. Secondly, It signifies a belt which girds about our garments, and so imports, that we should tie it fast unto us, and have those considerations always fixed upon our spirits, which may keep us in an humble frame of soul. Note then, That humility is a special ornament, a beautiful robe, to be put on daily, which commends us greatly both to God and man. We are never to account ourselves dressed, until we have this livery of our humble master Christ Jesus put upon us; *Be clothed with humility*. Observe next, The argument to enforce this duty: *for God resisteth the proud*, sets himself as in battle array against them, but giveth fresh supplies of grace to the humble; because more grace is promised to the humble, and the humble soul is more fitted, prepared, and disposed, to receive farther measures of grace from God. God sets himself against proud men to bring them down, but the humble he doth countenance and exalt.

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God; that he may exalt you in due time:

By the hand of God understand his judgments, his almighty power, which it is our duty to submit unto, and to be humble under, in the day of our affliction: and this profound submission, and deep humiliation, is the way to glory and exaltation. He can exalt us, and will do it here, if it be good for us; but sometimes God sees abasement better for his people; better, because safer, and accordingly they shall have it. Learn hence, That the strength and the power of God should oblige us very greatly to humble ourselves before him, and subject ourselves unto him. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." Secondly, That God will exalt the humble in due time, either here or hereafter; either in time or in eternity, as it shall most and best conduce to his own glory and their good.

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty enjoined, to cast our care upon God; it is not a providential and prudent care, but an anxious and vexatious care, that the scripture forbids; and the duty here required is this, that, after we have used all prudent care and diligence in suberviency to the providence of God, we should not be over-solicitous about the issue and event of things; which, when we have done all we can, will be out of our power. 2. Casting our care upon God implies, that we should refer the issue and event of things to his wise providence, which is continually watching over us, and knows how to dispose of all things for the best advantage to us; entirely confiding in his wisdom and goodness, that he will order all things for the best, and, in that confidence, resting satisfied with the disposals of his providence, whatever they be. This is to

cast all our care upon God. Observe, 2. The argument here made use of to persuade us to this duty: *God careth for us.* This implies also two things: 1. In general, that the providence of God governs the world, and concerns itself in the affairs of men, and disposeth of all events that happen to us. 2. More particularly, that this providence is more peculiarly concerned for good men, and that he takes a special care of them, and of their concerns; and the care that God takes of them is a special care, a tender care, a promised and engaged care, a care mysteriously exercised; he then takes most care of them when they think he takes the least, and the men of the world think he takes none at all. Cast we then all our care upon him who careth for us; for anxious care is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a sinful evil.

8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 ¶ Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Observe here, 1. A double duty exhorted to, sobriety and vigilancy: *Be sober, be vigilant,* be sober and temperate in all things; sober in your enjoyments; sober in your employments; sober in your recreations. Be neither drunk with wine, nor with worldly cares; the latter is the worst of the two. A night's sleep cures the former, but the worldling is drunk all the year long, never sober night nor day. And to sobriety we are exhorted to add vigilancy, a watchful care, and diligent circumspection over all our thoughts, words, and actions, that we may not displease God in any thing: *Be sober, be vigilant.* Observe, 2. The reason or motive to enforce the duty, *because your adversary the devil goeth about, &c.* Where note, How every word contains a special motive to christian watchfulness. He is your adversary, who will do you all possible mischief: he is the devil, an accuser, and one that seeks all advantages against you; he is a cruel adversary; a lion, yea, a roaring lion, which adds terror to his cruelty: he is a restless adversary, he goes about seeking whom he may devour; what soul he may devour, for that is the bait he gapes for, it grieves the devils, those apostate angels, to find the souls of men appointed to fill up those vacant places in heaven, which they turned themselves out of. It is a delight to them to plunge souls into the same condemnation and misery with themselves. Observe, 3. The duty of resistance urged upon us in order to our preservation, with the weapon put in our hand for that purpose; *Whom resist steadfast in the faith;* that is, be steadfast in the faith, that you may resist him; and, by the help of your faith, you shall overcome him. Learn hence, 1. That the devil is the restless adversary, and unwearied enemy of mankind. 2. That all the pains which satan takes, is in order to the destruction of precious souls. 3. That the way to overcome him is by resisting of him, not by yielding to him; he is a cowardly enemy, and a conquered enemy; resist him and he will run. 4. That

faith is the weapon, by which the christian is enabled to resist the tempter, and to repel the force of his fiery temptations.

—Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

As if the apostle had said, "Resist satan's temptations, occasioned by your sufferings, remembering that it is not your case alone, but others also suffer with you, even all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. Learn hence, That christians should not desire, and cannot reasonably expect a better condition in the world, with respect to freedom from sufferings, than the rest of their brethren, who have all a share of affliction to suffer, and a measure of hardship to endure as well as ourselves: "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you:

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Our apostle concludes and closes his epistle with an affectionate prayer for these afflicted christians and suffering saints, beseeching Almighty God, who is the author of all grace, and who hath called them by his gospel to the participation of that grace, which will entitle them to eternal glory, that, after they have suffered awhile in the world, he would perfect the work of grace begun in them, establish, strengthen, and settle them in the truth of the gospel; and to this infinitely gracious God, he desires glory and dominion should be for ever ascribed. Observe here, 1. That God is the God of all grace, seed, growth, and perfection, all from him, restraining grace, renewing grace, sanctifying grace, all from the fountain of all grace. Observe, 2. That serious christians are called by God to eternal glory and happiness, they are called to the hope and expectation of this glory, upon the account of the promise of it which God made to Christ, Tit. i. 2. and they are brought into a state of preparation for it; God hath by his word and Spirit wrought them for this same thing. Observe, 3. They are called to eternal glory through Jesus Christ, he reveals it to them, he purchases it for them, he works that faith and repentance in them which qualifies them for, and entitles them unto this heavenly glory. Observe, 4. That some afflictions must be expected and endured by all christians, how dear to God soever they are or may be. Was there any patriarch, prophet, apostle, primitive or modern christian, that did not suffer awhile? Saints must suffer awhile from the remains of sin, from the temptations of satan, from the enemies of religion, from the friends of religion, yea, from God himself their best friend. Observe, 5. That after serious christians have suffered awhile, they shall enter into glory, their title is sure by the promise of God, by the pur-

chase of Christ, by the inhabitation of the Spirit. Observe, 6. That the perfecting, establishing, strengthening of the christian in grace and comfort is from God, to whom all glory and dominion is and ought for ever to be ascribed.

12 By Sylvanus, a faithful brother unto you, (as I suppose) I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Observe here, That our apostle, to encourage these suffering christians to a resolved perseverance in the christian religion, assures them, that it was undoubtedly from God, the unquestionable truth of God, and therefore neither seducers on the one hand, nor persecutors on the other, should be able to shake them, or cause them to fall from their own steadfastness; a firm belief of the certainty and excellency of christianity conduces much to the establishment of those that have newly embraced it: if we be once assured that it is the true grace of God wherein we stand, it will cause us to stand steadfast.

13 The church that is at Babylon, elect-

ed together with you, saluteth you: and so doth Marcus my son.

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all, that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

At the foot of his epistle he sends them salutations from the christians at Babylon, who were chosen out of the world, to partake in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. Some, by Babylon, figuratively understand Rome, but others understand it of Babylon in Assyria, where many Jews did tarry and continue after the expiration of the seventy years' captivity, whom St. Peter, being a minister of circumcision, went to visit, having probably planted a church there. Wheresoever they were, God had called them to the knowledge of his gospel, and they send salutations to all their brethren and fellow-members in Christ, wheresoever dispersed, or howsoever distressed. As also doth Mark, whom St. Peter calls his son, because instructed by him in the gospel, and begotten by him to christianity. Lastly, He exhorts them to express their fervent affection to each other by a kiss of charity, used in the primitive times as a token of love amongst christians; but afterwards, for just reasons laid aside; and so wishing peace: that is, all manner of prosperity to all in Christ Jesus, that is, to all professing faith in Christ Jesus, he shuts up his epistle.

THE

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

SAINT PETER.

The second Epistle of St. Peter was written by him a little before his death, he having received a revelation, probably of his approaching departure out of this life; he writes this second letter to the Jews of the dispersion scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, to warn them of the fiery trial, that sharp and bitter persecution which was coming upon them, and to fortify them against that apostacy from the faith, that falling from their own steadfastness, that departing from the holy commandment, which these newly-converted Jews were very prone unto: he sends therefore this epistle to establish and settle them, to strengthen and confirm them; and this is the last mention which we find in Scripture of this great and glorious apostle.

CHAPTER I.

SIMON PETER, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ :

Observe here, 1. The author and penman of this epistle, described by his name, *Simon Peter*, the former given at his circumcision, the latter by Christ, upon the occasion of his confession, Mat. xvi. 18. by his condition, *a servant* : by his office, *an apostle* ; by the author of his office, *Jesus Christ*. Here note, That Christ only hath an authoritative power to make apostles, ministers and dispensers of his word : a derivative power from Christ the governors of the church have ; but such as have not now their call from Christ immediately, (which it is presumption to expect, and if any pretend to it, let them show it by their miracles) or mediately from the officers of his church, are usurpers of the sacred office, and they cannot pray in faith themselves for a blessing upon what they do, nor can the people expect, Jer. xxiii. 32. *I never sent them, (says God) therefore they shall not profit this people at all.* Observe, 2. The persons described to whom this epistle is directed, *to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.* To such as had obtained faith, precious faith, like precious faith, with the apostle of Christ ; like for its nature and quality, though not for its measure and degree : and *alike precious* in regard of its object, Christ ; in regard of its subject, the heart ; in regard of its act, which is acceptance and consent to the terms of the gospel covenant ; in regard of its effects and precious fruits, peace with God, peace with conscience, victory over the world, and the like. We see then that the faith of the poorest believer is as precious as the richest, and that the weakest believer has the same precious faith with the strongest ; and if it be alike precious, it shall be alike permanent and persevering. Observe, 3. The meritorious cause of this their precious faith, the righteousness of Jesus Christ : *Through the righteousness of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.* All grace is derived to us, through Christ, for the sake of his righteousness, sufferings, and satisfaction : and as all grace is derived from him, and for his sake conferred, so all our good, that little service we do for God, is accepted through him, and owned for his sake. And if so, then Jesus Christ is really God : for the righteousness of a creature cannot justify me in the sight of God : there is no appearing before God for any creature in a creature-righteousness, and farther, if so, then it is not faith that justifies and saves, but the righteousness of Christ, upon which faith is grounded, Eph. ii. 8. *By grace ye are saved effectually, through faith instrumentally.* The brazen serpent healed not the eye that looked on it ; yet without looking upon it, no help from it, no healing by it.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord :

The person saluting, and the parties saluted, were mentioned in the former verse ; here we have the salutation itself, 1. The matter of it, *Grace and peace* ; grace to free us from God's wrath, and reinstate us in his favor ; peace to quiet our own consciences, and reconcile us to ourselves. Observe, 2. The measure of it, *grace and peace be multiplied* : they had both grace and peace already, yet the apostle prays for the farther increase of them ; there is no complete perfection in grace attainable in this life. The best of saints must be multiplying and increasing their stores ; for they are but imperfectly perfect, when at the best. Observe, 3. The means for multiplying grace and peace, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord. Learn, That the knowledge of God, in, by, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the special mean of multiplying grace and peace in our hearts ; and indeed there is no comfortable knowledge of God, but in and through Christ, John xvii. 3. " This is life eternal, &c " Out of Christ God is a revenger, in Christ a reconciled Father.

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue :

In these words our apostle shows, what reason they had to believe and hope, that grace and peace should be multiplied unto them, namely, because Almighty God had already given them all things which conduced to make them holy in this life, and happy in the next, by the knowledge of Christ. Others, by *life and godliness*, understand all things conducing to the preservation of natural life, likewise of grace here and glory hereafter : and whereas it is said they were " called to glory and virtue," by *glory* understand the honor of being christians ; by *virtue*, the good life that becomes christians. To both these they were called with a glorious calling, as being attended with the glorious effusion of the Holy Ghost. If by glory and virtue be understood grace here, and glory hereafter, it shows our privilege, that we have both at present in a way of inchoation, and shall ere long enjoy both in a way of consummation ; and it points also to us our duty, we must have virtue, if we would have glory ; if we be not like Christ, we can never love him, nor may we ever expect to live with him.

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Whereby, or by whom, that is, through the knowledge of Christ in the gospel, God has given to us all things conducing to our present and future happiness ; and, amongst the rest, the precious promises of the gospel, which so directly tend to make men partakers of the divine nature. Note here, That the promises of the gospel are the christians' great and precious treasure ; greatness and goodness are then most shining, when they meet in the same subject, but

such a glorious conjunction is rarely found, either in persons or things: rarely are great men good, or good men great: pebbles are great, but not precious: pearls are precious, but not great: but the promises are both for quantity exceeding great, for quality exceeding precious, and that in respect of the author of them, *God*: the foundation of them, *the blood of Christ*; the manner of the dispensation, they are freely given; the means whereby they are apprehended and applied, precious faith, and exceedingly precious the promises are in regard of the end of them, which is to make us partakers of the divine nature, not of the essence, but qualities of the divine nature, which enables us in some measure, to resemble God; as the seal doth communicate its signature, but not its substance: so in the work of regeneration God doth not impart his essence, but infuse holy principles and gracious habits into the soul, whereby the christian resembles him. Learn hence, That the great end and effect of the promises, and the proper influence and efficacy which they ought to have upon the hearts and lives of men, is this, to make them partakers of the divine nature, and to render them daily more like unto God: "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here note, 1. That the world is full, very full, of corruption, sin, and temptation; by reason of the lusts of men, they rub their leprosy upon each other, and, by the contagion of a bad example, infect and poison one another. Note, 2. That by being made partakers of the divine nature, through the influence of the promises, we escape the pollution of fleshly lusts, which the world is defiled with, and would defile us by.

5 And, besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;

6 And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness;

7 And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

The apostle spends the former part of the chapter in comforting, this in exhorting; he told us before what God had done for us; he tells us now what we must do for ourselves; it is not fit that heaven should take all the pains, and we none; we must give diligence, all diligence. Besides this, that is, besides what God has given us and done for us, let us take care to be daily adding to our stock and store. Adding to our faith, *virtue*; that is, all good works in general, without which, faith is dead, or dying; and fortitude, or holy courage, in doing our duty in particular. To virtue, *knowledge*; that is, a more exact knowledge of your duty, and a farther increase in it; for knowledge is the light, without which the christian cannot see to do his work. And to knowledge must be added, *temperance*, which subdues the violence of our unruly passions and appetites, and does reduce those rebellious powers under the government and dominion of reason and religion. And to temperance, *patience*, under all wrongs and sufferings whatsoever: an impatient man under affliction is like a bedlamite in chains, raving against God and man. To patience, *godliness*, a conscientious regard to all the duties of the first table; let the fear of

God restrain you from sin, the love of God constrain you to duty and to godliness, *brotherly kindness*, or a fervent love to all christians, as being our brethren and fellow-members in Christ, and this for grace-sake. And to brotherly kindness, *charity*; that is to all mankind, as proceeding from the same stock, having the same nature, and subject to the same necessities with ourselves; let there be found with you a desire and endeavour to do all the possible good you can to every one. Learn and observe from the whole, That there is a concatenation both of graces and duties, they must not be separated, they will not live single; where there is one grace in sincerity, there is a constant care to secure all the rest; and where a christian, for conscience sake, performs one duty, he will make conscience of all the rest; the duties of both tables are religiously observed, both as an argument of his sincerity, and as an ornament to his holy profession.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

To encourage christians to grow and improve in the fore-mentioned virtues and graces, our apostle here lays before us, 1. The great advantage of such a proficiency and growth; *If these things be in you and abound*, that is, the fore-mentioned graces, they will both cause you, and evidence you not to be barren and unfruitful in your profession of christianity and faith in Christ; the exercises of divine graces are the best evidences of our being made partakers of the divine nature. Observe, 2. The miserable state of those whose faith is not fruitful in good works: *He that lacketh these things*, that is, who doth not live in the exercise of the fore-mentioned graces, is spiritually blind, and really destitute of that knowledge which he pretends to, blinded by his passions and lusts, and sensual affections, and sees not the great end and design of christianity, forgetting that in baptism he solemnly vowed all this, and that he was sacramentally washed from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

As if our apostle had said, "See that in the diligent exercise of the afore-named graces, and in the daily practice of the afore-mentioned duties, you make your calling and election, which are sure in themselves, sure to you; for so doing, you shall never fall or miscarry eternally." Here note, That it is their own calling and election which christians are called upon to make sure, not another's: we must leave their case and state to God that searches the heart; we cannot know the hearts of others, it is well if we know our own: "Make your calling and election sure." Learn, 1. A christian may be assured of his own salvation. 2. Assurance of salvation requires all diligence. 3 That assurance

of salvation deserves all diligence. 4. That the way to make our election sure, is first to make our calling sure.

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are four sorts of persons spoken of in scripture : 1. Some are said to be far from the kingdom of God, afar off from God, as heathens and infidels, who know not God. 2. Others are said not to be far from the kingdom of God, Mark xii. 34. who yet will never come there. 3. Others are scarcely saved, saved with great difficulty, so as by fire, with much dross of error in judgment, and corruption in life. 4. Others are said to have an abundant entrance administered to them into the everlasting kingdom, and these are the fruitful christians, who are daily adding to their graces, and going from strength to strength : these shoot the gulph of death in the holy triumph of their grace : they enter the harbour of heaven with a plerophory, a full sail, with a full assurance of faith and hope : thus will the fruitful christian have both a more comfortable passage to, and also a more ample reward in heaven.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance :

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom the apostle gave the foregoing exhortation to progressiveness and proficiency in holiness, they were knowing persons, yea, established persons, they were both informed and confirmed in the truth ; but were they knowing, yet they wanted farther information : were they established, yet might they want farther confirmation. It is a very dangerous notion that some have taken up, that a christian in this life may live above ordinances, and outgrow counsels and exhortations, as if he need not hear, or pray, or the like. St. Peter thought otherwise ; these were grown christians to whom he writes, yet he tells them three several times together here, in four verses, that he would not be negligent to put them in remembrance, even of those things which they knew already. Observe, 2. The exemplary diligence and industry of the apostle in his ministerial work, together with his constancy therein, *as long as I am in this tabernacle* ; that is, as long as I live in this world, I will endeavour to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal burning very lively upon the altar of your hearts. Observe, 3. The motive of consideration provoking him to this diligence, and that is, the

certainly of his approaching dissolution, " I must shortly put off this tabernacle, as my Lord hath showed me." Where note, 1. He calls his body a tabernacle in regard of its moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house made without hands, eternal in the heavens. Note 2. How familiarly our apostle speaks of death. *I must put off this tabernacle* ; he makes no more of putting off his body by death, than a man does of putting off his clothes at night. Note, 3. The necessity of putting off the body, *I must, I may, and I must shortly* ; intimating, that how strong soever the affections and inclinations of souls are to the fleshly tabernacles they now live in, yet they must put them off, and that speedily. Note, 4. How the consideration of the certainty and suddenness of St. Peter's removal by death did excite and provoke him to the utmost industry and diligence in his ministerial work, while he lived ; the apprehensions of approaching death must quicken to utmost diligence. Lastly, that ministers must never give over pressing known truths as long as they live, that their people may have them in remembrance after their decease ; " I will endeavour that after my decease you may have these things always in remembrance."

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty :

17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Our apostle comes now to exhort them to constancy in the faith of the gospel, assuring them that himself and his fellow-apostles had not followed artificially devised fables, when they made known to them the coming of Christ in the flesh, and that he was truly, and in very deed, the promised Messiah ; for that he himself, with James and John, were with Christ upon mount Tabor, as eye witnesses of his transfiguration, where and when he received in his human nature a communicated splendor, and God the Father from heaven, the seat of the magnificent glory, pronounced him to be his well-beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. Learn hence, That God the Father's testimony from heaven, concerning his Son *Jesus Christ*, did effectually bring honor and glory unto Christ, and is a great obligation upon us to faith and obedience to him ; " he received from God the Father honor and glory ;" attesting him to be his well-beloved Son. Learn, 2. That there was as much assurance given of the certainty of Christ's being the promised Messiah, and of the truth of the evangelical doctrine, as the world could reasonably desire. Men can humanly be certain of nothing more than what they perceive by their senses, which are the proper judges of all sensible objects ; now no satisfaction of

this kind was wanting to the world concerning our blessed Saviour and his miracles: the apostles attesting what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, and their hands had handled of the word of life, 1 John i. 1.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

Observe here, That the scriptures, or written word of God, are a more sure word to us than any voice from heaven, or revelation whatsoever; not that there was any uncertainty of the Lord's voice uttered from heaven at Christ's transfiguration, but because that transient voice was heard only by three, and might be mistaken or forgotten; whereas the Holy Scriptures are a standing and authentic record, and a most sure ground for faith to build upon: and accordingly our apostle tells them, they should do well to attend unto the written word, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, as unto a light that shineth in that dark time, until, by considering those ancient prophecies, and comparing them with what Christ hath done and suffered, they might find the day dawning upon them, and the morning star, the Holy Spirit, arising in their hearts, so enlightening and convincing them, that no more doubts or scruples should be left in them, concerning this great truth, attested by a voice from heaven, and confirmed by the writings of the prophets, namely, that *Jesus* is the true and promised *Messias*, and really the Son of God. Learn hence, That the written word of God is a surer word, more to be depended on and relied upon than any voice from heaven, though attested by the greatest and most eminent apostle, and consequently to be more heeded and regarded by us; nay, farther, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in and upon the hearts and lives of sincere and serious christians is a more certain and indubitable evidence of their salvation, than if an angel should come from heaven on purpose to tell them that they should certainly come thither; for the testimony of an angel, at the highest, is but the testimony of a creature; but the testimony of the sanctifying Spirit is the testimony of God himself; it is therefore the *sure word* that we are to attend unto; and that revelation of God's will being final, is and ought to be attended to, before any pretended or real revelations whatsoever: "we have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, &c."

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

These words are understood variously. 1. Some interpret them thus: that no part of holy scripture was written by any private impulse, incitation, or motion, by no suggestion of men's own private spirits, but they gave out to us what the Holy Ghost gave in to them; nor did they prophesy according to the *will of man*, that is, when they would, or what they would, but they spake by the instinct

and impulse of the Holy Ghost. The words show what authority the men of the holy scriptures had to write what they did, and why we should be so careful to take heed to what they wrote. Learn hence, That it is a very great principle, yea, one of the first principles of our faith, that the scriptures are the *very word and will of God*, written not by any private spirit, but dictated by the Spirit of God, and consequently are no part of them of human invention, but all of divine inspiration, for which reason great respect is due to them, and we shall do well to take heed to them. 2. Others understand the words thus: that no prophecy of scripture is to be expounded as speaking only of those persons whom the speaker first intended and meant, according to the speaker's proper private thought, for the holy men of God were moved by God's Spirit to speak those words which signified more than they designed, or always meant and understood themselves; as for instance, David often speaks in the *Psalms* words true of himself and Solomon, but the Holy Ghost pointeth at Christ, who was typified by those persons; and whether David meant more than himself and Solomon, it is certain the Holy Ghost meant more; so if *Joshua* be meant in Isa. liii. as some would have it, it is evident that he was but typical, and that the Holy Ghost meant Christ and his sufferings ultimately; so that it is plain that the scripture prophecy receives its full sense from the Spirit, and not from the speaker; and must not be appropriated narrowly to those private men, by whom, or of whom they were proximately meant by the speaker. 3. Others understand the words after this manner, namely, that no private person must take upon him the interpretation of holy scriptures, but refer all to the church: hence Estius infers, "That the reformed and their pastors must not interpret the scriptures, but the Catholic church only." To which we reply, that as no private persons, so likewise no church, may presume to interpret scripture according to their own mind, nor make their private sense to be the sense of scripture, but to seek understanding from God, who shows the meaning of the word by the word, (comparing scripture with scripture) and by his Spirit leads good men into the knowledge and understanding of it; knowing this, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER II.

Our apostle, in the latter end of the foregoing chapter, recommended the Holy Scriptures to us as our guide and rule, as our card and compass, by which we should steer our christian course; he tells us, that the holy prophets under the Old Testament were men divinely inspired, and what they wrote was by the special direction of the Holy Ghost: he comes now to declare and foretel in this chapter, the coming in of false prophets and teachers, that would pervert the truth of doctrine by bringing in damnable heresies; and he sets forth their manners: also they walk according to their own lusts; monstrous doctrines are usually accompanied with monstrous lusts, and strong delusions with vile affections.

BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle foretels the coming of false teachers into the gospel-church, as there had been false prophets in the Jewish church; no age of the church ever was or will be free of them; but the run of the last times is most likely to have most of these sour dregs. *There shall be false teachers among you, false teachers then may find a scripture prophecy for their being in the church, but they will hardly find a scripture warrant for their being there.* Observe, 2. The doctrines which they will teach; and they are *damnable heresies*. Where note, That Almighty God never intended a certain remedy against heresy any more than he did against sin and vice; it is certain, that there is no certain and effectual remedy against either of them; God does what he sees best and fittest, not what we think to be so. Note also, that infallibility itself is no effectual remedy against heresy; the apostles were certainly infallible, and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish heresy, which never more abounded than in the apostles' times: St. Paul says, *there must be heresies*, 1 Cor. i 19. St. Peter here says, that *there shall be false teachers*; now, if there must be heresies and false teachers, either the church is not infallible, or infallibility is no effectual remedy against heresy. Observe, 3. That Christ is here called the Lord that bought these men who brought destruction upon themselves, *denying the Lord that bought them*; because none should perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin; Christ by his blood purchased for them pardon and life, to be theirs, upon condition of believing acceptance. Observe lastly, As the *seeds-men, false teachers, and the seed they sow, damnable heresies*, so the crop they shall reap, and that is *swift destruction*; as *damnable heresies* are brought in privily, so the blasphemous heretic, the seducing heretic, the seditious heretic, brings upon himself *swift destruction*; sometimes temporal destruction in this world, certainly eternal, without repentance, in the next.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

As if the apostle had said, "Notwithstanding heretics bring such fatal destruction upon themselves, yet many that profess christianity shall be seduced by them, and follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the enemies of religion will speak evil of it, and the professors of it. Observe here; 1. The thriving and growth of heresies, *many shall follow their pernicious ways*. Where note, the nature of error, it is pernicious and destructive; and the efficacy of error, not a few, but *many* are in danger of being perverted by it. Observe, 2. The sad sequel or fruit of this, *by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of*. Here note, 1. The title given to christian religion, it is the way of truth, so styled from its parentage and original, the God of truth, in regard of its efficacy, it works truth in the

inward parts, and because it brings those that embrace and practise it, to the enjoyment of him who is the God of truth. Note, 3. The coarse usage which religion meets with from many in the world, it is blasphemed or evil spoken of by persons following seducers, *by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of*. It is no new or unusual thing for religion, and the sincere professors of it, to be traduced and slandered by heretical seducers and false teachers.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Observe here, 1. What is the root of all heresy; it is *covetousness*, which the apostle calls the root of all evil; they are covetous worldly minded men generally, who hope some way or other to make an advantage of their opinions, who broach errors and false doctrines. Observe, 2. The miserable condition of the seduced, they are sold by heretics like beasts; *they make merchandise of you*: the business of heretics is to sell their own and others souls, as Judas did Christ, for some outward benefit. Observe, 3. The arts which heretics and seducers use to circumvent and deceive, and that is feigned words, artificially composed to seduce, drawing into error with a deceitful eloquence. Observe, 4. The dreadful punishment which attends their sin, "*swift destruction*; their damnation slumbereth not; their judgment lingereth not." Learn, That the righteous judgment of God brings damnation upon the wicked, and their damnation will come swiftly, very swiftly upon them.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment:

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly:

Our apostle having asserted in the foregoing verse, that the judgment of the wicked in general lingereth not, and that the damnation of seducers in particular slumbereth not; he comes here in these verses to make his assertion good by a threefold instance, namely, the *angels*, the *old world*, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; from whence he would have them conclude, that, if God spared not these he would not long spare false prophets and their followers. Observe, 1. The example of God's severity on the fallen angels: they sinned, and kept not their first state, they fell from that state of holiness in which they were originally created; and their punishment followed, they were

cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment. But are they not judged and punished already? Yes, no doubt, but the full wrath of God will not be poured out upon them until the day of judgment; if they are now as full of sin as they can be, it is certain they are not so full of misery and torment as they shall be. Learn hence, 1. That the angels, though created in an holy, yet are they not in an immutable state. 2. The freedom of their own wills was the cause of their sin, and their sin the cause of their misery. 3. That for sin they were cast down to hell, where their misery is much, but they expect more. Observe, 2. The example of the old world, upon whose sinning God brought a flood, drowning them all, except eight persons. Where note, That the greatest multitude and number of sinners does not hinder God's justice from executing judgment upon them for their sins; a whole world sinning are as easily destroyed by God as a single sinner. Observe, 3. He instances in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were consumed by fire from heaven, and rendered by the Almighty a dreadful spectacle to all that should live ungoddily. Sin lays the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms; the strongest walls cannot keep judgments out, when sin enters in: Sodom's plenty and power could not secure her inhabitants, when sin had once exposed them to the wrath of God. Note also, The intention, end, and design of God, in punishing some sinners; it is to make them examples unto others.

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)

Observe here, 1. As bad as Sodom was, it had a good man in it; God leaves not himself without witness, in the vilest and worst of places. God has some that profess his name, and bear witness to his truth. Observe, 2. The character given of him, *just Lot*; the denomination was taken from the habitual frame of his heart, and the general tenor of his life. Observe, 3. How this good man laid to heart the wickedness of Sodom; he was grieved for their wicked and filthy conversation before God, more than for their unkind and cruel behaviour towards him; the spirit of a child of God is a sympathizing spirit, it sadly lays to heart both the sins and sufferings of others. Observe, 4. The care that God took for this good man's preservation, *he delivered just Lot*; he delivered him both from the company and conversation of the wicked, which was a continual vexation to him; and also delivered him from the judgments which were righteously brought upon the wicked: "and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished;

From the particular example of Lot, and his gracious preservation in Sodom's destruction, the apostle draws this general conclusion. "That Almighty God knows how to preserve his own faithful servants from the evil of temptations and trials, which they here meet with in the world, and from the world, and can and will reserve the wicked to the day of judgment to be punished." Note here, 1. That the Lord has a perfect and exact knowledge both of the righteous and the wicked, and of their several ways and doings. 2. That God knoweth many ways how to deliver the righteous, (but considering the tenor of his revealed will), he knoweth no way how to deliver the wicked, they having refused all ways of his appointment for their own deliverance. 3. That although the wicked sometimes escape trouble, yet they are never delivered from it; all their preservations from evils are but reservations for future and farther evil; the wicked are not so much preserved from, as reserved unto future wrath: thus we see how Almighty God very well knows how to perform all those things which he has promised to the godly, and threatened to the wicked: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, but reserveth the wicked, &c."

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

As if the apostle had said, "Though God reserves all wicked men to punishment, yet, especially heretics and seducers, who second their corrupt doctrine with a wicked conversation, such as *walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*." Here note, That heretics are frequently unclean persons, monstrous opinions and vile affections accompany one another such as oppose the faith are flesh-defilers. Note farther, That seducers are opposers of civil-government and dominion, "they despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." Some think the dignities here intended were the angels, others the apostles, but most understand it of civil rulers: it is a very heinous sin in the sight of God to despise government, and oppose rulers.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

That is, "Whereas the blessed angels, who have more power than men, when they plead against devils themselves, do it not by railing accusation." Note here, That angels are far superior to men in dignity and power. 2. That purity of affection does accompany angelical illumination; as the angels are above us, so are they the patterns of holiness to us. 3. They are eminently so with respect to the government of their passions; when they contend with devils themselves, it is without disturbance, without railing accusations. It is our duty to learn this angelical lesson, or forbearing railing accusations; not to return evil for evil, but being defamed, to entreat; we are to be as just to another's reputation as our own: they that handle the names of others

rudely, must expect their own will be, at one time or other, hauled as roughly; nothing is more just with God, than to suffer others to open their mouths against those who will open their own mouths against others.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption :

Observe here, What our apostle compares these heretical seducers to, and sets them forth by, brute beasts. 1. Because their minds run after sensual objects violently and impetuously, and they know no measure in the using of them; like swine, they wallow over head and ears in the mud of their sensual lusts. And, 2. They were also as secure as the brute beasts; they mocked at the denunciation of God's judgments, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Seducers are perfect sensualists; it is a righteous thing with God to leave them to be governed by sense, who will not be guided by grace: they would not be saints, and at length they cease to be men; but like brutes fall into the ditch of beastly sensuality. O christian! beg of God that thy grace may be true and supernatural; for if it be only in appearance, and doth not arise to true sanctity, it may soon degenerate and sink down into sensual bestiality. In a word, 3. They are to perish, and to be destroyed like brute beasts; all seek to destroy them for their hurtfulness, but these moral beasts destroy themselves; sensual seducers *perish in their own corruptions*; in their natural corruptions, by their luxury and intemperance, bringing diseases and death upon their bodies: in their civil corruptions, overthrowing their families, by swallowing down their estates; yea, they corrupt themselves eternally, destroying body and soul by their excesses. Lord! how will the fatted glutton (without repentance) fry in hell; how dismal a recompence will a sea of brimstone be for a river of wine! They who are drowned in profuseness, shall certainly be drowned in perdition.

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time: spots *they are*, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you :

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children :

Here we have many sad and dreadful instances given of the height of sensuality and brutishness which these seducers were arrived at, and had attained unto. Lord! how do fleshly lusts, and sensual affections, obscure the light of conscience, and corrupt its judgments? There is such an intimate communion between the soul and the body, that

they interchangeably corrupt one another. To what a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility, had the flames of lust seared the consciences of these men! They had lost all the ingenuous bashfulness of human nature, and pleased themselves in their licentious principles and practices, not declining to do that at noon day which heathens would have blushed to be found doing at midnight. Observe particularly, how luxury and uncleanness accompany each other; they took pleasure in rioting and sporting themselves in their feasts, and their eyes were full of adultery. They feasted and fed immeasurably, impurely, and lustfully, making their plenty fodder and fuel for their lusts: for, having fed to the full, every one neighed after his neighbour's wife, and putting out the candles after supper, they gave way promiscuously to the ravings of unbridled lust, turning the temple of the Holy Ghost into an hog-sty: but know, O unclean sinner! that God will return flames for flames, and revenge this fire in thy heart with the fire of hell. How nearly does it concern thee, who hast burnt in these impure flames of uncleanness, and kindled the flames of God's wrath, to labor to cool and quench them with the blood of Christ, and the tears of repentance, which alone can allay the heats of sin in thee, and of wrath in God? Let unclean sinners improve examples, lest they be made examples

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, *the son of Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness ;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.

Our apostle having charged these men with insatiable lust in the former verse, proceeds next to tax them with insatiable covetousness in this verse, declaring that this sin had diverted them from the right way of truth and godliness, and caused them to imitate Balaam of old, whose love of honor and wealth so blinded his eyes, that the ass he rode upon could see beyond him, whose mouth God miraculously opened to rebuke the madness of the prophet. Note here, 1. How the wicked in after ages do in their courses and practices imitate such wicked persons as lived before them in former ages: these men follow the way of Balaam, imitate his covetousness and insatiable desire of wealth. Note, 2. That as it is the nature of all sin to carry men out of the way, so covetousness in particular will carry a man astray, and put him upon the practice of any wickedness; it neither fears nor forbears any sinful course to attain its end; they that will be rich meet with many enticements unto sin, and they will not fear to embrace any enticement. Nay, verily, a thirst after gain, will make a man thirst after blood, to get gain. Witness Balaam and Judas, who were both covetous and bloody. Covetousness is oftentimes the cause of uncleanness. How many, for the sake of money, have violated their matrimonial faith, allured more with the adulterer's purse than by his person. Let no person hope to escape any sin that embraces this one sin. Note, 3. What a mighty struggle there sometimes is in a natural man's conscience concerning sin. The light of Balaam's

conscience made him refuse the wages of unrighteousness, and speak honorably: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot, &c." but at the same time lust in his heart led him forth strongly to desire it. "He loved the wages of unrighteousness;" loved it, yet durst not touch it. Note, 4. How extremely, yea, brutishly mad, such men are upon their lusts, who will not be rebuked or stopped in their progress of impiety without a miracle. Balaam's running was so greedy, and his march so furious, that he had cursed the people, had not the angel stopped him, and the ass spoken to him. Little thanks to a resolute sinner that he does not rush on, when the arm of omnipotency pulls him back. O let the heart changing power of the grace of God influence us to do good, as well as his almighty arm restrain us from evil, or we are miserable.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

Still our apostle proceeds in characterising and describing these seducers, which were then amongst them. He describes them before by their luxury and licentiousness, by their incontinency and uncleanness, by their insatiableness and covetousness, now he proceeds to discover their vanity and emptiness. They pretended indeed to be deep fountains of saving knowledge, but they were like wells without water; and to be clouds, containing abundance of rain, for the watering of the church; whereas they were like clouds carried about with the tempest of pride and ambition, from one vicious doctrine and practice to another, darkening the church; for whom by the just judgment of God, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Note here, 1. The ministers of the gospel ought to be as wells, for depth of knowledge, for purity of doctrine, for residency and fixedness of abode; every one knows where the town-well stands; though ministers are wells of clay, yet should they be always full of the water of life, and always at hand for the people to have recourse unto. Note, 2. The ministers of Christ must be full and watery clouds, able and apt to teach, able to open scriptures, able to convince gainsayers, continually dropping down the heavenly dew; but not as clouds without water, without the water of true knowledge, without the water of holiness, sanctity both of heart and life, not without the water of consolation and refreshment. The highest commendation of a minister is industry for, and usefulness to the souls of others; clouds consume themselves by watering others. Note, 3. That although seducers are wont to make great shows and appearances of worth in themselves, yet it is a great and inexcusable sin to make show of that goodness of which we are wholly void, and to which we are also opposite; to be wells without water, and clouds without water, big and black, accompanied with emptiness and dryness. Appearing goodness sets men at the farthest distance from the real goodness; they that satisfy themselves in appearances, will never labor after holiness in reality.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the

lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

The next sin charged upon these seducers is pride and ostentation, they speak big, *great swelling words of vanity*; with a lofty and affected style they propound their false doctrines to amuse the simple. It is the usual practice of seducers to speak in an high-flown strain of words, that, being not understood, they may be the more admired. Next they allure to their party such novice christians who had left the heathenish bestiality, and made an outward profession of the christian religion. The word rendered to allure, is a metaphor taken from fishes or fowlers, who produce the bait or shrap, but hide the net or snare. Seducers bait their hook with such baits as are proper to the fish they would catch, else they are no good anglers. But observe, why the bait is here before us, it is liberty, it is licentiousness, they allure through the *lusts of the flesh*: no bait like this. Learn hence, That the true reason why seducers have so many followers is this, because their doctrine is libertinism, and most agreeable to the carnal lusts and corrupt affections of men. This is the true reason why popery has had so many proselytes; *they allure through the lusts of the flesh*. Never was a religion better calculated for gratifying men's beastly lusts than popery: it indulges a liberty to all abominable lusts and unchristian practices, yet after all will blanch over wilful violations of God's laws with the favorable title of venial crimes, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis*; let my soul, at the great day, be rather found among the sober heathen philosophers, than among sensual and brutish christians.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Observe here, 1. How the old pretence for the most unbounded licentiousness has been "liberty; they promise you liberty;" a liberty to do any thing without fear: but this is not liberty properly, but licentiousness, which in reality is the greatest slavery. Accordingly it follows, "they themselves are the servants of corruption;" that is, such as promise you a sinful liberty, are the greatest slaves to sin and corruption themselves. All sin is servitude and slavery; and, when sin and sinners flatter men with the great opinion of liberty, it makes them the most miserable vassals, and the worst of slaves; for so many lusts, so many lords, so many vices, so many tyrants has a sinner over him;" for of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage." As when the conqueror brings the vanquished into captivity, he makes them slaves, and imposes on them vile and servile offices; in like manner, those lusts, by which sinners have been conquered and brought in bondage, they must needs be slaves unto. Is this liberty, to obey every lust as a petty slave? Call you this freedom, when a man cannot choose but sin? If to sin be the only liberty, they have no liberty in heaven; no, this is the service of corruption; a thral-

dom, not a freedom: "for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome: the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

By escaping the pollutions of the world, understand their renouncing of them in baptism; their conversion from Heathenism to the profession of Christianity, by the knowledge of the gospel. Now, if afterwards they return to it again, and are entangled in their idolatry, and other gross sins, their latter end is worse than their beginning, their christian heathenism worse than their old heathenism. Learn hence, that a person may forsake many gross and scandalous sins, and have a visible change, and reformation wrought in his life: but not being a thorough and prevailing change, he is still in an unsafe state; his latter end may be worse than the beginning.

2 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

As if the apostle had said, the sin and misery of these men had been far less, if they had never known the way of righteousness revealed by the gospel of Christ, than after they have known it, to forsake the practice of holiness, which by their baptismal profession they had obliged themselves unto. Learn hence, That to sin against light and knowledge received in and by the gospel is a very heinous aggravation of sin. The condition of persons simply ignorant is not so sad by far as theirs who have been enlightened, and yet afterwards have apostatized. A relapse is evermore dangerous than the first sickness, more soon incurred, more hardly cured. Woe to those that relapse from God to the world, from truth to error, from grace to vice; their latter end will be worse than their beginning, if they recover not themselves again by timely repentance.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again: and, The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Observe here, The odious character given of apostates; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who, though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly; upon occasion it will again to the mire; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more; but whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still: and swine washed are swine still. No wonder

then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit, and mire again. O our God! as thou hast outwardly washed us in baptism, do thou inwardly renew us, and thoroughly sanctify us by thy Holy Spirit; as we are the workmanship of thine hands, make us also the sheep of thy pasture, that our love to purity may daily more and more increase: that when apostatizing sinners return to their vomit with the dog, and to the mire with the swine, and so draw back unto perdition, we may be of the number of those that persevere to the salvation of our souls. *Amen.*

CHAPTER III.

Our apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, at large described the seducers and false teachers, which in all ages trouble and perplex the church; he comes, in this chapter, to inform us, that those men would proceed to that height of impiety, as to scoff at the principles of religion, and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, which in the close of this chapter he describes; and exhorts christians to the love and practice of universal holiness, as the best preparative for the day of judgment; advising, that no profit may tempt them, no pleasure entice them, no power embolden them, no privacy encourage them, to do that thing which they would not be found doing, if judgment should surprize them in the doing of it. Accordingly thus he writes:

THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you: in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

Observe here, 1. The design of both St. Peter's epistles was one and the same, even to put them in remembrance of, and to call to their minds what they had formerly heard and understood, but possibly not retained, nor duly considered. "This second epistle I write; in both which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance." Note, the office of ministers is to be remembrancers. *The Lord's remembrancers*, by putting him in mind of the people's wants; *their people's remembrancers*, by putting them frequently in mind of their duty to God. There is then a constant necessity of a conscientious ministry; none are weary of it but such as love not to be remembered of their duty by it. Nay, farther, St Peter tells them, he would stir up their *pure minds* by way of remembrance; implying, that the memories of the best christians stand in need of refreshing, and the affections of the holiest want a fresh exciting. The freest christian sometimes wants a spur: we are slow to learn what we should do, and more slow to do what we have learnt. Great then is the sin of those who contemn repeated truths.

Cursed is that curiosity that despises a wholesome truth, because it is common. If we have such nice stomachs that will not endure to eat twice of the same dish, if wholesome; it is just with God, that want should overtake our wantonness. Observe, 2. What it is that he would have them remember and be mindful of; it is the word of prophecy in the Old Testament, and the doctrine of the gospel in and under the New, "that ye be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets," namely, *Enoch* and *Daniel*, who prophesied of the general judgment of the last day, and of the destruction of Jerusalem, then at hand. Observe, 3. How St Peter here joins the prophets and apostles together, as concurring harmoniously in their doctrine; what was foretold by the prophets was confirmed by the apostles; hence they are said to have but one mouth, St Luke i. As he spake by the mouth of all his prophets, not by the mouths; for, though the prophets and apostles were many, yet had they all but one mouth, speaking all the same things."

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last day scoffers, walking after their own lusts.

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

Observe here, 1. The persons foretold, or what sort of men should be found in these last days; namely, *scoffers*. These are the dregs of mankind, found in the dregs of time; they scoff sometimes at the word of God, sometimes at religion and the ways of good men; sometimes at sin, and the follies of those that are bad. The scoffing spirit, is a vile spirit; it is better to be a fool than a flouter; better to have a dull spirit than a deriding spirit; to deride God and religion is the height of impiety. Such as are in the chair of the scooner are in the highest form in the devil's school. Observe, 2. What it was that these men scoffed at: namely, at the prediction of our Saviour's coming to judge the world; they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" because Christ did not come, when some looked for him, they concluded he would not come at all, but that all things should go on in a constant course, as they had done from the beginning of the creation. Observe, 3. The character of the persons who are called scoffers; they are said to *walk after their own lusts*, men of sensual spirits, and licentious lives. No wonder, that they who give themselves up to all manner of sensuality, to deny a judgment to come; for, as it is expedient for them that there should be none, so they endeavour to persuade themselves that there shall be none, and are glad to find arguments to fortify themselves in that persuasion. But surely God scorneth the scorners, he will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their desolation cometh. Lord! what a black and horrid ingratitude is this, to scoff at the Author of our beings, and the Patron of our lives; to live in defiance of him in whom we live? Is it not time for God to come and judge the world, when men begin to doubt whether ever he made it?

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens

were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.

These scoffers had declared in the former verse, that the world was the same it was from the beginning; that nature always bad, and therefore ever would keep its course. But says the apostle here, these scoffers know better; if they be ignorant, they are willingly ignorant what a change God made in the world since the first creation of it, and that he can as easily destroy it, as he did at first create it. To evidence this, the apostle shows how God by water drowned the old world, and therefore all things had not continued as they were from the beginning of the creation; and that this present world shall, when God's time is come, be ruined by fire, as the old world was by water. The same omnipotent power of God which created the world, upholds it and preserves it, and will at last destroy it, namely, at the final judgment, when all wicked persons, especially profane scoffers at, and deriders of Christ's coming, shall be condemned and perish. Hence learn, That those great and awful works of God, the creation, preservation, and final destruction of the world first by water, and next by fire, none ought to be ignorant of, but all ought to meditate frequently upon, and be continually prepared for. Note, 2. That the day of judgment will be a day of perdition to ungodly men, they shall then be utterly and eternally destroyed. The wicked are called in scripture sons of perdition; they are so actively, they make it their work to destroy others; and they are so passively, they shall be destroyed at that day, when they and their works shall be burnt up.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Our apostle here answers the cavil and objection of the fore mentioned scoffers, namely, that if Christ intends to come to judgment, why does he so long defer his coming? To this our apostle replies, 1. By assuring them that this delay ought not to be judged according to our sense and apprehension of things, for God does not measure time as we do, but a thousand years, which seem so long to us, are but a day, yea, but a moment to him who is eternal, and inhabiteth eternity. To the eternity of God no finite duration bears any proportion; to eternity all time is equally

short; God does not measure time by our pole, nor cast up years by our arithmetic. 2. He assures them farther, that God's delay of judgment did not proceed from slackness, but from divine patience and goodness. He delays his coming, on purpose to give men time to repent, and by repentance to prevent their own eternal ruin. Learn hence, 1. That God's delay of judgment is no ground for sinners to conclude that he will not come to judgment, for our Saviour has now here fixed and determined the time of it. We can neither be sure when our Lord will come, nor certain when he will not come. Learn, 2. That the true reason why God defers judgment is, to give sinners opportunity for repentance, if this be not complied with, he reserves those who are incorrigibly bad to a more remarkable ruin, condemning them that will not be saved, but obstinately destroy themselves.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.

Our apostle having asserted, that this solemn day of judging the Jews, at the destruction of Jerusalem first, and then of all mankind at the end of the world, will certainly come: he next shows the manner how, and that although this great day of the Lord comes slowly, yet it will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, surprising the secure and unprepared part of the world. The thief cometh without warning, and without noise, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Rev. xvi. 15. "Behold I come as a thief, blessed are they that watch." Observe next, the apostle declares what a great change there will be when Christ comes to judgment, namely, a total dissolution of the whole frame of nature, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt, and the earth be burnt up;" that is, say some, totally consumed and utterly abolished: for when there is no more need of sun and stars, of earth and water, why should they be any more? And when the saints see God face to face, what need of the glass of the creatures to behold the face of God in? Others conceive that the heavens and the earth shall not be annihilated, but bettered and improved, their substance continued, but their qualities changed: that out of this conflagration God will bring forth a new edition of heaven and earth, and of what is contained in them, to be the everlasting monuments of his own power and goodness, and the delightful objects of his saints' contemplation.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness.

These words are St. Peter's practical improvement of the foregoing doctrine, concerning the certain, sudden, and terrible judgment of Christ to come. If the whole frame of heaven and earth shall be so wonderfully changed, and a new world made, how holy should they be, and how great a degree of purity should they labor to attain unto, who expect to live in this new world? Learn hence, That the firm

belief of Christ's coming to judgment, and the dissolution of this sinful world by fire, should convince all christians of the necessity of, and engage them in their pursuits and endeavours after, a life of universal holiness, and that with the utmost care and possible diligence; "Seeing all these things, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" Heaven is an holy place, has holy company, holy employments, holy enjoyments; we must be qualified for it, before we can be admitted into it, and begin that life of holiness upon earth, which will never end in heaven; without a present meetness for heaven, we must never expect to be admitted into it, Col. i. 12.

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Having exhorted persons by holiness to prepare for Christ's coming to judgment in the foregoing verse, he now directs them to expect and look for it, to desire and long after it, "looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God," that joyful day of our perfect deliverance and salvation, when the lower heavens and earth shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat. Learn hence, That there is or ought to be in all believers a vehement desire after, and a fervent longing for, the coming and appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. O christian! long intensely for Christ's company, for know assuredly he longs for thine.

13 Nevertheless, we (according to his promise) look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Observe here, 1. What is the subject matter of the christian's expectations, he looks for *new heavens*, and a *new earth* in which *dwelleth righteousness*, that is, only righteous persons, and perfectly righteous persons, where sin shall no more prevail. Observe, 2. What is the ground and foundation of this hope in the christian, it is the promise of God, "we (according to his promise) look for new heavens and a new earth." To hope for any thing that God has not promised, is presumption. Hope is the expectation of some future good which God has promised and faith believed. Observe, 3. How christians should qualify and fit, make ready and prepare themselves for this joyful hour, this desirable place and state: "Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." Give all diligence that ye may be found at that day in a state of peace and reconciliation with God by justification, and without spot, and blameless, without any allowed spot or blame, by pressing now after the highest measures of sanctification, that so an entrance may both joyfully and abundantly be

administered to you into that kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you;

16 As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

In these words St. Peter advises them to make an holy and wise construction of the forbearance of God in his delaying to come to judgment, not to think that God neglects them under sufferings, or is well-pleased with the perverseness of the wicked world in sinning; but his patience and long-suffering towards them is hereby displayed, in order to the bringing of them to repentance, and by repentance to salvation. "Account that the long-suffering of God," that is, the design of God in his long-suffering, is the sinner's *salvation*. Here note, That patience and long-suffering in God is an ability or power in him, not only to delay the execution of his wrath for a time, by a temporary suspension of it towards them that perish, and shall feel it at last; but to delay the execution of it towards others, in order to their eternal salvation, that they may never feel it. Observe, next, How this apostle, to add to the strength and authority of what he had spoken concerning the certainty of Christ's coming, and their duty to be in a ready preparation for it, doth make mention of St. Paul as bearing witness, in several places of his epistles, thereto. "Even as our beloved brother Paul hath written unto you in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things." As the prophets had all one mouth, so had the apostles also, speaking all the same things. Observe lastly, The testimony given by St. Peter to St. Paul's epistles. He acknowledges, 1. That there were *some things in them hard to be understood*. Mark, He doth not say many things, much less that all things in St. Paul were *hard to be understood*, but some things only. How vainly then doth the church of Rome produce this text, to prove the obscurity of the whole scripture? whereas the great and necessary things to our salvation are so plainly revealed in

scripture, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them. And though there be difficulties in other points, more remote from salvation, yet they are so far our exercise and trial, to excite our most intense study and diligence. Note farther, Who the persons are to whom the scriptures are hard to be understood, to the unlearned and unstable, who wrest and pervert them to their own destruction. The original word rendered to *wrest*, is a metaphor taken from torturers, who put a man upon the rack, they torment him so long till they make him speak what he never meant to speak; so these wrest a sense out of scripture which the Holy Ghost never intended. *Scripturæ obscuritas non novæ regulæ necessitatem, sed spiritus illuminantis et ministerii exponentis necessitatem ostendit.* Bishop Davenant.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with an exhortation to watch against the errors and false doctrines of seducers, lest we, being led away thereby, do fall from our own steadfastness in the faith of the gospel. It ought to be our care not only to be sound in the faith, but steadfast in the faith; and, that we may be so, we are here directed, 1. To grow in grace, in all grace, in faith, hope, and love; for grace establishes the heart, and, accordingly, steadfastness and increase of grace are here joined together. 2. To grow in knowledge; the way to be kept steadfast is to grow in grace; and the best way to grow in grace, is to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to know him in his person, in his offices, in his undertaking, in his doctrine, in his example; such a knowledge as this is of Jesus Christ, is fundamental to all graces. They all begin in knowledge, and are increased by knowledge. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ;" behold how these two keep equal pace in the soul of a christian, namely, grace and knowledge; in what degree one increases, the other increases proportionably. To the author and finisher of which grace, to the fountain and foundation of which knowledge, be ascribed all honor and glory both now and for evermore. Amen.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
SAINT JOHN.

As touching the author and penman of this epistle, the church of God has in all ages concluded it to be St. John the apostle, the same person that wrote the gospel, though we do not find his name prefixed to either, which is looked upon as an evidence of his great humility; he that was so high in Christ's favor as to be called, The disciple whom Jesus loved, how little and how low was he in his own sight.

The time when he wrote this epistle is concluded to have been a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, because he speaks of the last hour now at hand, which is generally understood to be the last times of the Jewish state; and because of the many Antichrists and false Prophets, which were then amongst them, such as Christ tells us, Mat. xxiv. 24. were to be the immediate forerunners of that destruction.

The occasion of writing it seems to be twofold, partly to arm the Jewish converts against those loose doctrines, that faith without works, believing without doing righteousness, was sufficient to salvation; that men might be children of the light, and yet walk in darkness, the favorites of God without obedience to his laws, or love to his children or servants; and partly to fortify them against the impious errors of the Gnostics, who sprang from Simon Magus, and pretended to extraordinary measures of knowledge and divine illumination, from whence they had their name; but notwithstanding all these glittering appearances, they allowed themselves in all manner of impious and vicious practices.

Now that St. John particularly aims at these men, is evident from the frequent and plain allusions throughout this epistle, to those names and titles which the sect assumed to themselves; thus chap. ii. 4. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. This sect also pretended that, whatever they did, they could not sin. Hence is that of the apostle, chap. i. 8. If we say that we have no sin, the truth is not in us. In a word, these men not only held it lawful to renounce christianity, that they might avoid persecution, but also joined with the heathens in persecuting the christians; for which reason the apostle taxes them with hatred of their brethren, and calls them murderers; therefore to show the inconsistency of these principles and practices with christianity, the apostle writes this excellent epistle now before us, asserting, that nothing is more essential to a true christian than the love and practice of universal holiness; and let men pretend to what knowledge and faith they please, wickedness is a plain mark and character of the children of the devil. This is the general scope and design of John's epistle.

CHAPTER I.

THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life ;

It is first observable, that whereas St. John began his gospel with a description of Christ's divinity, as God, he begins his epistle with a demonstration of the truth of his human nature, as man ; for the certainty of which he appeals to the judgment of sense, because the senses, when rightly circumstantiated, are the proper judges of all sensible objects ; accordingly St. John here, to show the certainty of Christ's incarnation, and manifestation in the flesh, brings in three of the five senses, to wit, *hearing, seeing, feeling*, to bear witness to it, the latter still carrying a stronger testimony than the former : to see is more than to hear : to feel is more than to see : "that which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have handled." Observe farther, That to make the testimony yet more strong, St. John adds two words more, by way of confirmation, 1. *That which we have looked upon* ; now this is more than to see ; to see may be but a transient sudden act, but to *look upon* is a fixed and deliberate act, and usually a pleasing and delightful act ; we looked upon him as the rarest object, as the desire and the delight of our eyes. 2. It is added as the surest ground of certainty, that their hands had handled the word of life ; as they daily conversed with Christ, so they handled and touched him, both before his resurrection and after it ; so that from hence we may remark, that God has given us the highest and fullest assurances, that can be desired, of his Son's manifestation in our flesh, and appearing in our nature : he was heard and seen, looked upon, and handled, by those that conversed with him, which are evident demonstrations of the truth of the human nature assumed by him. Observe farther, That our apostle takes notice of Christ's divine nature, as well as asserts the reality of his human nature ; he styles him *the word ; the word of life, and the word which was from the beginning* : in the beginning, when all things received their being, then the word was, and did actually subsist, even from all eternity. Learn hence, That Jesus Christ, the eternal word, not only antecedent to his incarnation, but even before all time, and the beginning of all things, had an actual being and subsistence. Prov. viii. 23. "I was set up from everlasting, then was I by him as one brought up with him ;" thus was this Jesus, in whom we trust, both God and man, having two distinct natures in one person.

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)

As if the apostle had said, "*Christ Jesus*, that eternal life

which was with the Father from eternity, as being his eternal Son, was in the fulness of time manifested in the flesh, and we his apostles saw him in his assumed human nature, and do now testify, publish, and declare him unto you ; he was pleased to subject himself to the notice of our senses ; and what we have heard, seen, and felt, and has been manifested unto us, that we do with all integrity declare and manifest unto others." Note here, 1. The title given to Christ, he is *life, eternal life*, he is so in him-self, and he is the fountain of life to us ; we now live by him a life of justification : we derive from him a life of holiness and sanctification ; and we hope to live with him a life of glorification. Note, 2. This eternal life was from all eternity with the Father, and distinct from him ; he was with the Father, not as an instrument, but as an agent, in making of the world, Heb. i. 2, 3. And as his Father's delight, Prov. viii. 31. Note, 3. This eternal life, which from the beginning was with the Father, in the fulness of time was manifested to the sons of men ; manifested, not as he was to the prophets by faith, so they rejoiced to see him, John viii. nor in the similitude and likeness of flesh, so he sometimes manifested himself to the patriarch, Gen. xviii. but manifested in the flesh to his apostles, who eat and drank, discoursed and conversed with him. Note, 4. That what the apostles saw of Christ they made manifest to others : they had themselves sufficient satisfaction of the verity of Christ's human nature, and of the certainty of his doctrine, and therefore with mighty assurance they declare it unto others, and the reason of that declaration follows in the next verse.

3 That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

As if he had said, "We declare unto you that of Christ which we ourselves have seen and heard, and what we had by sight and hearing you are to receive from our testimony ; and our design and end herein is sincerely this, that you may have fellowship, and be of one communion with us, and not with false teachers, and by virtue of your communion with us may partake of the same faith and grace, and all spiritual benefits and privileges which Christ has purchased for us ; and you will have no cause to repent of your coming into our communion and fellowship ; for verily we, and all that have sincerely embraced the doctrine of the gospel with us, have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with each other." Learn hence, That believers have communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and one with another. *Quest.* What doth this communion include? *Ans.* 1. Real union ; believers are united to God and Christ morally, conjugally, mystically. 2. Reciprocal community ; and community of enjoyments ; the Lord is theirs, and they are his ; a community of affection ; there is mutual love, mutual delight, mutual desires, and mutual hatred ; a community of interests ; they have the same designs and ends, the same enemies and friends ; a community of privileges ; the Lord visits them, and they visit him ; the Lord walks with them, and they with him ; the Lord observes them, and they observe him ; they impart

the secrets of their hearts to him, and he imparts the secrets of his word and of his providence to them. Gen. xvii. 17. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" *Quest.* 2. What are the benefits and advantages of this communion? *Ans.* It affords the highest honor, the sweetest pleasure, and the chiefest happiness; it is heaven on this side heaven, our happiness and theirs differ only in degree, not essentially, but gradually. Blessed privilege!

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Observe here, The great end for which the apostles penned and wrote the doctrine of the gospel, namely, that their joy may be full who do believe it and obey it. The joy which good men experience in the word of God, is a solid joy, a substantial joy, a full joy, a lasting joy. Worldly joy is nauseating but not satisfying; gluttony, but not filling: but that joy that is found in the holy scriptures, in the word and promise of God, is better experienced than expressed. Christianity doth not extirpate our joy, but regulate and refine it; it shows us the proper object of our joy, what to rejoice in, and the manner how, that we may not sin in rejoicing.

5 ¶ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

That is, "This is the sum and substance of the gospel of Christ's doctrine, and our message, to teach us to know what God is, namely, *light*, that is, a being of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and purity; and that there is *no darkness in him*, no darkness of error, no darkness of ignorance, no darkness of falsehood, impurity, and sin, found with him, or can be pleasing to him. Note here, 1. The gospel is a message, a special and gracious message, sent by God to a lost world. The ministers of the gospel are messengers sent of God, to make known this message; and if so, then they must receive their mission from God, then their message depends not upon their own, but God's authority; then their people are to receive it, not as the message and word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God. "This is the message that we have heard, and declare unto you." Observe, 2. The metaphor which St. John makes choice of, to set forth the nature of God by. He describes him, 1. Affirmatively, *God is light*, his nature and attributes are (though darkly and imperfectly) resembled by it; the light, as it was the first of all creatures, shadows forth the eternity of God's being, who is the First and the Last; light, of all bodies, is the most immaterial and uncompounded, denoting the spirituality and simplicity of God's nature. Is the light diffusive, and cannot but impart itself, for the benefit of others? so is God communicative of his goodness to all persons, shining upon the just and upon the unjust. But according to the apostle's intendment here, light is of a pure and undefiled nature, it is a bright and spotless splendor; though it shines upon a dunghill, it contracts no pollutions; this represents the perfect purity and unspotted holiness of God. 2. Negatively, *in him is no darkness at all*; that is, God is so pure, that not the least impurity can cleave unto him; so holy, that no sin can be found in him, and consequently no darkness of sin or impurity can proceed from

him. Learn we then, always to entertain high and holy thoughts of God, and to conceive of him as a being that hates sin, and all the works and workers of darkness, Psal. v. 4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee: sinners shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,—

Observe here, 1. What great plainness of speech St. John uses with and towards such persons as call themselves christians, and pretend to fellowship with God, but yet hold communion with sin, he says *they lie*. O how well do fervor, vehemency, and impartiality, become the ministers of Christ in reproving sin! health is found in those smart wounds which ministerial reproof makes. Observe, 2. St. John speaks in the first, not in the second person plural; *if we say*, not *if you*; if we apostles and ministers, as well as if you disciples and members of Christ, be guilty of this hypocrisy, *we lie*, and *do not the truth*; he does not say, and speak not the truth, but do it not; there is a twofold lie, the lie of the lip, and the lie of life, and the latter is the louder of the two; they lie, because they do not the truth, the same is, that a profession of piety and religion, accompanied with sin and unsuitable walking, is odious hypocrisy abhorred by God and man. Observe, 3. The practice of the sincere and serious christian, he *walks in the light*; that is, in the clear knowledge of the gospel, and in the exemplary and exact performance of his duty. Walking implies motion, it is a voluntary motion, an uniform and even motion, a progressive motion, a constant motion. To talk of religion is easy, but to walk wisely before God and man in the practice of our whole duty, requires diligence and circumspection. Observe, 4. The pattern after which the christian walks, and that is God; he walks in the light, *as he is in the light*; God is in the light, that is, all his actions are exactly pure and holy, and our walking must, for the quality of it, be holy, though for equality it cannot be so holy as God is holy. Observe, 5. A double privilege secured to such as walk in communion with God, we have *fellowship one with another*; justification by Christ, the blood of Jesus Christ, cleanseth from all sin. Note, 1. Such as walk in the light have a certain fellowship and communion with God and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and they with him, and likewise an intimate fellowship and communion one with another. Oh! How great is our dignity! How gracious Christ's dignation! How high are we exalted? How long is he abased? The second privilege follows:

—And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Note here, 1. The pollution and uncleanness of sin implied and supposed in the word *cleansing*; sin is the great pollution and defilement of the soul, an universal pollution, an abiding pollution, a mortal pollution, and yet an insensible pollution. Note, 2. The remedy which the wisdom of God has provided against this malady, the soul's pollution by sin,

and that is the blood of his Son; this cleanseth meritoriously, called therefore *the blood of God*, as being the blood of him that is truly and really God. Note, 3. The extent of the efficacy and virtue of this blood. 1. In regard of the universality of the disease, it cleanseth from all sin. 2. In regard of the permanency of the remedy, which is expressed in the present tense, it *cleanseth*; implying, that this blood doth never lose its efficacy; it cleanses still no less than it did the first moment it was shed; nay, it cleanseth virtually before it was shed; all the patriarchs and prophets were justified, and saved by faith in his blood, who was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, in the decree and purpose of God. Eternal thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth from the guilt and filth of all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say, we apostles, we cannot say we are free from sin; much less can the proud Gnostics say so, who suppose and assert themselves to be in a state of perfection; and observe, he doth not say, if we say we had no sin, we deceive ourselves; but that if now we say we have none; intimating, that christians, as well after as before conversion, continue sinful persons; a perfect freedom from all sin being altogether unattainable in this life, not only by ordinary christians, but by the most eminent saints. The church of Rome will have it that this is *magis humiliter quam veraciter dictum*, rather spoken humbly than truly; but the apostle doth not say, humility is not in us; but, the truth is not in us; he saith not, we extol ourselves, and there is no lowliness in us; but, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us; no truth of knowledge in our understandings, no real holiness in our hearts. Who can say, he has made his heart clean? We can neither ascribe what purity we have to ourselves, nor yet attribute perfection to our purity; and if so, how should we long for the day of redemption, when no sin shall affect us, no sorrow afflict us; when we shall be clothed with unspotted purity, perfect felicity, and that to all eternity.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Behold here, 1. A double blessing promised and insured, namely, justification and sanctification, forgiveness of sin, and cleansing from it, yea, from all iniquity; when God pardons sin, no sin is left unpardoned; the sea can as easily drown a thousand men as a single man; God's act of pardoning grace is free and full. Observe, 2. The certainty of the mercy promised, God is *faithful and just to forgive*; not merciful and gracious, though so he is in himself, but faithful with respect to his promise to us, and just with respect to the satisfaction given by Christ for us. Almighty God in pardoning sin performs an act of strict justice with respect to Christ, as well as an act of grace and mercy, in regard of us, he is faithful and just, as well as gracious and merciful. Observe, 3. The indispensable duty required on our part, and that is confession of sin, if we confess. Now

confession of sin is a penitent sinner's voluntary accusing himself to God, and condemning himself before God, with hatred of, shame and sorrow for, and a full resolution against his sin, together with an earnest desire of, and some good hope in divine mercy. Observe, 4. What relation confession stands in to remission, not as a meritorious cause, satisfaction, not confession merits pardon, but it is an exclusive condition, there is no remission without confession; God will not pardon without it: and it is an inclusive condition; God will, certainly will, forgive them that confess: there is not only a possibility or probability, but an infallible certainty of obtaining remission upon confession.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Note here, The impiety and blasphemy of those who affirm themselves to be in a state of sinless perfection: they do not only lie themselves, but interpretatively, and as much as in them is, they make God a liar, by contradicting what he has asserted in his word, that all are sinners: so that upon the whole it appears, that to affirm we have no sin, is the highest pride, the greatest deceit, the loudest lie, the prophane blasphemy; it is to make the God of truth a liar, and to turn the truth of God into a lie, which evidences that his word is not in us.

CHAPTER II.

MY little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Observe here, the compellation. First, *My little children*. The apostle calls the christians to whom he wrote, *children, little children*; his little children. He calls them children, because converted to christianity; *little children*, because young and tender christians, of a low stature in religion, and far short of manly perfection; and *his little children*, to denote that spiritual relation which was between him and them, and that endeared affection which he bore towards them. St. John by a loving compellation, makes way for a faithful admonition, which follows in the next words: *These things I write, that ye sin not*. This must be understood in a qualified sense, thus: 1. *Sin not*, That is, as the wicked sin; take heed of scandalous enormities, though you cannot shake off daily infirmities. 2. *Sin not*, as in the same kind that others sin, so abstain either in the same manner that you yourselves before sinned; sin not with that fulness of deliberation, with that freedom of consent; sin not with that strength of resolution, with that frequency of action, with which you sinned before you were called to

christianity. 3. *Sin not*; that is, as far as human nature will admit, abstain from all sin; let it be your care, prayer, study, endeavour, to keep yourselves from every evil thing. Thus Zachary and Elizabeth were blameless, Luke, i. 6. that is, they lived in no sin known to the world, or known to themselves; so it is said of Job, chapter i. ult. *he sinned not*; that is, had no sin prevailing in him; no sin indulged by him. Observe, 3. As the cautionary direction, *sin not*; so the comfortable conclusion, *but if any man sin*, that is, through infirmity and weakness, through the policy of the tempter, or by the surprise of a temptation, *we have an advocate*, a mediator and an intercessor in heaven, who is absolutely sinless, even *Jesus Christ the righteous*. It is a metaphor taken from courts of judicature, where are the guilty person, the accuser, the judge, and the advocate: thus here heaven is the court, man is the guilty person, satan the accuser, God the judge, Christ the advocate. The proper office of an advocate is, not to deny the fact, or disown the guilt, but to offer something to the judge, whereby the law may be satisfied, and upon which the judge may, without any unrighteousness, discharge the accused. Observe, 4. An invaluable privilege here discovered, that Christ our advocate became a propitiation for us, and for the whole race of mankind, for all that lived before us, or shall live after us, for Jews and Gentiles; there is a virtual sufficiency in the death of Christ for all persons, and an actual efficacy as to all believers. Learn hence, That our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering death upon the cross for our redemption, did by that one oblation of himself once offered, make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. The original word *propitiation*, signifies a propitiatory covering, an allusion to the mercy-seat that covered the ark in which the law was: in allusion to which, Christ is here called our *propitiatory covering*, because he hides our sins, the transgressions of the law, from his Father's sight.

3 ¶ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

Observe here, 1. That a christian may be assured of his salvation; to know that we know, is to be assured that we know, not only to have the vital, but the fiducial act of faith. Some christians can say, "We know that we know him." Observe, 2. The nature of true christian knowledge discovered: it is an obedient knowledge; it is not sufficient to profess that we know Christ, except we yield sincere obedience to him: for this is a certain mark and proof that we know Christ effectually, if we love him; and keep his commandments. The true knowledge of God consists in keeping of the word of God, the whole word of God, and because it is his. Observe, 3. That to say we know God,

when we do not keep his commandments, and to say we keep his commandments, when we do not know him, is a lie. Sad will their condition be who perish for want of the knowledge of God, but much sadder theirs, who perish in the neglect or abuse of that knowledge. Observe, 4. That a conscientious care, and constant endeavour to observe the word, and keep the law of God, is a certain mark and evidence that he that doth it has the love of God perfected in him, and towards him; "Whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

6 He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked.

Observe here, 1. An high and honorable privilege supposed to be claimed, and that is union with Christ, and abiding in him; *he that saith he abideth in him*. The abiding in Christ is a great privilege, and the true and real christian doth truly and really abide in Christ. Observe, 2. A great and important duty belonging to all those that do abide in Christ, and that is to walk as Christ walked; to set his example daily before them, and to be continually correcting and reforming of their lives by that glorious pattern. Every christian is bound to an imitation of Christ, under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ; for no claim to Christ is or can be valid without a careful imitation of him. The temper of our minds, and the actions of our lives, must be a lively transcript of the mind and life of the holy and innocent Jesus; we must be like him, or we can never love him, nor hope another day to live with him.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Our apostle here exhorts christians to the great duty of brotherly love, assuring them, that it was no new commandment which he enjoined them, but that which they were taught, not only in and by the Old Testament, but at the first preaching of the gospel amongst them; and in these respects the command of love might be called an *old commandment*, it being a branch of the law of nature, and a known precept of the Jewish religion; although in other respects it might be called a *new commandment*, because urged from a new motive, and enforced by a new example. Learn hence, 1. That the doctrine of christian love is a divine commandment, that which christians are not only allowed, but enjoined to practise; and it is called the *commandment*, in the singular number, to intimate, that in the one commandment all the rest were contained, so that in keeping this we keep all. What are all the commandments indeed but love enlarged? And what is love but the commandment contracted? Learn, 2. That the commandment of love is an old

commandment; it is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart. The evangelical command of love was from the beginning of the law, and nothing new enjoined by Christ, which was not before by Moses. Learn, 3. That yet this command of love may, in some respect, be called a *new commandment*; not substantially, but circumstantially; not in the essence of the doctrine, but in the manner of the discovery; not in respect of the truth delivered, but in the way of delivering. *New*, not in regard of institution, but restitution, because purged from the old corrupt glosses of the pharisees, who had limited this duty of love, and confined it to their own countrymen; whereas Christ obliges his disciples to love mankind, even our very enemies. In a word, it may be called a *new commandment*, because it was never to wax old, but to be always fresh in the memory and practice of Christ's disciples to the end of the world. Observe next, The arguments to enforce the observation of this new commandment; 1. In those words, *which thing is true in him and in you*; that is, as there was in Christ a true and sincere love towards you, so look that there be a true and sincere love in you towards him, and one towards another. 2. "Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth;" that is, the darkness of ignorance in general, and the darkness of the Mosaic state in particular, is now past, and the true light of the gospel now clearly shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Two things are here to be considered, namely, the grace and duty proposed and enforced, and the sin or vice specified and opposed. Observe, 1. The grace proposed, or the duty recommended, namely, the love of our brother; "he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him." Where note, 1. The nature of brotherly love; it is a gracious propensity of heart, which a christian bears, for Christ's sake, to his neighbour, whereby he will, and, to his power, procures all good for him; or it is that brotherly affection which every true christian chiefly bears to all his fellow members in Christ, for grace sake. Note, 2. The benefits attending the practice of this grace and duty, 1. His condition is happy, *he abideth in the light*: that is, he is in a state of grace. Charity is an evident demonstration of sanctity; and accordingly, St Paul, Gal. v. reckoning up the fruits of the spirit, placeth love in the front of them. 2. His conversation is holy, *there is no occasion of stumbling in him*; that is, he walketh inoffensively in a state of grace, and neither stumbleth himself, neither is there occasion given by him, that others should stumble, or be drawn into any sin. Observe, 2. The sin specified, and the vice opposed, namely, hating of our brother. He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and

walketh in darkness." Where note, 1. It is not any hating, but hating our brother, that is forbidden, and that this hatred is not only forbidden whilst he is our friend, but when he becomes our enemy. To hate a friend is inhuman; to hate an enemy is unchristian. And further, it must be noted, that whatever falls short of the duty of *loving*, cometh within the compass of hating our brother; for every departure from love is a degree of hatred. Note, 2. The dismal character given of those persons who hate their brother; they are described by their wicked disposition; they are *in darkness*: by their vicious conversation; they "walk in darkness: by their miserable condition; they know not whither they go, because that darkness has blinded their eyes." From the whole learn, That we must love all, in the various kinds and manners, in the various measures and degrees, according to which God appeareth in them: that is, we must love all men, a men, above the brutes; and we must love all professed christians, above all other men; and we must love real christians, especially such of them as are eminent for wisdom, goodness, and usefulness, above all other christians. The light of knowledge and the heat of love must be inseparable.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Observe here, 1. The care which God has taken, not only to have his word preached, but written; *I write unto you*, partly to supply his ministers' absence, that their writings might be instead of vocal instructions, partly to perpetuate truth unto posterity, and to transmit divine revelations to future ages. Observe, 2. The subject or persons whom our apostle writes to; *fathers, young men, and children*; where, in general, the great wisdom of the apostle is to be observed, and taken notice of, that he contents not himself with generals, but directs his discourse particularly to old and young; plainly intimating, that none are too young to receive instruction, none are old enough to reject it, and if St. John wrote to persons of all ages and conditions, then the sacred writings are to be read to, and read by, persons of every age and condition soever. And if the scriptures be perverted by some, that is not a natural effect, but only an accidental consequent of reading the scriptures. Now, as evil must not be done that good may come of it, so good must not be left undone, though evil come of it. Observe, 3. The duty which all sorts of christians ought to be ex-

horted and excited to, and that is love; love to God, accompanied with obedience; and love to all christians, in obedience to the command of God. It belongs to all sorts of christians, weak and strong; to all ages of men, young and old, children and fathers, to expel the poison of anger and hatred out of their bosoms, and mutually to embrace one another. Observe, 4. The reasons of our apostle's writing to all christians in general, and to each age in particular. Note, 1. The reason assigned for writing to children, ver. 12. "Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake:" therefore ought you mutually to forgive, and cordially to love one another. Note, 2. The reason assigned for writing to fathers; "Because ye have known him that is from the beginning;" that is, Jesus Christ, who in respect of his divine nature, had a subsistence from the beginning; that is, from all eternity: and if so, then our blessed Saviour had a being antecedent to his conception, and before he was born of the Virgin Mary; he then began to be man, but he did not then begin to be; for before Abraham was he was; and he prays to his Father, John xvii. 6, to glorify him with the glory which he had with him before the world was. Mark, it is not said, with the glory which thou *preparedst* for me in thy decree and purpose before the world was, as the Socinians would have it, but the glory which *I had* with thee. He that gave being to all things, must have a being before all things. Note, 3. The reasons assigned for writing to young men, "Because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, and the word of God abideth in you." Here we have observable, 1. The enemy described, satan, called the *wicked one*: not that he was so by creation, but by his apostasy and defection. Because the first wickedness, because most industriously wicked, and because most obstinate and persevering in wickedness. 2. The conquest ingeminated: *Ye have overcome the wicked one*. Mark, he doth not say, You have made a league with him, but overcome him: there is no way to accommodate or compound matters with satan, no way to deal with him, but by victory: we are said to overcome him, because we are sure to overcome him; resist him, and he will flee; and because we have overcome him in God's account, and because we have begun to overcome him. Yield to him, and you will find him an imperious tyrant; resist him, and you will find him a timorous coward. 3. The combatants, *young men*. Youth is the warlike age; young men are fit for action, old men for advice; young ones should begin this spiritual war betimes, possibly they may never live to be old; or if so, victory will be the more difficult, by how much the longer it is delayed; and God may deny thee that grace which now thou deniest thyself. The proverb says, "*A young saint, but an old devil*;" but it is very hard for a young devil to become an old saint: whereas a young christian soldier is most amiable in God's eye, and most terrible in the devil's. 4. The aid, helps, and assistants by which this victory is attained, *ye are strong*, that is, made partakers of divine strength; ye have your second in the field, the Holy Spirit, you are strong in the Lord, "And the word of God abideth in you." By the strength of God, and the abiding of his word and grace in us, we overcome the wicked one, and prevail against him. God's word is the richest treasury to supply our wants, and the strongest armory to oppose our enemies. "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Observe here, 1. That our apostle doth not, as he did before, direct his advice to any one particular sort or rank of christians in special, but unto all in general; *Love not the world, &c.* Observe, 2. That the prohibition here is not absolute, but comparatively only. It is not an *ordinata charitas*, but *inordinata cupiditas*, that is here forbidden; we may look upon the world, and desire it, delight in it, and in the enjoyment of it, provided we do not choose it for our portion, delight in it as our chief good. Observe, 3. St. John doth not say, Leave the world, but Love not the world; he doth not say, use not the world, but Love it not; that is, seek not after the world inordinately, and delight not in it immoderately: seek it we may, but not in an undue manner; delight in it we may, but not in an undue measure. Observe, 4. The arguments which our apostle makes use of to enforce his dehortation. 1. The contrariety of the love of the world to the love of God; "If any man love the world" (in an undue manner and measure) "the love of the Father is not in him;" that is, the worldly lover has no interest in the Father's love; the world's darlings are none of God's friends, and the world's lover has no love of the Father in him: there is no positive love of God in him in whom there is a superlative love of the world. Lord, how desperate and dangerous a sin then is *worldly love*? If the love of the Father be not in him, the hatred of the Father is toward him, James iv. 4. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." A second argument to dissuade from worldly love is contained in the 16th verse: *For all that is in the world*; that is in esteem and vogue with the men of the world, is either *the lust of the flesh*, that is all sensual delights and enjoyments, which occasion intemperance: or the lust of the eye, the desire of gold, silver, stately houses, rich gardens, which tend to gratify the eye: and the pride of life, or the desires of honors and dignities, high titles, and places of advancement, which tend to gratify our pride, all these are not of the Father; that is, they are not desires excited by him, nor are they pleasing to him, but are the desires of the men of the world, and proceed from that corruption which is in them. The third argument is taken from the world itself, and its short continuance, in the 17th verse, the world passeth away, that is, all the things of the world, which the men of the world doat upon, and are in love with, are of a fading transitory nature in themselves, and they pass away from their possessors and owners. *And the Lusts thereof*: that is, the pleasure which they had in gratifying their lusts passeth away, but the sting remaineth, and the torment

abideth. It is added, "But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Behold here the permanent felicity, not of the knowing, but obedient christian. He abideth for ever, not in this, but in the other world, in a state of endless happiness. Although eternity, in its most comprehensive notion, be peculiar to a Deity, and incommunicable to a creature, yet it is that which God has made rational creatures capable of; and as he abideth for ever, so will he grant to them that do his will to abide with him for ever also; "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

18 ¶ Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Our apostle having warned them against the danger of covetousness in the foregoing verses, he cautions them against the danger of deceit in these; he tells them, that this is the last time of the Jewish dispensation, and that the destruction of their city, temple, and polity, was now at hand; and as they had heard that antichrist should come, accordingly now there were many antichrists come; that is, opposers of Christ, and deniers of him to be the Christ; and by the swarming of these seducers and false teachers now, according to our Saviour's prediction, Matth. xxiv. they might well conclude it was the last time. Observe next, These antichrists are described by the communion which they once were of, to wit, the christian communion: *They went out from us*, from us apostles, and from us christians, being false brethren, and unsound christians: for if they had been of us, as members of the same body, and had joined with us apostles, in planting and propagating the same christian faith, "They would no doubt have continued with us," professing the same faith, and preaching the same doctrine which we do; but they left us, that it might be made manifest that *they were not all of us*. Here note, That these antichristian impostors had been in the bosom of the church, and made a profession of the christian faith: so did the false apostles, the judaizing teachers, mentioned Acts xv; so did Simon Magus, Nicholas, and Cerinthus. The church's seeming members prove her worst friends, the foxes within do more mischief than the wild boar without. Quest. But is it not then lawful to depart from the communion of a church whereof we have been formerly members? Ans. Yes, if she departs from herself: if she degenerates and grows so corrupt a body, and be so far infected, that we cannot communicate with her without sin, which was the case between us and the church of Rome, her doctrines were erroneous, her worship idolatrous; we went out from

them, because they went out from the ancient apostolical church. *Non fugimus; sed fugamur*: Not we, but they made the separation, and consequently the schism lies at their door.

20 ¶ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

As our apostle had said, "Although there are many antichrists and seducers abroad in the world, yet the most holy God hath anointed you with his Holy Spirit, which will preserve you from pernicious error, and lead you into all necessary truth, if you obey and follow him." Observe here, 1. A privilege enjoyed. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." By which understand the Holy Spirit in its sanctifying gifts and graces, which consecrates believers as kings and priests unto God. Observe, 2. The advantage of that privilege declared. *Ye know all things*: not absolutely, but with restriction and limitation: *All things*: that is, all divine things, all divine things revealed, and all things revealed that are necessary to salvation: *All things* needful to be known, and as far as needful for you to know: all things relating to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, ourselves, sin, satan, the law, the gospel, grace, and glory; ye know all these things by virtue of your unction.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth: but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; [but] *he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also*.

Observe here, 1. The character given of the gospel; it is *the truth*, the word of truth, the way of truth, confirmed by real miracles. It is divine truth, universal truth, effectual truth, and no lie; for Almighty God would never have set the seal of his omnipotence to a lie, and have confirmed it by signs and wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, had it been false. Observe, 2. The character given of the heretics in St. John's days, and in our days also, they denied that Jesus is the Christ, and therein deny the Father and the Son: "For whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" that is, he denieth the Father's well as the Son; for not having the Father, and denying the Father, is the same thing, ver. 22. "He is antichrist that denieth the Father, and the Son." This is a text in which every Socinian may see himself an atheist; he that denies the divinity of the Son, denies the Deity of the Father: for such is the nature of the Godhead, that one of these cannot be alone; the Father is not without the Son, nor can be; nor can the Son be without the Father; this coherence is inseparable and inviolable; therefore he that denies the eternal

Son, denies the eternal Father; and if it be atheism to deny the divinity of the Father, it is no less to deny the Deity of the Son; for he that denieth the Son, denieth the Father also. There is such a connection between these two, the Father and the Son, they being co-essential and co-eternal, that if you deny the divinity of the one, you deny that of the other: therefore they are atheists that deny the divinity of Christ, as well as they that deny the being of a God: "For he that denieth the Son, denieth the Father also."

24 Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

These words are an exhortation to hold fast, and not to forsake the doctrine of christianity, which from the beginning they have received, and not to turn to novelties. "Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning;" that is, from the first preaching of the gospel. Note here, What is truth and true doctrine, namely, that which was delivered from the beginning. Truth is error's elder, though error is not much truth's younger. Note, 2. By what means they received the evangelical doctrine, namely, by *hearing*; let that which you have heard abide in you. No sense more needful than that of hearing, for the benefit and advantage of man; both as he is by nature a reasonable creature, by converse a sociable creature, and may be by grace a new creature; faith cometh by hearing. Note, 3. The duty required with reference to what they had heard; "let that which ye have heard abide in you," namely, by a careful remembrance of it, and by resolute adherence to it. The sum of this exhortation is, that we retain and maintain the ancient catholic and apostolic faith; and verily when we consider how tenacious heretics are of their novel errors, it may bring a blush into our faces to consider how ready we are to be withdrawn from primitive truths. Observe next, The motive with which our apostle doth enforce and back his exhortation.—"If that which ye have heard remain in you, you shall continue in the Son, and in the Father;" that is, in the love and favor of the Son, and of the Father, and in communion with both. *Quest.* But why is the Son put before the Father here? Partly to insinuate, that the Son is no less in essence and dignity than the Father, but equal in both; accordingly, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the apostolical benediction, is mentioned before the love of God the Father: and partly, because no man cometh to, or continueth in the Father; but by the Son; "He is the way, the truth, and the life." The doctrine of the gospel comes from Christ; it leads to Christ, and by him unto the Father. See John xiv. 23. "If a man keep my word, we will make our abode with him."

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

Observe here, 1. How gracious Almighty God is to enforce his commands with promises of reward; he required of us adherence to the truth, and perseverance in it, in the former verse; here he promises eternal life, by way of en-

couragement in this verse. Observe, 2. The benefit promised, *life, eternal life*; the greatness of this life is immeasurable, the worth of this life is inestimable; the joys of this life innumerable, the duration of it is interminable. Observe, 3. The certainty of the conveyance; this is, the *promise promised*. Mark, he doth not say purposed, but promised. A purpose is a secret and a hidden intention of the mind, but a promise is a revelation of that intention; yea, it is more than a declaration. A promise makes sure, as well as makes manifest; especially God's promise, which has his oath for the confirmation of it, Heb. vi. 17. Observe, 4. The peculiarity of the persons to whom the promise is made, he hath promised *us*: not to us as apostles only, but to us as christians; all that are born of God are begotten to a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away: again, he has promised *us*, not promised *all* eternal life, but *us*, who are thus and thus qualified, who keep his commandments, and walk as he walked. Observe, 5. The eminency of the author by whom this promise is made, in the relative *he*; "This is the promise which he hath promised us." Here note, That eternal life was promised by God to good men under the Old Testament; Heb. xi. 16. tells us, that the Old Testament saints desired a better country, to wit, an heavenly; now how could they have desired it, if they had not known it? And how could they have known it, if God had not revealed it? And Christ bade the Jews search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: intimating, that in the writings of Moses, eternal life was made known typically and darkly, not so clearly and fully as by the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. He is holy, and cannot lie; righteous, and cannot deceive; immutable, and cannot repent.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Observe here, the pious care which St. John expresses for the preservation from heretics and seducers, "These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you." That is, to arm them against the seducers then amongst them; intimating, that men are naturally prone to error, yea, to fundamental errors. 2. That to be seduced by, and led into such errors, is dangerous and destructive. 3. That it is the special duty, and ought to be the singular care of the ministers of Christ, to warn their people of, and arm them against errors and erroneous persons, against seducers and seduction; "These things I write concerning them that seduce you;" that is, those who endeavour to seduce you. Observe next, The encouragement which St. John gives them against the seducers, and their seduction, the anointing which ye have received from Christ, that is, from the special illumination of his spirit, this *abideth* in you, *teaching you all things* necessary for you to know, so that you need not any man to teach you; that is, any new doctrine, any new fundamental prin-

ciples of faith. Note here, That christians, savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God, need no new gospel or doctrine to be instructed in; but they need farther teaching still in order to their better improvement in what they know: vain therefore are the Quakers, and other sectaries' arguments drawn from hence, against all ministerial teaching; because the Spirit teaches, man must not teach; whereas the Spirit teaches mediately, by man, and not immediately by itself. When those seducers can show that they have such an immediate and extraordinary *afflatus* of the Holy Spirit, as was vouchsafed to the primitive christians, then let them cry down the necessity of ministerial teaching, not before.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Still our apostle reinforces his foregoing exhortation to abide fixedly in Christ; that is, in the doctrine of Christ, in true christianity: "and now, little children, abide in him:" and the argument which he makes use of is forcible and cogent, namely, "That when Christ shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Here note, 1. Something supposed, namely, the coming and appearance of Christ; he shall appear. 2. Something implied; namely, our appearance before Christ in the day of his appearance. 3. Something expressed, namely, the confident appearing before Christ, of all those who abide in him; "That we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Whence learn, That the persevering christian shall have confidence before Christ at his coming; shall lift up his head without shame or blushing, from the testimony which conscience bears of his sincerity, and from the interest he has in the Judge: but, on the other hand, they that do not persevere and abide in Christ shall be ashamed before him at his coming; ashamed of their gross hypocrisy, of their vile unfaithfulness, of their manifest folly.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Our apostle concludes the chapter with an exhortation to holiness and righteousness; assuring them, that if they be sensible (as they must necessarily be) that God is righteous, essentially and infinitely holy and righteous; they may and ought to know also that whosoever is born of him, and doth receive a new nature from him, doth certainly endeavour to live unto him, and to walk before him as his child in a way of obedience, and to expect favor and protection from him as from a father. Learn hence, That all that sincerely have a righteous life towards God and man, are certainly born of God: and such as are born of God do certainly live that righteous life: then, and only then, may we know that we are indeed God's children, when the image of our heavenly Father is instamped upon us, and the disposition of his children wrought in us: when there is a happy conformity in creatures to the holiness of God's nature, and in our lives to the righteousness of his law; when he beholds his own face in the glass of our souls, and loves us for his own image instamped and impressed upon us.

CHAPTER III.

BEHOOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!

Our apostle begins this chapter with wonder and admiration at the astonishing goodness and condescension of Almighty God towards believers, in taking them into his family, and adopting them into the number of his children: that strangers and enemies should be dignified with the honorable and amiable title of his sons; it is the same relation that Christ has, "I ascend to my Father and your Father;" there is indeed a diversity in the foundation of it: Christ is a Son by nature, we by favor; he by generation, we by adoption: however, not only crowns and sceptres are beneath his dignity, but the honor of our innocent state was not equal with it; well might the apostle then break out with an heavenly astonishment, and say, "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called," accounted and acknowledged, for the *children of God*! Here note, 1. That it is the high and honorable privilege of all true believers, that they are now the sons of God. They are so, 1. By regeneration: they are made partakers of the divine nature; not in the essence of it, but in the gracious qualities of it, which enables them in some measure to resemble God their Father; they receive a principle of spiritual life from God which enables them to live unto God; and this principle received in regeneration: it is an inward principle, an universal principle, a God exalting principle, and an abiding principle. 2. They are children by adoption also: adoption is the acceptance of a stranger into the relation and privileges of a son; it was a rare condescension in Pharaoh's daughter to rescue Moses, an innocent and forsaken stranger, from perishing by the waters, and adopt him for her son; but, O! how much greater kindness was it for Almighty God to save guilty and wretched man from eternal flames, and to take a rebel into his family! This privilege of being the sons of God by regeneration and adoption, is a choice and gracious privilege, an high and honorable privilege, a free and undeserved privilege, a lasting and abiding privilege. Observe, 2. As the privilege itself, so the fountain cause of it, the fountain from whence it doth proceed and flow, namely, from the gratuitous love and free favor of God; what manner of love has the Father bestowed upon us? He cannot say what, nor how great it was; he admires it, but cannot declare it; yet though adoption was the effect of God's free love, it was the fruit of Christ's rich purchase; he of a Son became a servant, that we of slaves might become sons. Observe, 3. In a word, *Behold!* a note of attention and admiration both; God expects, the gospel requires, and the privilege of adoption deserves, that it be beheld with love and wonder, taken notice of with joy and thankfulness, and improved for growth in grace and advancement in holiness: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us?"

—Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Note here, 1. That the believer's dignity, though real

and great, is altogether unknown to the unbelieving world; they are so far from acknowledging them to be God's children, that they mock and scoff, jeer and deride them, for pretending so to be; and as they little know them, so do they less affect and love them, but hate and persecute them. *The world knoweth us not.* Note, 2. The reason assigned why the world knows not the children of God, *Because it knew not him*: God once made himself manifest to the world in and by his Son; Christ, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, came and dwelt among us, but the world *knew him not*, received him not; and if they saw no beauty in him who had strength of grace, and no corruption in him, is it any wonder that they see no excellency in them in whom is much weakness of grace, and too great strength of corruption? "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

As if the apostle had said, "Although the world knows us not, affects us not, esteems us not, because of the weakness of our grace and the strength of our corruptions, yet notwithstanding both these, we are now the sons of God; this is the happiness of our present condition, we are as children in their minority; we are not grown up for the inheritance, but we are growing; we are not what we would be, we are not what we should be, we are not what we shall be; but blessed be God we are what we are; now are we the sons of God." Observe, 2. As to the honor and dignity of the christian's privilege in this life asserted, *we are now the sons of God*, so their happiness and glory in the next life described, 1. By way of negation. "It doth not yet appear what they shall be;" the glory which God has prepared for all his adopted children and people, is an hidden glory, a glory that doth not yet appear; what the saints shall be in their perfect state of glory doth not yet appear to them in this imperfect state of grace. 2. By way of positive asseveration, "But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Here note, 1. The certainty of Christ's appearance declared, *He shall appear*. 2. A double benefit which believers may expect at his appearing. 1. *They shall be like him*, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality; like him in a perfect freedom from sin, like him in the ardor and intense fervency of their love; like him in the perfection of grace, and the unspotted purity of his holy nature. 2. *They shall see him*, That is, his glory, with a clear and immediate sight, with a full and comprehensive sight, with an assimilating and transforming sight, with an appropriating and possessive sight, with a satisfying and everlasting sight.

3 ¶ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Every one that hath this hope, that is, the hope of seeing and enjoying Christ in glory, he now endeavours to purify

himself according to the pattern and copy which Christ hath set before him, laboring to imitate it, though he cannot reach it. Observe here, 1. The character of a christian by this hope, *every man that hath this hope in him*. Learn, That a christian is a person of high hopes, and raised expectations, as to future blessedness; the author of this hope is God; the object of this hope is some future good promised and expected; the grounds of this hope are the promise and oath of God, the purchase and undertaking of Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit in and upon his soul. Observe, 2. A description of this hope by its inseparable effect, it *purifies* the christian; he that has this hope *purifies himself*; where it is implied, 1. That sin is a pollution which we must be purified from. 2. That the holiest of saints here on earth, are not perfectly purified from the pollution, but are daily endeavouring to purify themselves more and more. Observe, 3. The pattern after which the sincere christian doth conform in this work of purification, and that is Christ: he purifies himself, even as he is pure; intimating, that the Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect pattern of purity; and that it is the christian's duty to eye this pattern, and to endeavour to conform himself thereunto, by purifying himself, even as Christ is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins: and in him is no sin.

Whosoever committeth sin, that is, whosoever lives in the allowed commission of it, lives in rebellion against, and in a flat opposition to the law of God, sin being a transgression of God's laws; and such a person as thus commits sin, not only violates the law of God, but also frustrates the death of Christ; for Christ, in whom there was no sin, was manifested in the flesh to take away sin, the guilt of it by his blood, the power of it by his Spirit, and consequently we must purify ourselves from it, if we hope to see him as he is. Learn hence, That nothing can be more unreasonable and absurd, than to expect salvation with God in heaven by a sinless Saviour, if we allow ourselves in a course of sin; nothing being more contrary than this to the design of Christ's death, which was not only to deliver us from the danger, but from the dominion of our sin; not only to expiate our sins, but to make us sinless like himself.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

That is, "Whoever lives in sin, and goes on in a course and trade of sinning, is the servant and slave of sin: and although his reason condemns him, his conscience boggles at it, and his will is something averse to it, yet if he yields his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, he is the servant of sin; and whatever his pretence may be, he has no right knowledge of Christ, nor any true faith in him; for whosoever abideth in him *thus*, sinneth not." Learn hence, That the sincere christian, so far as he is in Christ, and by faith united to him, and is taught and ruled by him,

sinneth not; that is, he makes it his constant care, and continual endeavour to shun and avoid all sin. 2. That such persons as go on in a course of sin, let their pretences to christianity be what they will, they never had any experimental knowledge of Christ, no fellowship of communion with him; nor can ever hope to be happy in the fruition and enjoyment of him: "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

7 Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.

As if the apostle had said, "Let no man deceive you by making you believe, that a right faith may consist with an unrighteous life, for only *he that doeth righteousness is righteous*. Note here, 1. That there is a twofold doing of righteousness. 1. In a legal sense, which stands in an exact obeying and fulfilling the law: and thus there is none righteous, no not one. 2. In an evangelical sense, a walking uprightly, according to the rule of the gospel, conscientiously avoiding all known sin, and performing every commanded duty; it is not a single action, but a constant course of holy actions, that denominates a person holy; a righteous man makes righteousness the business of his life; his daily care is how to please God in all he does. Note, 2. That it is the duty of every christian, that would not be deceived as to his spiritual state and condition, to try himself by this infallible mark and rule of trial; "He that doeth righteousness is righteous; he that doeth not righteousness is not of God." Christian, inquire not so much what thy affections are, what thy desires are, what thy joys and comforts are, as what thy actions are; not what thy peace is, but what thy paths are, for God doth not measure men's sincerity by the tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions, and the general course and tenor of their conversation: *He that doeth righteousness, is righteous*, and only he.

8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning—

That is, "So far as a man sinneth, so far he is of the devil, and like unto him, in whom sin is predominant; he having been an old sinner; soon after the beginning of the creation, and a bold tempter to sin all his days. Learn, 1. That satan has kept in a constant and continued course of sinning against God from the beginning of his apostacy, and first moment of his revolt from God; *the devil sinneth from the beginning*. Learn 2. That such as make sin their work, do make themselves the devil's children; they are his children by imitation: St. John viii. 44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.

—For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

As if he had said, "The Son of God came purposely into the world to destroy sin, the work of the devil; in all that he will save. Note, 1. The odious character where-with sin is branded, it is *the work of the devil*; that work

which he is always doing himself; and which he is continually tempting and soliciting others to do, that they may be as miserable as himself. Note, 2. Our Saviour's manifestation in the flesh asserted; the Son of God was manifested, namely, to the world, and in the world: he appeared in our nature, and was seen in our flesh; it was a real exhibition, and not an imaginary manifestation of him. Note, 3. The great end of this gracious manifestation of the Son of God in our nature, it was *to destroy the works of the devil*, to loose and dissolve; so the original: this supposes mankind to have been in bonds and fetters; we were in durance and captivity, shut and locked up in the prison-house: we were under the dominion of sin, and power of satan, but the Son of God came to rescue us, to knock off our fetters, and to set us at liberty: by the works of the devil understand all sin in general. 2. Those sins in particular, which have most of the devil's image upon them, and render persons most like unto him; such are malice and envy, rejoicing at the calamities, and delighting in the evils that befall others, rage and passion, bitter strife, and contention, schism and faction, lying and falsehood, craft and treachery; but especially pride and haughtiness, which was the sin that turned satan out of heaven, and made him a devil in hell. 3. By the works of the devil here are meant in particular, idolatry, and all idolatrous worship, even to the worshipping of the devil himself; this, and all other kinds of idolatry, had strangely prevailed and overrun the world before the coming of Christ, who came on purpose to deliver mankind from this slavery, and to put down the kingdoms of satan, and beat him out of those strong-holds which he thought had been impregnable; "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Observe here, 1. The character of a true christian, *he is born of God*; he has in the work of regeneration passed under a blessed change by the operation of the Holy Spirit, renewing his nature, and reforming his life; yet this denotes not a single transient act of regeneration, but rather a continued course and permanent state; one that is born of God is the same with him that leads a pious and godly life, and continues so to do. Observe, 2. What is here asserted concerning him that is born of God, namely, that *he doth not commit sin*, and that *he cannot sin*. 1. *He doth not commit sin*, he is no evil-doer, no worker of iniquity, no habitual or customary sinner: he goes not on in any way or course of sin, as the wicked does, who makes a trade of it; yea, he does not tolerate or allow himself in any single act of sin; not that he is absolutely free from sin. 2. It is said *he cannot sin*: but how? And why? How can he not sin? Has he not a natural power to sin? Has he not corruptions within, and temptations without, inclining and disposing him to sin, as well as other men? And has he not opportunity to sin; the same expectations of advantages by sin with other men? Yes, no doubt; but he has not a will bent for sin, or a heart and mind set upon sin, as the wicked have; nay, he has a heart and will opposite to sin, and set against all sin. A gracious person then, though he hath not a natural impossibility, yet he has a moral impossibility

to sin. He that is born of God hath a power to do that evil which he hath not a will to do; he hath always a natural power, and sometimes a civil power, as being in authority; but his blood and pedigree are so high, being born of God, that he disdains to meddle with, or to trade in so base a thing as sin is. Note, That a child of God has a blessed impotency in the unregenerate part, that he cannot sin strongly, though as yet he has not that ability in the regenerate part, as not to sin at all. Observe, 3. The reasons assigned why a regenerate person cannot sin as the wicked sin, because "his seed remaineth in him, and because he is born of God;" that is, he has an inward principle inclining and disposing him to hate and oppose all sin, to wit, the sanctifying grace of God; and he has that mortifying Spirit, which causes him daily more and more to die unto sin, and enables him to mortify the deeds of the body. Learn hence, That although sin remaineth in him that is born of God, yet he that is born of God doth not remain in sin, either as to a sinful state, or a sinful conversation; God's word and Spirit, by which he was regenerate, still remain in him; and so far as he is under the ruling power and governing influences of them, he cannot sin, much less live in wilful sin.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Our apostle in these words gives us the distinguishing character of a good and bad man; those who in their dispositions and actions, in the temper of their minds, and in the actions of their lives, do imitate God, are his children; and those who addict themselves to sin and impiety are of another race and descent, they are the children of the devil; they resemble him, and belong unto him. By doing righteousness is meant the practice of universal goodness, and a thorough conformity to the law of God in opposition to sin, which is the transgression of the law. Learn hence, 1. That every man may come to the certain knowledge of his own condition, whether he be a good or a bad man? "By this the children of God are manifested;" that is, hereby good and bad men are really distinguished; the Scripture has laid down real marks of difference between them. Learn, 2. That the love and practice of universal righteousness, and nothing short of it, will denominate a person a child of God, and evidence to his own conscience, that he is brought into a state of grace and favor with him: "In this the children of God are manifested, whosoever doeth righteousness is of God."

—Neither he that loveth not his brother.

This discovers a farther difference between the children of God and the children of satan, namely, *Brotherly love*; he doth not say, he that *hateth* his brother is a child of the devil, but he that *loveth not his brother*; intimating, that not only hatred and malice against, but want of brotherly love towards each other, is the mark and sign not of a child of God, but of the devil. He that doth not unfeignedly love men as men, and all christians as christians, is no child of God, no lover of God; for he that loveth not God's image, loveth not God himself.

11 For this is the message that ye heard

from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Our apostle comes now to enforce his exhortation unto brotherly love, by many weighty arguments. 1. He assures them, that this precept concerning brotherly love was given them by Christ and his apostles, from the beginning of the preaching of the gospel; "This is the message ye heard of him from the beginning." Note here, 1. That the word of God is a message sent from God unto us, a message for our information and instruction, a message for our guide and direction. 2. That the duty of brotherly love is an ancient message that God has sent, and has continued to send us, *from the beginning*; God help us to learn this lesson, so anciently taught us, and so long pressed upon us by God himself! "This is the message which ye have heard from the beginning." A second argument to excite brotherly love is drawn from the evil of hating our brother, which appears in the person and practice of Cain, whom our apostle describes, 1. By his pedigree, *He was of that wicked one*; that is, the devil, of his diabolical disposition, of his envious and malicious inclination, and, as such, was not so much Adam's son as the devil's son. 2. By his practice, *he slew his brother*; He first hated him, and then slew him. His hatred was causeless and unjust, implacable and deadly, and ended in his brother's death, and his own destruction. 3. The reason is assigned why he slew him, "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous;" not for any harm he had done, or for any evil he had deserved, but because Cain was bad himself, and his works bad; to hate godliness, and to persecute the godly, is the very nature and disposition of a wicked man. Observe, lastly, The inference drawn by the apostle from this example of Cain's hating his holy and innocent brother: "Marvel not my brethren, (says he,) if the world hate you;" intimating that the world always did, and ever will hate God's children; and that the children of God are not to marvel or wonder at it, but to prepare for it; it is no new thing, but what has been from the beginning: though Cain be dead, the spirit of Cain is alive; the prosecutor goes about with Cain's club in his hand, redded with blood; *marvel not then if the world hate you*.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Observe here, 1. Our apostle's description of a carnal unregenerate state; it is a state of spiritual death. 2. Of a christian's renewed state by the Spirit of Christ, it is a state of spiritual life; *we are passed from death to life*. 3. Here is the mark and token by which this translation from death to life may be known, namely, by *love*; for love being the

great work of God's renewing spirit on the soul, it is by the production of that, we come to the knowledge, that we are changed from a Cainish corrupt state of death, into a state of holy life; whatever grace men pretend unto, if they want this grace of love, they are yet dead in sin. Observe, 4 The characteristic note of that love which will be an indubitable evidence of this our translation from death to life, it must be a love of the *brethren*; that is, of all christians, as such; particularly it must be an extensive and universal love, that reaches all the children of God, all good men, of what judgment and opinion soever, otherwise it is the love of a party only, and a love for opinion sake, not for grace sake, Colos. i. 4. "We give thanks since we heard of your love to all saints:" that is, to all of what nation and kingdom soever, of what estate and condition soever, of what judgment and opinion soever, though differing from you in some lesser things. It must also be an holy love that will evidence our christianity; though all men must be loved as men, yet the brethren must be loved for the likeness of God in them, we must love God's holiness in holy persons: it is one thing to love the brethren, and another to love them as brethren, and because they are brethren; a gracious person may be loved only for carnal respects, and sinister ends; again, it must be active and operative, a costly and expensive love; that cheap love of some men, which will wish a poor christian well, but will be at no pains, no cost, or expence, to help and succour him, because they love their money better than they do their brother, is the hypocrite's love, not the saint's; see James ii. 15. "If a brother or a sister be naked, and we say unto him, 'Be thou clothed, &c.'" this is a cold sort of love, which will profit neither our brother nor ourselves. From the whole learn, That the love of grace in another, is a good evidence of the life of grace in ourselves; unfeigned love to the children of God as such, is an undoubted evidence of our regeneration and adoption; "We know that we are passed from, &c."

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the sin condemned, it is a secret sin of the heart, not an open sin of the life; he that *hateth his brother*, that is, in his heart, is a murderer, though he doth not smite him either with his tongue, or with his hand. Learn hence, That sins of the heart are damning as well as sins of the life; a man may be an adulterer in the sight of God, and yet never touch a woman, Mat. v. 28. an idolater; and yet never bow his knee to an image, Eph. v. 5. a murderer, and yet never hurt his brother; if he hates him in his heart, it is recorded murder in God's account. What need have we to put up David's prayer, Psal. xix. "Cleanse thou me from my secret sins?" Observe, 2. The sad and deplorable condition of such as are guilty of this sin, namely, of murdering their brother by hatred in their hearts: "He that hateth his brother, abideth in death, ver. 14, and hath not eternal life abiding in him," ver. 14. that is, he hath no spiritual life, nothing of the life of grace abideth in him, which is the seed and principle, the original and beginning of eternal life. Note thence, That the life of grace in the heart of a regenerate person, is the beginning and first principle of a life of glory, whereof they cannot

but be destitute who hate their brother in their hearts. So much hatred in a man, so much death; and so much want of love, so much want of life.

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Here our apostle presses brotherly love from another argument, namely, from the example of Jesus Christ, who being God, as well as man, laid down his life, *as man*, for us. Where note, That the intimate union betwixt the divine and human nature in Christ, gives ground for the calling Christ's life, as man, the life of God: as his blood is said, Acts xx. 28. to be God's own blood: *Hereby perceive we the love of God*, that is, of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, *in that he laid down his life for us*. Thence learn, That the death of Christ for us is a special manifestation of his singular love unto us. Observe farther, The inference which our apostle draws from Christ's love in laying down his life for us, namely, that we therefore ought to lay down our lives for the brethren: That is, in a time of persecution, when the glory of God, the edification of the church, and the eternal salvation of our brethren, do require it, and stand in need of it; we must never stick at laying down our lives when God calls us to it, as needful for better ends than our lives. It is not needful that we live, but needful and necessary that we glorify God, both in life and death.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Our apostle here draws an argument from the greater to the less, after this manner: "If, says he, we ought to be ready in some cases to part with our lives for the brethren, surely we much more ought to impart and communicate our worldly goods to them in the time of their necessity, and he that refuses so to do, can never think there is any thing of that love in him, which God requires of him towards his children." Learn hence, That there certainly dwells no love of God in that man's heart, who having this world's goods, stretcheth not out his hands to help the necessities of his brother. Here note, 1. The fountain from which all charitable distributions are to proceed and flow, namely, from the compassion of the heart. 2 That the compassion of the heart must draw forth the help of the hand; he that is a christian indeed will open both heart and hand to the distressed, and they shall partake of his purse as well as of his pity. 3. It is not said, he that has abundance of this world's goods, let him of his great superfluity give; but he that *hath this world's goods*; that is, in any measure, yea, though he has no more than he works for, yet is he required, Eph. iv. 28. that worketh with his hands, to give to him that needeth. The world is greatly deceived who think charity and almsgiving a duty that only concerns the rich; indeed it concerns them eminently, but not exclusively. And oh! the dreadful account that some rich men have to give, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than they

give to the poor in a whole year. But yet, after all, every one that hath this world's good, though he has but what he labors and sweats for, yet must he in proportion to what he has, give to him that needeth. Note, 4. The object of this our compassion and charity; a *brother*, a brother in need, and every brother in deed; not only such as are cast down, but such as are falling, are the proper objects of our pity and help. Note, 5. The circumstance of time when we must give, namely, when we see our brother in need. What a vanity is it to leave our alms till after our death, to be beholden to the justice of others for their distribution! Let us see our charity bestowed with our own eyes, and given out with our own hands, when the loins of the poor will bless us, but their prayers will do us no good when we are dead. "Whoso seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" From the whole learn, That when we are in a capacity, and enjoy an opportunity of expressing our charitable benevolence towards our poor and indigent brethren, the omission of it is a certain evidence that there is nothing of the love of God residing in us.

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but in deed, and in truth.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Having laid down several motives to brotherly love before, by way of excitation, as an help to their affections, he comes now to propound some directions to them as an help to their endeavours. And the first is this, to take special care that their love is sincere, and not hypocritical. *Let us not love in word*, that is, in word only, *but in deed, and in truth*. As if he had said, "Let our deeds speak the truth of our love; sincere love is fruitful; true affection will put forth itself into action; it doth not rest at the tongue's end, but will be seen at the finger's end, rendering us laborious in works and offices of friendship; as faith, so love without works is dead; and as faith is justified by works, so is our love also. Observe next, The encouragement which our apostle gives to the exercise of this true love, hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him: That is, "By such efficacy and real fruits of our love we shall know that we are true christians, who live by, and walk according to the rule of the gospel, which is emphatically styled *the truth*, and shall have the assured testimony of our consciences, that we are sincere in the sight of God." Learn hence, 1. That the love of christians one to another ought not to be verbal, or in word only, but in deed, and in truth. 2. That the sincerity of our love to our brethren is the security of our consciences and estates before God. A christian may be assured of his good estate, and may build his assurance upon the sincerity of his love to God and christians.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us

not, then have we confidence towards God.

By heart, here is undoubtedly meant *conscience*; and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "If our consciences tell us that our love is barren and fruitless, and so condemn us for hypocrisy, God is greater than our consciences, both in holiness to condemn, and in knowledge to perceive the evil of them, for *he knoweth all things*; whereas if we have the witness of our consciences touching the sincerity of our love by the fruits of it; if, after a most strict examination of our consciences, and an exact comparing of our lives and actions with the law of God, we are not condemned of insincerity in our obedience to God, and love to our neighbour, then have we an humble confidence with God in all our addresses to him." Learn hence, 1. That the consciences of men have a self-condemning and a self-absolving power. 2. That the consciences of men are much better known to God, than they either are or can be known unto themselves. 3. That if our hearts or consciences do condemn us, it is an evidence of greater condemnation from the heart-searching God. 4. That if our consciences do absolve us, it is an argument of our acceptance with God, and a ground of confidence in all our addresses to him. 5. That according to the verdict or testimony of men's consciences rightly informed, and truly testifying, God will either acquit or absolve them at the great day.

22 And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Observe here, 1. An extraordinary favor and privilege insured, *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him*; that is, whatsoever we ask according to his will, we are sure to receive, either in kind or equivalency. It shall either be given in mercy, or denied in love; for verily God is as kind in denying some of our requests, as in answering others; we often cry for that which it would be cruelty for God to give; we know not what is best to beg, but an infinitely wise God knoweth what is fittest to give. *Dat pro jocundis aptissima*. Observe, 2. The qualification of the persons to whom this precious privilege does belong. *They keep God's commandments*, and do the things that please him. According to our hearing God's commandments, so he hears and answers our prayers; with what measure we mete to God, God will measure to us again. If God's commands be trod under our feet, no wonder that all our prayers fall to the ground. God hears not us if we hear not him. "If we keep his commandments, whatsoever we ask, we receive of him."

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Observe here, 1. What is the sum of the christian's duty, *faith and love*, to believe on the name of Jesus Christ; that is, to rely upon him as our Redeemer, our Teacher, our King, our Intercessor, and to obey his great command of loving one another with a pure heart fervently. Observe, 2. What a mighty encouragement it is to faith, that believ-

ing on Christ is constituted a duty by a plain gospel-precept, *This is his commandment*, for this command cuts off that vain pretence and plea of presumption. What! such a vile wretch as thou presume to believe on Christ? says Satan. Yes, says the christian, here is a command to me so to do, yea, a command from the highest sovereignty, the contempt whereof I must answer at my utmost peril. Observe, 3. How the command of faith, and the command of love, are linked and knit together, as if the weight of our salvation hung equally and alike upon both; as without faith it is impossible to please God, so without love it is impossible to please him also. Will no duty profit without faith? In like manner can we neither profit ourselves nor others without love: as whatever is not of faith is sin, so whatever duty we perform towards our brother, if we do it not out of love, we miss our reward. 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, I am nothing." Lord! can we ever think this command of love small and inconsiderable, when thou hast joined the love of thine image with faith in thy dear Son? "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, and love one another."

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Observe here, 1. The benefit of obedience to God's command. God dwelleth in us, and we in him. God's dwelling in us implies, 1. Right and property; what a man dwells in is his own. 2. Command and authority; the master and owner is the commander and disposer of the house. It also, 3. Implies residence and continuance, settlement and fixedness of abode; there a man dwells where he constantly resides. And our dwelling in God imports, 1. Reconciliation with God. Can two dwell together except they be agreed? 2. Affiance and trust in him. 3. An upholding constant communion with him; it is one thing to run to God for refuge in a storm, and another thing to make him our dwelling-place at all times, and in all conditions; he that keepeth God's commandments thus dwelleth in God, and God in him; it follows, "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Learn hence, That the Spirit of God, bestowed upon us in his sanctifying gifts and saving graces, is an evident sign of God's dwelling in us, and we in him.

CHAPTER IV.

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Our apostle having in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, mentioned the abiding of the Spirit of God in the soul

of believers, lest the christians to whom he wrote should be deceived by such as might pretend to be actuated by the Spirit, when indeed they were not; he comes in this chapter to caution and counsel all christians to take heed of being seduced by such as should pretend to be inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, saying, *Believe not every Spirit*; that is, every teacher who pretends to be inspired, and every doctrine that lays claim to the authority of divine revelation: *but try the spirits*; that is, examine their doctrines by the rule of the word of God, and try from whom they come, whether from the Spirit of God, or satan; for *many false prophets*, or impostors, and deceivers, are gone abroad into the world. Learn hence, 1. That men from the beginning of christianity have, and still do, falsely pretend to divine inspiration. 2. That christians ought not to believe every one that thus pretends to be divinely inspired; for every one that has but enough of confidence, and little enough of conscience, may pretend to come from God. Learn, 3. That neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God; for when the apostle bids us not believe every spirit, he supposes that we are to believe some; and when he bids us try the spirits whether they be of God, he supposes some to be of God, and that such as are so, ought to be believed by us. Learn, 4. That there is some way to discern mere pretenders to inspiration from those who are truly and divinely inspired; it were in vain to make the trial, if there were no way to discern the truth. Learn, 5. That it is the duty of all christians to examine the doctrines propounded to them by the word of God; they having a judgment of discretion, though not a judgment of decision; a power to judge for themselves, not to impose upon others; nor does this allowed liberty of every one judging for himself take away the necessity and use of our spiritual guides and teachers, or exempt us from a due submission and obedience thereunto, but, in concurrence with them, "we are to try the spirits whether they be of God."

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.

In these words our apostle lays down a plain mark and rule of trial, how they might know a teacher that was acted and inspired by the Spirit of God, from one that was not: such a one as durst truly and openly in the face of danger own and profess, teach and preach Jesus Christ in his person, nature, and offices, as the incarnate word, or Son of God, sent from heaven, ascribing virtue and efficacy to the sacrifice of his death, and attributing to him alone the whole glory of a perfect Saviour: this doctrine is of the Spirit, and this Spirit is of God. But such teachers as will not hazard themselves, but for fear of sufferings and persecution will deny either the Godhead or manhood of Christ, and disown either his incarnation, death, or resurrection;

such teachers, and such doctrines, are not of God, but are the very spirit of antichrist, which says he, you have been foretold, should come, and is now already in the world. Learn hence, That such a teacher as disowns either of the natures of Christ, or denies any of the offices of Christ, that either denies the divinity of his person, or the merit-riousness of his satisfaction, is not of God, he is antichrist, against Christ, and shall find Christ against him in the day that he appears before him.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Observe here, 1. A character and description given of these christians to whom our apostle writes. He tells them they were of a nobler descent, of a more excellent pedigree, and higher offspring, than their false teachers; *Ye are of God, regenerated by the Spirit of God, quickened by his renovation, led by his manuduction, actuated by his influences, animated by his assistances: Little children, ye are of God.* Observe, 2. What is affirmed of these christians, *Ye have overcome them*; that is, you have resisted their temptations, withstood their seductions, and all their arts and endeavours to mislead you, when others have been perverted by them. Learn hence, That by steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ, christians do overcome impostors and seducers, when unstable souls are overcome by them. Observe, 3. The reason assigned why, and the means declared by which they overcome, namely, *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*; that is, Christ, who by his Spirit and doctrine dwells in you, is greater and more powerfully efficacious, than the spirit of error, which influences these vile impostors and seducers that are abroad in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Here we have, 1. The character given of these seducers and false teachers, *They are of the world*; that is, men of worldly minds and interests, *They speak of the world*; that is, they preach a doctrine suitable to the lusts and inclinations of worldly men, who greedily hear them, and easily believe them; ordinarily our words are such as we are; they who are of the world must needs speak of the world, for they have nothing else to speak of. The covetous man speaks covetously, and the proud man proudly. Observe, 2. The character which the apostle gives of himself and his fellow-apostles, *we are of God*; that is, taught and instructed by God. We have our mission and our message from God, and he has given us his attestation, by opening the ears and hearts of those that attend upon our ministry, to receive and embrace our doctrine; but such as are not taught of God, reject both it and us. Observe, 3. The inference and conclusion which our apostle draws from hence, namely, that by the doctrine and writings of the apostles and evangelists,

the truth or falsehood of doctrines may and must be judged; for, says he, "Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error; he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us."

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

Our apostle here resumes his exhortation to brotherly love, and urges and reinforces it with fresh arguments. 1. He assures us, that *love is of God*: that is, the fruit of his good spirit in us: common love is his common gift, and holy love is his special grace: *Love is of God.* 2. It is an evidence that we have a right knowledge of God, both of his nature and will, and that we understand both what he is, and what he requires; he that has not the grace of love in his heart, has not the right knowledge of God in his head, whatever he may think of himself, or pretend to others. 3. The apostle assures us, That love is not only commanded, but exemplified by God himself: *God is love.* He had said before, *Love is of God*, as a quality; here he says, *God is love*: not as a mere quality, but his essence. *God is love*; 1. Essentially; love in the creature is an accidental quality, in God an essential property. 2. *God is love*, casually, the efficient cause of whatever is loving or lovely in us: all our love to him, and one another, is but a reflection of his love to us. 3. *God is love*, objectively; he is, or ought to be, the supreme object of our love; and we must love him above all, or he accounts we love him not at all. 4. *God is love*, declaratively; all his works, as well as his word, are a declaration of his love to us, and ought to engage us to steadfastness in our love to him. *Let us, therefore says the beloved disciple, love one another, for love is of God, and God is love.*

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Observe, 1. That God doth not only bestow love upon his people, but it is his good pleasure to manifest that love. *Quest.* Wherein has God manifested his love towards us? *Ans.* 1. In our creation, making us out of nothing in such a wonderful manner: our bodies curiously wrought as with a needle, our souls beautified with understanding, will, and judgment. 2. In our apostacy and degeneration, when no eye pitied us, and when we had no hearts to pity ourselves, then were his bowels of love and compassion yearning towards us; then he said unto us, *Live*, when he might have said, *Die and be damned.* 3. In our redemption, recovery, and restitution, in sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Observe, 2. A threefold evidence of God's love to mankind in the work of redemption, that great and glorious work. 1. It was a wonderful instance of the love of God, that he should be pleased to take our case into consideration, and to concern himself for our happiness; as nothing is more obliging to human nature

than love, so no love obliges more than that which is exercised with great condescension after a provocation; such was God's love to offending man. 2. That he should design so great a benefit to us, as is here expressed, even life, *That we might live through him.* 3. That God was pleased to use such a mean for the obtaining and procuring of this benefit for us. He sent his own Son into the world, that we might live through him. Where note, 1. The person sent, his own Son, and only begotten Son. 2. The persons sent to, the men of the world, who were spiritually dead, and judicially dead. 3. The manner of his being sent voluntarily and freely, not constrained by necessity, not prevailed upon by importunity, not obliged by benefit or kindness from us; but out of his mere pity and goodness towards us, he sent him into a wicked world, and into an ungrateful world, that we might live through him. From the whole learn, That God's bestowing his Son upon a lost world, was a manifest evidence of his great and wonderful love unto them: "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, &c."

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Herein is love; that is, the clearest, the fullest, the highest expression of free and undeserved love that ever the world was acquainted with. Observe, That the wisdom and power of God did not act to the utmost of their efficacy in the work of creation; he could have framed a more glorious world had it pleased him; but the love of God in our redemption by Christ could not be expressed, or set forth, in an higher degree, when Almighty God would give the most excellent testimony of his favor to mankind, he gave them his eternal Son, the son of his love; and verily the giving of heaven itself, with all its joys and glory, is not so full and perfect a demonstration of the love of God, as the giving of his Son to die for us; *Herein is love.* Observe next, The priority of God's love to mankind; he loved us, not we him; he loved us antecedently to our loving him, and he loved us, that we might love him, when there was nothing in us either to deserve, or to engage his love. Observe lastly, The great intent and gracious design of God in sending his Son, namely, *To be a propitiation for our sins*; that is, to die as a sacrifice for our sins, and thereby atone divine displeasure. *Herein is love*; that is, the triumph, the riches, and glory of divine love, that God gave Christ to die for us. "But is there love in nothing else but this?" Y sure, to have a being among rational creatures, therein is love; to have our life carried so many years in the hand of providence, like a burning taper, in the midst of winds and storms, and not burnt out, this is love to have food and raiment convenient for us, relations and friends to comfort us, in all these is love, great love; but comparatively none at all to the love expressed in giving Christ to die for us: herein was love, the flower of love.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us:

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Observe here, 1. The genuine inference which our apostle draws from the doctrine laid down concerning the greatness of God's love to us; namely, "that seeing God so loved us, we should love one another, and be like him according to our measure, and in our degree." Observe next, The apostle's argument to provoke us thereunto; he tells us, That God himself is to be loved by us for his astonishing love unto us: but as God is not to be seen in his essence, but in man his image, so must we love God in man, his creature, made after his own image and likeness: and if we love the holy image of God in each other, it is an evidence that God dwelleth in us, and we in him; namely, by the inhabitation of his Holy Spirit, which being a Spirit of love in us, draws forth our love towards himself, and one towards another. And further he assures us, That this will be a sign, *that love is perfect in us*; namely, that this grace is in its vigor and perfection in our souls, sincere and entire, having all its essential parts, though it be not absolutely perfect in all degrees. Note, That perfection here is not opposed to imperfection, but to insincerity. Our love is then said to be perfected, when it is considerably heightened and improved. Blessed be God! the hour is coming when this, and all other graces, shall be perfected, when this spark of love shall be blown up into a seraphic flame. Observe lastly, The rule which our apostle lays down, whereby we may know assuredly, that God dwelleth in us, and we in him; namely, *If he has given us his Spirit*, which is a spirit of holy love. Learn thence, That the Holy Spirit, (not in its extraordinary gifts, which are long since ceased) but in its sanctifying operations and gracious fruits, (of which sincere love is the first and chief) is an undoubted evidence of God's dwelling in us by a special inhabitation, and of our dwelling in him: that is, resting in his love and favor, and under his protection and care; "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit;" namely, as a Spirit of holy and universal love.

14 And we have seen, and testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

As if the apostle had said, "Though no man hath seen God at any time, yet the apostles, who preach the doctrine of faith unto you, and press the duty of love upon you, have seen with our bodily eyes the Lord Jesus Christ, and do testify, that God the Father glorified his love, by sending his Son to be the Saviour of a perishing world; not of Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. And we further declare, That whosoever, believing this our testimony, shall confess with his

mouth, and believe in his heart, that this Jesus, whom we preach is the Son of God, and shall evidence the truth of his faith by the sincerity of his love, and other good fruits, it is certain that God dwelleth in him by his Spirit, and he dwelleth in God by repeated acts of love. And finally, we apostles well knowing, and firmly believing the love, the wonderful great love, which God hath manifested towards us, in and through his Son Jesus Christ, we again affirm and conclude that *God is love*. Love originally, the fountain from whence all love flows. Love efficiently, the producing cause of all love in the hearts of our people. Love subjectively, a God full of love and mercy, of goodness and pity towards his creatures. Love objectively, he is deservedly the first and chief object of our love, as he is the first and chief good. Love declaratively, both his word and works declare the purposes of his love unto us, and give demonstrations of innumerable instances of his beneficence towards us. But especially God is love essentially. Love in us is an adventitious and accidental quality; in God it is an essential property, it is his very essence and nature, inseparable from his being; he can as soon cease to *be*, as cease to *love*. And as *God is love*, so we again affirm, that he that *dwelleth in love*, that is, he who has love, as the prevailing habit in his heart, and as the governing principle of his life, *dwelleth*, by communion, *in God*, as the eye dwells in the light, and as one friend by love dwells in another; and God, by his Spirit of love, *dwelleth in him*.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Still our apostle proceeds by way of argument to enforce upon us the obligation of our duty to love one another; he assures us here, that if our love *be made perfect*, that is, heightened and improved by an exact corresponding with the divine pattern and precept; if we love one another in obedience to God's command, and in conformity to Christ's example, it will give us boldness in the day of judgment, and we may think and speak of, we may expect and look for, the approach of that day without fear and consternation of mind; the reason is added, because *as Christ was, so are we in the world*; that is, as he was full of holiness and purity, of love and charity, so have we endeavoured to be in imitation of his example, according to our measure, in some proportion and degree. Learn hence, 1. That such as are sincerely gracious, and do excel in the grace of love, are in the world in some sort as Christ was in the world; such as walk in love, walk as Christ walked. Learn, 2. That such as are in the world, as Christ was in the world, shall have boldness when Christ comes to judgment, and need not fear the condemnation of that dreadful day: "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment;" the reason of this freedom from the fear of wrath is added, verse 18. *There is no fear in love*; that is, no slavish

or distrustful fear, whereby we question the favor of God; but only a filial and reverential fear, whereby we stand in awe of offending him as a father: *But perfect love casteth out fear*; that is, either the actings of our perfect love to God, or the apprehensions of God's perfect love towards us, do cast out all that fear which has torment in it. Yet note, That although perfect love casteth out tormenting fear, it calls in obeying fear, Eccl. xii. 13. "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;" an awful fear of God is all duty, and every grace. Note also, The true reason of our disquieting and tormenting fear is the imperfection and weakness of our love; fear may stand with faith and love, but not with perfect faith, nor perfect love. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love;" and because he is not made perfect in love: therefore he feareth. Blessed be God, as there will be no torment, so no fear, in heaven; that is, no tormenting fear; yet there is a fear of reverence, which will undoubtedly remain with glorified saints in heaven; they shall have an everlasting awe of the majesty and holiness of God eternally fixed upon their hearts and spirits, even in the kingdom of glory in heaven, as well as in the kingdom of grace here on earth; the saints "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" Lord, hasten the perfecting of thy grace in us, particularly the perfection of our love, that perfect love may cast out tormenting fear, and cherish such a reverential fear as will both prepare us for heaven, and accompany us in heaven, to all eternity.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

There is a double reading of these words according to the original. 1. They may be read, let us love him because he first loved us, by way of motive, denoting, that believers have great reason to love God with their choicest and highest affections, forasmuch as he has loved them, and first loved them. 2. They are here read by way of causality, we do love him, because he first loved us; intimating, that God's love to us is the root and spring of our love to him, and to one another; all our love to saints is the effect of his preventing love to us, and but a reflection of those beams of love which God has first cast upon us; if God's love to us had been a mere dependant consequence of our love to him, how uncertain should we be of its continuance? but his love to us was the antecedent cause of our love to him; we therefore love him because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Our apostle in these words prevents an objection. Some might be ready to say, "Who is it that doth not love God? is there any that live who doth not love him?" The apostle replies, That whosoever says he loves God, and yet hateth his brother, is plainly a liar: for it is impossible truly to love God, and not to do what God commands: and if we do not exercise love to our brethren, whom we daily see and converse with, how can it be imagined that we love God, whom we never saw? Learn hence, first, That as God is infinitely above us, so he needeth not our love, but it is wonderful condescension in God to give us leave to love him, and to suffer

himself to be embraced by those arms which have embraced sin and lust before him. Learn, 2. That though God needs not us, or our love, yet we need him, and stand in need of one another, and for that reason must and ought to love each other. Learn, 3. That if we love not God's visible image, it is certain we never loved the invisible God; if when we have our christian brethren in our daily view, and the objects of our senses are their miseries and wants, and yet we shut up the bowels of compassion from them, can we, or dare we, pretend at the same time to love God whom we have not seen, and who is only present to our minds by raised expectations; as the sight of our brother is a strong inducement to love him, so the not loving him at sight, is a strong argument that we love not God himself; For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.

This commandment: This great and chief commandment, above the rest, this summary and comprehensive commandment, including all the rest, namely, to love God above all, for his own sake, and to love our brother as ourselves, for God's sake, this command, so full of wisdom, so agreeable to right reason, and so much our duty and interest to comply with, have we received from God; and it is most certain that we love him not, if we keep it not; "this commandment have we from God, that he who loveth God, loveth his brother also." Learn thence, 1. That the great God, by his gracious command, requires that we love him, and place the supremacy of our love upon him. 2. That as God requires us to love him above ourselves, so does he oblige us, by virtue of his command, to love our brother as ourselves; as sincerely, though not so intensely as ourselves. Learn, 3. That the same commandment that requires us to love God requires love to our brethren also; God interprets the neglect of our duty to our brother, as a neglect of our obligation to himself.

CHAPTER V.

Our apostle in this chapter prosecutes the design of the whole epistle, which is to excite and inflame in christians the love of God, and their brethren, two comprehensive duties, and our principal perfections in heaven and earth; these he recommends by the most affectionate and obliging persuasives, namely, the superlative love of God to us, and our communion with the saints both in nature and grace: and accordingly thus he writes:

WHOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Observe here, 1. The grand proposition laid down as the object of our faith, namely, that *Jesus is the Christ*; that is

that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born with, and lived amongst the Jews, was the Saviour of the world, the person whom Moses and the prophets foretold to be the Messiah. Observe 2. The duty required of us, namely, to believe that Jesus is the Christ; that is, not historically only, to assent that Jesus is the predicted and promised Messiah, but to express the truth of that faith in a suitable conversation. Observe, 3. How evidential such a faith is of our regeneration; whosoever thus believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; faith in Christ Jesus, as the great King, Priest, and Prophet of his church, accompanied with a holy life, is a sure mark and undoubted evidence of our new birth. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Observe, 4. The affection which every person that is born of God bears unto God, *He loveth him that begat*! this is the ingratiating and endearing quality; it is this that commends both our persons and performances to God's acceptance; the service of love is therefore most acceptable, because most honorable to God, and most durable and lasting from us; the obedience of love will be lasting. Observe, 5. What is the genuine effect, and natural product of this love to God, namely, a sincere affection to all the children of God: "whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," every christian that sincerely loves God, certainly loves the image of God in his saints and children; he that loves the father for his own sake, cannot but love the child for his father's sake, if like him: and the more like him, the more he loves him: "he that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

Observe here, That the sincerity of our love to the children of God is best discovered by our love to God, and obedience to his commands. *Quest.* 1. What kind of love is required towards the children of God? *Ans.* A love of esteem, a love of desire, a love of delight, and a love of service and beneficence. *Quest.* 2. What kind of obedience towards God is that which springs from love? *Ans.* It is uniform and universal; love regardeth the whole law in all its injunctions and prohibitions, and studieth to please the law-giver; it is pleasant and delightful, not a melancholy task, but a pleasing exercise; it is accurate and exact, it produces a severe circumspection over our ways, that nothing be done or allowed by us that is displeasing to the divine eye: and it is constant and persevering; that motion which is caused by the outward prizes will cease when the weights are down, but that which proceeds from an inward principle, or life, is continual; and such a principle is the love of God planted in the christian's breast: "by this then may we know that we love the children of God, if we love God and keep his commandments."

3 ¶ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Our apostle in these words gives a threefold description of a sincere christian. He describes him, 1. By his inward affection to God and Christ, and that is love: this is shed abroad in his heart. 2. By the action which flows from

this affection, namely, obedience to God in keeping his commandment. 3. By the disposition and inclination from which that obedience doth proceed and flow, namely, a delight and cheerfulness in the doing of our duty. "His commandments are not grievous;" that is, they have nothing in them heavy or burdensome, but every thing that may render them at once both our duty and delight. Learn hence, 1. That obedience is the most natural and necessary product of love; where love is the governing principle, it rules all the inclinations of the heart and actions of the life. Learn 2. That love makes our obedience to God cheerful and constant, delightful and lasting. Love is seated in the will, and that obedience which proceeds from it is out of choice, and purely voluntary. No commandment is grievous that is performed from love, and makes obedience also constant. That which is forced from impressions of fear is unsteady, but that which flows from delight is lasting. Learn hence, That the service of Christ is a very gracious, a most desirable and delightful service, not to sinners, whose minds the God of this world has blinded, whose consciences are canterized, who have not only grieved, but quenched the Holy Spirit of God. But, 1. It is not grievous in itself. 2. Nor is it grievous to a regenerate person: a sound eye never complains of light, but a sore eye is uneasy under it. The commands of Christ cannot be grievous, because they exact things of us which are agreeable to our reason, suitable to our natures, consonant to our rational desires. We cannot give an instance of any one of the commands of Christ which is in itself grievous; that command of his, to do to others as we would have others do by us, is a dictate of nature as well as the law of Christ.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Two things are here observable, namely, a proposition, and the explication of that proposition. Observe, 1. The proposition, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Every regenerate christian is a victorious christian, he is a conqueror, yea, the greatest of conquerors, he conquers the whole world. Observe, 2. The exposition of this proposition, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is a spiritual conquest, and spiritually obtained, even by faith. Note here, 1. That the world is a christian's grand enemy. A conquest supposes a combat, and a combat supposes an enemy. 2. That every regenerate christian is a victorious conqueror over this enemy. The christian is a soldier as soon as he is a believer, and he is a conqueror as soon as he is a soldier. *This is the victory*: he hath his enemy under his feet, even whilst he is in the fight. Note, 3. That the special weapon by which the christian conquers the world, and his spiritual enemies, is his faith. Many warriors have done great things in conquering kingdoms, but this is a greater conquest than all theirs; their conquest was but poor and partial, only of some small parts of earth, but the christian's conquest is universal; those conquerors whilst they prevailed abroad were slaves at home; whilst they were lords of nations, they were vassals to their own lusts; but these conquerors, which the text speaks of, begin their victories at home, and enlarge their triumphs over all enemies

abroad: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Our apostle having spoken of the usefulness of faith in the former verse, *that it overcometh the world*, next discovers the object of this faith, which is this proposition, *that Jesus is the Son of God*. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" That faith which overcomes the world, is faith in the divinity and sonship of Jesus Christ. We overcome the world by believing in him that overcame it, even Jesus Christ, who hath purchased, promised, and prepared a better world than what we do see, or can see, with our bodily eyes, and has made us heirs of eternal glory. Observe next, The argument by which the apostle proves that Jesus is the Son of God, the true Messias and the Saviour of mankind, namely, because he *came by water and blood*; that is say some, by the testimony given him when he was in the water, at his baptism, both by John the Baptist, and the voice from heaven; he came by his Spirit, say others, *as by water*, to sanctify those that believe in him; and by his blood to make a full atonement for them: an admirable symbol of both, which was the flowing of water and blood both out of Christ's side, when he hung upon the cross. It is a sweet meditation that Christ comes by water as well as blood, by way of sanctification as well as by way of justification; his death not only discharges from guilt, but cleanses also from pollution and filth: blessed be God there is a fountain opened in the side of our Saviour for sin, and for uncleanness to wash in, and to be purged from. Sanctification is as great, and in some respects a greater privilege than justification! for justification frees us only from misery and punishment, but sanctification frees us from sin, which is worse than punishment. Again, real perfections are above relative perfections; now justification by Christ's blood is only a relative perfection, it makes us stand in a new relation to the law, by which before we stood guilty, and condemned: but sanctification by the Spirit of Christ, signified here, and set forth elsewhere frequently, by water, is a real moral perfection, it changes the heart and nature, and makes us like unto God, yea, like unto him in his highest perfection, which is that of holiness. Come then, O blessed Redeemer, by water and blood into our souls, with thy renewing grace and sanctifying Spirit, to purge our consciences from dead works, and to deliver us not only from the danger, but from the dominion of our sins.

—And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Some by the Spirit's bearing witness understand the testimony which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ here upon earth, as touching the truth of his doctrine, the reality of his miracles,

and the certainty of his mission; others understand by it, the Spirit's testimony in the Holy Scriptures, and in the consciences of believers, that Jesus Christ is a divine person and came by water and blood, both to save us at once from the wrath of God, and the rage of our lusts. Learn thence, That the Holy Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and breathing in the consciences of believers, bears witness to their soul, that Jesus Christ came to save them by the water of sanctification, as well as with and by the blood of redemption: and that the spirit thus witnessing is a Spirit of truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

That is, "There are three in heaven which do bear record to this truth here upon earth, namely, that Jesus is the Christ; that is to say, the three persons in the Holy Trinity, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; the Father bore witness both at Christ's baptism and transfiguration also, when with an audible voice he declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Word bore record of himself, affirming frequently, plainly, and directly, that he was the Son of God, and making it manifest by his doctrine and miracles, that he came from the Father; the Spirit bore witness to this, partly by descending on Christ at his baptism in the shape of a dove, and partly by descending on his apostles in the feast of pentecost in the figure of fiery tongues, Acts ii. Learn hence, 1. That it was no easy matter to believe the truth of our Saviour's mission and miracles, and that Jesus Christ was the essential and natural Son of God. Though by the mouth of two or three witnesses every truth is established, yet in this and the next verse we have no less than six witnesses produced to prove our Jesus to be the Son of God, three heavenly, and three earthly witnesses — It is added, *these three are one*, one in testimony, say the adversaries of the Trinity, but not one in essence. One in both, say we, as one in testimony, so one in essence. But suppose that we should grant that the oneness spoken of in the text is to be expounded of consent in testimony, agreement, and will, principally, yet will it prove the Godhead of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; for in free agents, where there is the same will, there is the same nature: with men it is the same specific nature; but with God, because there is but one only God, therefore it must be, the same numerical nature. Learn, 2. That there are three persons, yet but one God, that do bear witness to the divinity of Christ, and of the plentiful redemption wrought by him.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

As if the apostle had said, "As there are three in heaven who have given us their testimony to the divinity of Christ and his doctrine here on earth, so there are three witnesses here below testifying the same thing, namely, the Spirit, in the preaching of the gospel, and in the souls of believers: the water, or sacrament of baptism, wherein we are

baptized in the name of the Son, as well as of the Father, and the blood, that is, the death of Christ, and the sufferings of those who have sealed this truth with their blood; all these do give testimony on earth to Christ's divinity from heaven." Note here, That though much of these two verses be left out in many ancient copies of the Bible, as the learned Dr. Hammond takes notice, yet in copies more ancient they are found, and we have more reason to believe that the Arians left them out, than that the orthodox put them in, other texts that assert the truth being so abused. It has been the common course of heretics to disown the authority of such texts as do gall and pinch them. Note, farther, That the doctrine of the blessed Trinity stands built upon holy scripture, as a firm basis, an impregnable rock, and the doctrine of the Anti-Trinitarians falls to the ground like Dagon before the Ark. Lord, let our understandings evermore stoop and yield to this divine revelation, though it contains such a doctrine as doth exceed the comprehension of human reason.

9 ¶ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

Our apostle's argument in these words is taken from the less to the greater, thus: "if, says he, for the believing of any thing it be ordinarily thought sufficient to have the testimony of two or three credible men, then surely the testimony of the faithful and infallible God, given from heaven, is much more worthy of belief; but the testimony given concerning Christ, that he is verily the Son of God, is evidently the testimony of the faithful God that cannot lie: therefore he that, after all the assurance which God has given of his Son's being a true and real Saviour, shall yet reject and disown him as such, does in effect accuse God of falsehood, and make him a liar, because he believes not the record which God has given of his Son: whereas the person that believes on Christ as the Son of God, and the true Messiah, is safe, having the testimony of God the Father without him, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit within him as the Spirit of holiness, wisdom, and power: "he that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself;" he that believeth not the Son, has made God a liar. Learn hence, 1. That every testimony which God gives us is infallibly true, 2. That the testimony which God has given us concerning his Son Jesus Christ being the true and promised Messiah, has had its confirmation abundantly above and beyond other testimonies. 3. Therefore such as do not believe on our Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, they disbelieve the most undoubted and infallible testimony of God, and in his account make him a liar. Lord! what a bold, presumptuous, and daring sin is unbelief? it gives God the lie, and makes the God of truth a liar.

11 And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

As if our apostle had said, "The sum of God's testimony recorded in the gospel is this, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, namely, that God for his sake has made a free deed of gift, of pardon and salvation to the world, assuring them of grace here, and eternal life hereafter, upon condition of their believing acceptance, that is, of faith and obedience; and accordingly he that thus has Christ, he that accepts the merit of his blood, and submits to the authority of his law, *hath eternal life*, that is, he has an undoubted right unto it, and assurance of it, yea, he has it already initially, and in the first fruits; but he that, either by unbelief or disobedience refuses Christ *shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*. Learn hence, 1. That eternal life is the gift of God. 2. That this gift of eternal life is laid up for us in his Son. 3. That upon our having or not having union with, and interest in the Son, depends our having or not having eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, &c."

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Our apostle entering now upon the conclusion of his excellent epistle, acquaints them with his design and end in the writing of it, namely, 1. That they might know they had eternal life, that is, both a right and title to eternal life, and might also attain to the knowledge and assurance of it. Learn thence, That believers may in this life, without the help of extraordinary revelation, attain to a knowledge and well-grounded assurance of life eternal. "These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life. There is a threefold knowledge; *notional*, which is barely the work of the understanding; *experiential*, which is seated in the heart, and visible in the life; *fiducial*, when a person is ascertained and assured of what he knows; thus here *these things I write*, that ye may know that ye know, that is, be assured that ye know; a christian may believe, and yet not be assured that he does believe; many have a vital act which have not a fiducial act of faith; many have a faith of adherence that want a faith of evidence; faith and assurance in a saint, differ as much as reason and learning in a man; every man has reason, but every man that has reason has not learning, which is the improvement of reason; thus every good man has faith, but every one that hath faith has not assurance, which is the special fruit of faith. This therefore was the first design and end of St. John's writing, that they might know they did believe; the second follows, that those that *did believe, might believe on the name of the Son of God*; the meaning is, that they might more firmly believe, be more rooted, grounded, settled, and confirmed in the faith, so as to remain unshaken by all the

storms of persecution that might fall upon them; this seems to be the sense of the apostle when he exhorts "believers to believe. These things write I unto you that believe, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." The strongest believers may be exhorted to strengthen their faith, and to persevere in the faith, which they are strengthened and established in.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

To enforce the foregoing exhortation to believers, namely, to be confirmed and constant in the faith, he shows them here what a special advantage believers have above other persons, namely, confidence in all their approaches to God: and a full assurance, 1. In general, that whatever they ask in faith according to his will, they shall obtain. 2. In particular, that our several petitions which we present unto God, shall in his own time, in his own way, and after his own manner, be granted by him, provided our persons and our prayers be qualified according to the gospel for the receiving of his promise. Hence learn, That through our interest in Christ, and for the sake of his meritorious satisfaction and prevailing intercession, our prayers are certainly heard by God, and we shall assuredly have what God has promised to give, and we are fit to receive. God indeed does not always, nay, not often, come with an answer of prayer at our time, but he never stays a moment beyond his own time. Learn, 2. That in all the prayers we present and put up to God, a special eye and regard must be had to the will of God, if we expect to be heard and answered, *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. The will of God is the rule, not only of things to be done by us, but also of those things which we crave of God to do for us. The will of God under a threefold revelation is the rule and matter of prayer. 1. The will of God in his commands; whatever God hath required us to do, we may pray for power that we may do. 2. The will of God in his promises; what God hath said he will give, we may pray that we may receive. 3. The will of God in prophecies; what God hath foretold shall come to pass, we may and ought to pray that it may come to pass. The prayer of man gives birth to the prophecies of God, yea, and to the promises of God too. Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *I will be enquired of, to do it for them*. Though God be a sure paymaster, yet he expects that we should put his bond in suit before he pays. Learn, 3. That a prayer made according to God's will, shall certainly be granted according to our will. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*. When we pray for any thing in obedience to God's will, and with submission to his will, we know that we have the petitions that we ask of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin

not unto death. There is a sin unto death : I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin : and there is a sin not unto death.

Our apostle informed us in the foregoing verse of the comfort which believers have in their prayers for themselves, all that is requested by them is granted by God : now in the verse before us, he relates the benefits which others receive by their prayers as well as themselves, assuring them, that if any of them did pray for an offending brother, they should be heard in what they desired, unless the person they prayed for had sinned the unpardonable sin, the *sin unto death*, by which we are to understand apostasy from the christian religion unto idolatry, as appears from the following words, *Keep yourselves from idols*, which caution has no manner of dependance upon what went before, unless we understand the *sin unto death* in this sense ; or if (with others) he call it *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, it comes to the same : for what is that sin but a renouncing of christianity, denying the truth of the christian faith, after illumination and conviction by the Holy Ghost, and maliciously persecuting the sincere professors of it ? Here note, 1. That a believer is not to hide his eyes from observing, but may and ought to take notice of the sins and miscarriages of his brethren : *If any man see his brother sin*, which he cannot do if he neglect to observe him. Note, 2. That a believer discerning and observing the sin of his brother, may and ought to pray for him. *Let him ask*, that is, importune God on his behalf. Note, 3. That a believer's prayers may prevail with God for us, when our own prayers will not prevail for ourselves. *Let him ask, and he shall give him life*, temporal life at least, and upon his repentance and faith eternal life also. Note, 4. That the state of some wicked men may be such, that were it certainly known, it might be a christian's duty to cease praying for them. *There is a sin unto death*, that is, which doth not only deserve death, as all sin doth, and bespeak a person in a state of death, but a sin that argues a person to be twice dead, dead in respect of unregeneracy, and dead in respect of wilful and sinful apostacy. *I do not say, that ye shall pray for it*, that is, for the person guilty of it, seeing God never intends to forgive it. Lord ! how deplorable is the condition of those whose sins are past prayers, who give over praying for themselves, and others are stopt from praying for them ! How sad is it, when the Lord shuts up the hearts of any of his from praying for us ! It shows the sin of that man to be apprehended as being the sin unto death, when the faithful cease praying for him. Yet note, 5. The apostle doth not here explicitly and simply forbid praying for such wretched persons, but only says, *I do not say that ye shall pray for them* ; that is, I cannot give you any encouragement to pray for such, nor dare I promise you any good success in praying for them who have sinned unto death. *I do not say* ; that is, I give you no warrant, I lay you under no command, I give you no promise, that your prayers for such shall be heard and answered.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not : but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

That is, we are all well assured that sincere christians, who are begotten and born of God, do not commit this sin unto death, namely, apostasy from Christianity to the Heathen idolatry : "But he keepeth himself and the wicked one toucheth him not," that is, he preserveth himself from the contagion of idolatry, into which the devil was so busy to seduce a great part of mankind. It may be further added, that *he that is born of God*, so far as he is a partaker of the divine nature, *sinneth not* ; that is, suffers not any sin to have dominion over him, but takes care to preserve himself through the assistance of divine grace, from Satan's deadly wound. *He toucheth him not* ; that is, doth not touch him so as to leave an impression of his devilish spirit upon him. *Non tangit tactu qualitativo, vel tactu lethali et mortifero* ; "He shall not mortally touch them, to make them sin unto death."

19 And we know that we are of God,—

That is, do belong to the true God, and are worshippers of him, we are guided by his spirit, we are obedient to his laws, we please him on earth, and do hope to enjoy him in heaven.

—And the whole world lieth in wickedness.

That is, the far greater part of the world are under the dominion of that wicked one, being sunk into idolatry, and become worshippers of the devil, continuing in the midst of their impurity and malignity, and wholly set upon mischief and wickedness. See here the darkness and horror of an unregenerate and unconverted state. Persons in it are under the dominion of satan, that wicked one. But behold the blessed change that christianity makes, not in the profession, but in the practice of it, it delivers from the power of darkness, and from the power of satan, the prince of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true : and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

As if the apostle had said, "We christians are better taught by our religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God by his Son Jesus Christ our only Mediator, and therefore exhort you to keep from idols ; intimating hereby, that the worshipping of any other besides this only true God, and by any other Mediator, besides Jesus Christ, is idolatry, or the words may be sensed thus : "We are sure that the Son of God is come, and that Christ is he, who by his doctrine and spirit hath enlightened us to know the true and living God, whilst the greatest part of the world worship false gods, yea, adore the devil himself." And farther, "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ ;" that is, we are by faith implanted into Jesus Christ, who is the author, purchaser, and disposer of eternal life, and there-

fore is true God. This text, which proves undeniably the divinity of Christ, the Socinians pervert by applying these words, *this is the true God*, not to Christ but to God the Father. But this makes the apostle guilty of a grand tautology, by saying, "The true God is the true God." Besides, it is here said of the same person that he is the true God, and eternal life. Now, eternal life is thrice in this very chapter attributed to Jesus Christ, as the author and dispenser of it, ver. 11, 12, 13. If then Christ be meant *by eternal life* he must be also meant *by the true God*, for they are spoken of together when the apostle says, *This is the true God and*

eternal life. Lastly, our apostle concludes his epistle with this cautionary direction *Little children, keep yourselves from idols*. As if he had said, "My advice to you is that of a father to his own children, having received by the gospel the knowledge of the true God, keep yourselves from idols, or false gods of the heathen, among whom ye live; abandon all idolatry, superstition, sacrificing to idols, frequenting idol feasts, and all idolatrous communion, these things being inconsistent with the worship of the true God, and real christianity. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*"

THE

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

SAINT JOHN.

That St. John, the Apostle and Disciple of our Saviour who wrote the first, did also write this second epistle, seems very evident from the exact agreement of several passages in this with the former epistle, even word for word, and accordingly it has been agreed, that the same person was the author of both epistles.

But as touching the person to whom it was wrote, there have been different opinions: Some think that it was a church whom he directs it to under the title of the Elect Lady; and that some Jewish Church, and particularly the church of Jerusalem, the mother of all, and from whence came forth the word to all other churches; the reason upon which this conjecture is grounded, is, because the rest of the epistles, called catholic, were written to the Jews, (excepting that to Gaius) and therefore probably this was written to some Jewish church; and because all the Jewish churches received their spiritual things from the church of Jerusalem, she may therefore, say some, be fitly styled the Lady, as she was the mother of all other churches. Others conceive this epistle to be wrote to a particular person, some eminent and religious matron, of a great estate, and a great reliever and supporter of the members of the church in her days. Which opinion of these two has the greater probability, is a matter of no great importance: let us rather attend to the subject-matter of this divine epistle, which speaks thus:

THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth:

2 For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever:

3 Grace *be* with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Observe here, 1. The person writing and directing this epistle, St. John, styling him the elder, partly with respect to his age, he being, as it is thought, the only person at that time living upon the earth, who bore the name of an *apostle*; and partly with respect to his office in the church; the word *elder* being a name of honor and dignity, we find both St. Peter elsewhere, and St. John here, making use of it. Observe, 2. The person to whom this epistle is directed. *The elect lady, and her children*; either some particular church, with its religious members, according to some; or some honorable person of eminent piety and usefulness in the church according to others; and to her children, who had been religiously educated by her. Observe, 3. The solemn profession which he makes of the sincerity of his love to herself and her children, together with the ground and attractive cause of that his cordial affection to her and hers, *Whom I love in truth, and for the truth's sake*. Mark, St. John here loved the lady for the truth's sake, but how many in our days love the truth for the lady's sake? I mean for sinister ends and bye respects. It is a blessed thing when a religion, and a grace of God shining in the lives of christians is the special loadstone of our love and affection toward them; *The elder to the elect lady, whom I love in the truth*. She had embraced the truth of the gospel, and he was confidently persuaded that she would continue in the profession and practice of it for ever. Observe, 4. The salutation sent to her and her children, namely, increase of grace, and an abundance of mercy and peace from God the Father, and Christ the Redeemer; earnestly wishing that they may continue steadfast in the profession of the truth, and in the exercise of love one to another, "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received the commandment from the Father.

Observe here, 1. The person rejoicing, St. John the apostle and minister of Christ Jesus. *I rejoiced greatly*. 2. The mercy rejoiced in, their *walking in the truth*. It was not their speculative knowledge of the truth, and their taking upon them a bare profession of christianity, that he rejoiced in, but their *walking in the truth*, and framing their

conversation according to the commandments which they had received from the Father. Christianity is not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living: and the most exalted knowledge is insufficient to salvation, without a suitable and correspondent practice; therefore, says St. John here, *I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children, not barely professing of the truth, but walking in the truth*. Observe, 3. The persons rejoiced for, or in the behalf of, the youth in that church or family to which he now wrote, "I rejoice to find thy children walking in the truth:" the hopes which the holy apostle had of a succession of saints, and that the children in his time would walk in their religious parent's footsteps, was matter of singular joy and rejoicing to the blessed apostle. Yet observe, 5. With what caution, restriction, and limitation, our apostle speaks, "I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children;" that is, some of them, perhaps many of them, it is to be feared not all of them; to have seen all was no doubt the apostle's desire, but to find any was unquestionless matter of exceeding joy: "I rejoiced greatly to find of thy children walking in the truth." Learn hence, That there is no greater joy to the ministers of Christ, than to see the youth, or rising generation in their day, walking in the paths of holiness and religion, and treading in their religious parents' footsteps.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Observe here, the duty required, together with the profession of the gospel, namely, to live in unity and peace, in amity and concord one with another. This he calls a *commandment*, in the singular number, to intimate, that in this one commandment all the rest are contained, and in keeping this we keep all: and he tells them, it is no new commandment, but an old one, from the beginning: it is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart; yet in some respects love may be called a *new commandment*, because urged from new motives, and enforced by a new example; and because it is never to wax old, but to be always fresh in the memories, and found in the practice of Christ's disciples to the end of the world; "I write no new commandment, but what we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

As if our apostle had said, "By this we shall make it evidently appear that there is the true love of God in us, if we endeavour to frame our lives according to his commandments;" and this, he assures them, was the great commandment, which they heard from the beginning, when the gospel was first preached unto them, namely, that they should believe in Christ, and love one another, and constantly persevere in the practice of these duties. Learn hence, That as obedience is the natural effect, and neces-

sary product of love, so is it the best evidence, the surest mark and sign of it, *This is the law of God*; that is, the surest evidence that we love him, if we keep his commandments. Learn, 2. That it is not sufficient that we profess love to God and our neighbour, but we must walk in love, and be found in the exercise, yea, in the persevering exercise, of that grace and duty: "this is the commandment, That as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Having exhorted them to perseverance in the faith before he subjoins a reason for that exhortation now, because *many deceivers are entered into the world, &c.* Many impostors were gone forth abroad, who denied, some the divinity, others the humanity of Christ, and so rased the very foundations of christianity, and thus discovered themselves to be antichrists, or persons that set themselves to oppose Jesus Christ. Learn hence, That even from the beginning our Lord Jesus has had those who have disowned his natures, and denied his offices, the divinity of his person, the meritoriousness of his satisfaction; these are antichrists, persons maliciously set against Christ, and they shall find him righteously set against them in the day when they shall be summoned by him solemnly to appear before him.

8 Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Here our apostle resumes his exhortation to them to constancy and perseverance in the faith and obedience of the gospel, from this argument, lest they should lose the fruit of their faith professed, the profit of their afflictions, which for the sake of christianity they had suffered, and their works of piety and charity which they had performed, but continuing faithful to the death, might receive a full reward, even a crown of life. Learn hence, That it is both lawful and needful, even for the best of saints, in what they do in the service of God, to have an eye to the promised reward, by way of encouragement to them in the course of their obedience. We may with Moses have respect to the recompence of reward, but not only, or chiefly, yet as a spur to provoke us to duty. Perseverance in goodness has its reward belonging to it; that reward has a fulness belonging to it, a fulness of compensation, and a fulness of satisfaction, and that it is both lawful and laudable to have an eye in our working to this full recompence of reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Observe here, 1. The character given of the gospel, it is *the doctrine of Christ*; that is, the doctrine relating to Christ, and the doctrine taught by Christ. Observe, 2. What is affirmed of those that apostatize from, and abide not in the doctrine of Christ, *they have not God*; that is, some say,

they have not God to be their Father, nor the Spirit to be their guide and sanctifier; they have, say others, no knowledge of God, no interest in God, no influences of grace and holiness derived from God. Observe, 3. The happy condition of those that abide in the doctrine of Christ, *they have both the Father and the Son*; he that has one, hath both; and he that hath not both, has neither; and this *having* may admit a threefold interpretation, thus; *he has the Father and the Son* by way of abode and inhabitation; he dwelleth in God, and God in him; they have the Father and the Son with them by way of society and communion "We will come unto them, and make our abode with them." Lastly, They have the Father and the Son, by the way of assistance and approbation; they have God to assist them, to accept them, to reward them.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

In these words our apostle directs them how to carry themselves towards those wicked apostates and heretical seducers, that deny the gospel, or any essential part of christianity, by no means to give any countenance or encouragement to them, or to hold any familiarity or communion with them, nor to entertain them, nor so much as courteously to salute them, but, by showing them disrespect, manifest a dislike and disapproving of their errors. This form of interdict, *Bid him not God speed*, seems to be an imitation of the Jewish practice towards excommunicated persons, who were not only excluded from all commerce, but also from all kind of common civilities, and ordinary salutation. Learn hence, That even civil courtesy, and common respect, is not, ought not to be paid to those that seduce others, or attempt to seduce us from the christian faith.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Here our apostle concludes his epistle with an apology for the brevity of it, declaring, that he hoped to come shortly to them, and see them. And though he had many things to write, yet all things were not fit to be written; but besides, a lively voice affects more than a written letter; and he hoped that they should be filled with mutual joy at the sight of, and converse with each other. Presence of friends, and familiar converse with each other, is preferable to all writing to each other. *By the children of the elect sister*, some again understand the members of another church, who now sent salutations to them. The concluding word, *Amen*, imports his sincerity in what he had written to them, and his hearty wishes for the happiness and welfare of them.

THE
THIRD EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
SAINT JOHN.

THE elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Observe here, 1. The penman and writer of this epistle, St. John, who wrote the two former, as appears by the agreement of them in words and phrases, which are peculiar to this apostle, he styles himself not an apostle, though he was so, but an *elder*: that word being a name of honor and dignity belonging to the chief of their tribes, agrees very well with the office of the apostle, set over the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. Observe, 2. The person to whom this epistle is directed, *Gaius*, we find three persons of this name in the New Testament, to wit, *Gaius* of Macedonia, Acts xix. *Gaius* of Derbe, Acts xx. and *Gaius* of Corinth, Rom. xvi. whom St. Paul calls his host, and of the whole church, who being eminent for his hospitality, especially to the ministers who went out to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, taking nothing of them; this man seems to be the person who had the honor of an epistle sent to him from the pen of an eminent apostle; such as do excel in their kindness to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, having oftentimes in this life some special marks of honor and respect put upon them by God, as a token of his gracious acceptance of them. Observe, 3. The interest which *Gaius* had in St. John's affections, he styles him *the well-beloved Gaius*, and shows also what was the motive and attractive of that his love, namely, *the truth*, that is, the gospel of Christ, called eminently *the truth*; he loved *Gaius* in the truth, that is, in great sincerity, and for the truth; for his sincere professing and practising the doctrine of the gospel, "The elder unto the well-beloved *Gaius*, whom I love in the truth;" such as love the truth are and ought to be, the special objects of our love.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Observe here, 1. This holy man, *Gaius*, who was so hospitable an host to the ministers and members of Christ, had but a weak and sickly body, he wanted health; strength of grace and dearness of respect, even from God himself,

cannot prevail against diseases; such as are most holy are sometimes most weak and sickly. Observe, 2. That though *Gaius* had but a weak and consumptive body, yet had he a very thriving and vigorous soul; it is a very common yet a very sad and true observation, that men of strong, healthy, and active bodies have weak, lame, sickly and sinful souls. Ah wretched sinner! when under obligations to serve thy God best, thou forgettest him most, and prostitutest thy health to the service of thy lusts; how does the health and ease of one day deserve the service and thankfulness of thy whole life! But alas; instead of that, thou makest him to serve with thy sins, and layest the first-fruits of thy time and strength upon the devil's altar. Observe, 3. Our apostle's wish on the behalf of *Gaius*, namely, that his body were as healthful as his soul was holy, that he had as much health in the one, as he had grace in the other; "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Behold here such an improved and well-grown christian was this holy man *Gaius*, that our apostle makes the prosperous state of his soul the measure of all that prosperity which the one could wish, or the other desire; as thy soul prospereth, so may thy bodily health, for the service of God and of thy soul.

3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came, and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.

Observe here, 1. The commendable testimony which the brethren that came from *Gaius* gave to St. John concerning his holy and unblameable conversation, according to the direction of the gospel, "the brethren testified of thee that thou walkest in the truth;" good reports of our brethren, without detracting any thing from their worth, is a manifest duty. Observe, 2. With what joy and rejoicing St. John received the notices of *Gaius*' adherence to the truth; and of his answerable walking thereunto. "I rejoiced when the brethren came and testified of thee;" he did not envy the grace of God so largely conferred on *Gaius*, but rejoiced in it, and no doubt blessed God exceedingly for it; soul mercies are the

greatest mercies, and matters of the greatest joy to gracious souls. Observe, 3. That additional joy which St. John expresses to hear that *his children*, that is, those persons whom he had converted to christianity, and begotten to Christ through the gospel, did *walk in the truth*, that is, in the sincere practice as well as in the outward profession of religion; "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth;" the faithful ministers of Christ rejoice more in the welfare of their people's souls, than in all their worldly wealth or honor.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well;

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

8 We, therefore, ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

Observe here, How our apostle at once commends the great charity of Gaius, and at the same time excites him to the farther practice of it. Where note, 1. How charity towards christians is here styled fidelity to Christ, because shown to them upon Christ's account, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren." Acts of charity are acts of righteousness and fidelity; he that is uncharitable is unjust. Note, 2. The extensive nature of Gaius' charity, it was to brethren, yea not only to *brethren*, but to *strangers*: that is, not only to the brethren of the church with him, but to strangers in their travels to and fro, as they came near him; more particularly to such faithful ministers as came out of foreign parts to preach the gospel, whom Gaius had hospitably and charitably entertained. Note, 3. How he exhorts Gaius farther to furnish and help these ministers in their travels with all things necessary for their journey; because, 1. They preached the gospel freely, taking nothing of the *Gentile* christians for their pains. 2. Because it was for Christ's name sake they went abroad; to preach the gospel say some: to avoid persecution, say others, 3. Because to entertain such is to farther, as much as in us lies, the propagation of the gospel of Christ; such as contribute towards the maintenance and support of the ministers of Christ for his sake, shall have the present comfort and future reward of co-operating and contributing their parts towards the propagating and spreading of the gospel of Christ.

9 I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore if I come, I will remember

his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

Observe here, The pious care which St. John took for the relief and succour of such faithful christians as now travelled amongst them, both to avoid persecution, and to preach the gospel; he wrote to the church on their behalf, desiring their reception, and advising their relief; *I wrote to the church*; that is, *I wrote for them*, and sent my testimonial to the church on their behalf; every one has a pen to plead for himself, happy he that has both tongue and pen to intercede for others. Observe, 2. The opposition which St. John met with in so good a work; Diotrephes, a proud man, regarded not his letters, acknowledged not his authority, yea, slighted the apostle, "prating against him with malicious words;" the holiest men may meet with opposition in the holiest and best of actions, wherein the glory of God and the public good are most concerned: "I wrote to the church but Diotrephes received us not." Observe, 3. The holy apostle's resentment of this indignity, and wise resolution thereupon; *when I come I will remember his deeds*; that is, I will sharply rebuke him, and use that severity towards him which his crimes deserve, according to the authority which God has given me. Learn hence, That though private offences against Christ's ministers must be forgiven and forgotten by them; yet when an offence is prejudicial to the church, it must be exposed, and openly censured.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Here St. John adviseth his beloved Gaius, and those with him, not to imitate and follow this evil example of Diotrephes, (who not only refused charity towards the christian Jews, that wanted it himself, but would not permit the Gentile christians to receive them or relieve them) but to follow the example of God, who is good to all; and accordingly, he that is merciful is born of God, but he that is malicious hath no true knowledge of God, but is a mere stranger to him. Behold here the eulogy and high commendation which the Spirit of God gives to a charitable and good man: *He that doeth good is of God*, he is allied to heaven, born of God, and his offspring, but the uncharitable evil man is a composition of spite, envy and malice, born from beneath, and the devil's offspring.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Having propounded the example of God in the former verse, he propounds in this the example of Demetrius, as a pattern to them for their imitation in works of piety and charity; not only common report, and the apostle's testimony, but his own good works, did justly recommend him as an extraordinary pattern to their imitation. Note, That the commendation, which our own good works do give us before the world, are more valuable than all the praises and applause which can be given us by men, yea, by the best of men; "Demetrius hath a good report of all men, yea, of the truth itself."

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee.

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Thus our apostle concludes his epistle with an apology for the brevity of it, hoping in a short time to see him, and to speak face to face unto him; he concludes with his apostolical valediction, *Peace be to thee*; unto which adding the brethren's salutations, it teaches us, that kind remembrances and greetings are suitable to christian friendship; "Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name."

THE
EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
S A I N T J U D E.

The design and scope of this Epistle appears to be much the same with that of the second of St. Peter, and was written probably about the same time; the intent of both is this, namely, to fortify the christian Jews against the errors and corruptions of those seducers, who, by their wicked lies and worse doctrines, attempted to seduce persons from the plainness and simplicity of the gospel, and to bring upon them the same condemnation and judgment with themselves.

JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Here we have observable, the person saluting, the person saluted, and the salutation itself. Observe, 1. The person saluting described three ways. 1. By his name, *Jude*, called Thaddeus and Lebbeus, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot; behold an holy apostle and a perfidious traitor, bearing the same name, Judas an apostle, and Judas an apo-

state; it is not an holy name, but an holy nature, that commends us unto God. 2. By his office, a *servant of Jesus Christ*; he might have styled himself near kinsman of Jesus Christ, or a brother of the Lord; but he mentions not his natural, but his spiritual relation to Christ, alliance in faith, or a spiritual relation to Christ, is much dearer and nearer than alliance in flesh: there is a peculiar honor and excellency in the title of Christ's servant above that of Christ's kinsman. 3. By his kindred and alliance; *brother of James*, this is added to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot; it is the duty of the servants, but especially the ministers of Christ, to prevent all scandalous exception against their persons, and to be of untainted reputations; "Jude the servant of Christ, and brother of James." Observe, 2. The persons saluted, these also are three ways described. 1. "They are sanctified by God the Father;" the apostle judges of them by

their profession, and by their obligation; they had, by assuming the christian name, obliged themselves to be saints, or holy persons; and by their profession did own and declare themselves so to be; and no doubt many of them were inwardly sanctified, as well as outwardly holy. 2. *They are preserved in Christ Jesus*; that is, in the faith of Christ Jesus, when many for fear of persecution, have apostatized from it; he that will approve himself a true christian, must show himself a steadfast christian; instability is an argument of insincerity; again, *preserved in Christ Jesus*; that is, preserved in a state of grace and holiness, by Christ Jesus, by the merit of his death and passion, by the prevalence of his intercession, and by the Holy Spirit's efficacy and operation. 3. *They are called* all of them externally by the ministry of the word; internally, many of them by the effectual operation of the Spirit, renewing the nature and reforming the life; these are the persons saluted, "Them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus and called." Observe, 4. The salutation itself, *Mercy, peace, and love, be multiplied unto you*; Mercy from God, the Father of mercies; peace from Jesus Christ, who is our peace; and love from the Holy Ghost, by whom it is shed abroad in our hearts: and his praying that these graces may not be barely given and granted, but be multiplied and increased, intimates to us our duty, which is not barely to seek grace at the hands of God, but the multiplication and augmentation of it: to labor after grace in growth, as well as grace in truth: *Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied*; thankful we may and ought to be for the least measures of grace received, but not satisfied with the greatest measures, short of our heavenly perfection; he was never truly good that does not desire daily to grow better.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints:

Observe here, 1. A courteous and loving compellation, *Beloved*, people should study to render themselves fit objects of their pastor's love. Observe, 2. How his love towards them put him upon writing to them with all diligence; love must be the spring and fountain of all our ministerial performances: all services without love, are as sacrifices without fire. Christ first inquired after Peter's love, before he urged him to labor; God will reward no services to our people, but what have been done in love. Observe, 3. The excellency and weightiness of the subject about which he was to write, it was concerning the *common salvation*; so called, not as if it were a salvation common to all persons, good and bad; but because common to all believers who have a joint title to it, and a common interest in it: the salvation which the gospel reveals, is a common salvation; it is common in regard of the purchaser of it; Christ our common Saviour; in regard of the price paid for it, the precious blood of Christ; in regard to the way and means by which it is obtained and secured, and that is *faith*: and in regard of the earnest of it, and longings after it, the Holy Spirit of God is common to all believers, and gives them a pledge and

earnest of it, and sets them a breathing after, and longing for this salvation. Observe, 4. The exhortation itself, "Earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints;" that is, for the sincere doctrine of the gospel delivered by Christ: *once delivered*; that is, once for all, so as never to be changed or altered more; no new rule of faith is evermore to be expected; and therefore the articles of faith added to the apostles' creed by the council of Trent, can be no articles of christian faith, because never delivered by Christ, or his apostles, and never known to many christians long after their decease. Learn, That it is the duty of christians at all times, but especially in the times of error and seduction, to contend earnestly for that pure and uncorrupted faith which is contained in the gospel.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we have a reason of the foregoing exhortation assigned, why we should contend so earnestly for the christian faith once delivered by Christ to his apostles, because there were crept, by little and little, such seducers into the church, as would endeavour to adulterate and corrupt it; "There are certain men crept in unawares." Note here, That corrupters and corruptions creep secretly and gradually into the church: and heretics do not broach all their errors and false doctrines at once; vain then and frivolous is the question which the church of Rome asks us, when did their innovations and false doctrines come first into the church? They crept in, and that unawares; it is enough for us that we find them there, though we assign not the time when, nor the manner how they did come in. Observe next, The character and description which our apostle gives of these seducers crept in amongst them. 1. He tells us they were men fore-ordained to condemnation; mark, not fore-ordained to seduction to sin, but to condemnation for sin; the word rendered *fore-ordained*, signifies before written, or before prophesied of, by Enoch and others, that they would by their great sins and impieties, fall into that condemnation which God hath ordained as a just reward to their transgressions; God never ordaineth or decreeth any man's sin, but he decreeth and foretelleth their condemnation for sin. 2. He styles them "wicked ungodly men; turning the grace of God into lasciviousness; pointing at the Nicolaitans, Gnostics, and other impure heretics, that sprang from Simon Magus, who made the doctrine of the free grace of God, discovered in the gospel, a cloak for their looseness and lasciviousness. Errors in doctrine are usually accompanied with corruption in manners, as being most suitable to man's corrupt vile nature, and will be sure never to want followers. 3. He charges them with *denying* the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ: that is, Jesus Christ our only Master, God and Lord, called by St. Peter, the *Lord that bought them*; lessening the dignity of his person, and invalidating what they could, the merit of his death and sufferings. Learn hence, 1. That Jesus Christ, the Master of the world, the Lord of his church, is truly God; he is called the great

God, and the mighty God, to show that he is not a God inferior to, but equal to the Father; and that by nature, not by office. Learn, 2. That it is an horrid impiety, to deny our Lord Jesus Christ, to deny him in either of his natures, or in any of his offices; to deny him in either opinion, or in practice, is a sin that carries a prodigious appearance with it: "They denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

5 I will, therefore, put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.

In this and the following verses, our apostle, to deter them from following the pernicious ways of these seducers, sets before them the several examples of God's judgments inflicted in former times upon persons guilty of such crimes, as these seducers were stigmatized for, and guilty of; he begins with the Israelites in the wilderness, as they perished through unbelief, after they were brought out of Egypt, so shall revolvers perish, notwithstanding their baptism, and fair beginnings. Learn hence, 1. That God's judgments inflicted on some, are, and ought to be, warnings unto all. 2. That God's ancient judgments were ordained to be our warnings and examples; his holiness is the same as ever, his justice the same, his hatred of sin the same, and his power to revenge it the same as ever; his judgments now may be more spiritual, but they are not less terrible. Learn, 3. That unbelief will as certainly bring destruction upon christians now, as it did upon the Israelites of old. Did God destroy them that believed not in his power then? No less will he destroy them that believe not his promise now.

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

The next example set before them, is that of the apostate angels, who, for their rebellion against God, were thrown down from heaven, and are reserved as so many prisoners in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, when their condition will be more miserable than now it is. Now, if God did not spare apostatizing angels, surely he will not spare apostatizing seducers. Note here, 1. The sin of the angels; they left their first state, namely, their state of holiness. 2. Their punishment; they left their own habitation, they departed from that place of happiness and glory which before they enjoyed: when they changed their nature, they changed their place: the presence of an holy God is no place for unholy persons. Note, 3. That the angels are kept in chains, and those chains are everlasting; the chain of God's eternal decree holds them; the chain of their own guilt holds them; the chain of utter despair eternally holds them. Note, 4. That the day of judgment will be a great day; and at that day, the punishment of fallen angels will be far greater than now it is: when heaven's joys are full, then heaven's torments will be full, but not before.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and

the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Another example of God's severity against sin and sinners, is Sodom and Gomorrha, Adma and Zeboim, who giving themselves up to the lusts of uncleanness, were in an extraordinary manner destroyed by fire from heaven, which was a forerunner of that eternal fire of hell, which they are to suffer to all eternity, and so may and ought to be a terrifying example, and timely warning to all persons, that they fall not into the like sins. Learn, 1. That the sin of uncleanness doth exceedingly displease and provoke God to punish above other sins, because it defiles both soul and body: it makes a sty of a temple; and because it is a sin usually accompanied with final impenitency, none that go unto her return, that is, very few: whoredom is a deep ditch, the abhorred of God do fall into it. Learn, 2. That the sin of uncleanness is remarkably followed with vengeance, even with eternal vengeance: God returns flames for flames, and revenges the fire of lust with the fire of hell.

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding these fore-mentioned examples of God's vengeance upon the unclean Sodomites, and others, yet these heretical seducers whom he calls dreamers, because they vented their own dreams and phantasies instead of God's truth, did defile themselves with their filthy practices, teaching that by their christian liberty they were freed from all civil subjection, speaking evil of those who were set in authority over them." Here observe, 1. That the doctrines which seducers bring, are not the truths of Christ, but their own dreams. Dreams they are in point of opinion, and dreams they will be found in point of expectation; they promise much, but perform nothing. 2. That dreams of error, or heretical principles, do dispose toward filthy and unclean practices. *Filthy dreamers defile the flesh.* Avoid error in judgment, if you would escape filthiness in conversation. 3. That lust loves not restraint, libertines despise dominion, sensuality makes men unruly: such are sons of Belial, they cast off the yoke. 4. That such as despise government, speak evil of governors; dignities lie open to the lash of the tongue; neither power nor innocence can protect from calumny and imputations, from slander and false accusation: "These filthy dreamers despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Our apostle in the preceding verse having charged seducers with contemptuous speaking against governors and government; in this verse he aggravates the impudence and impiety of it, by the carriage of Michael the archangel

towards the devil. This argument is taken from the greater to the less, and lies thus: "If Michael, an archangel, so excellent in nature, so high in office, contending with satan, an impure spirit, yet, used great modesty, without the least indecency of expression towards him, who and what are these that despise dominions, and dare speak evil of dignities? Hence observe, That it is our duty to learn this angelical lesson, namely, not to give railing or reviling language to the worst adversary in the best cause, because it proceeds from pride or passion, and because so contrary to the temper and design of christianity; much more is it our duty to watch against the sins of the tongue, with respect to our governors and superiors, remembering it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people."

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

A double crime is here charged upon these seducers by our apostle, name y, pride, in speaking evil of things they know not; and wickedness, in abusing the knowledge they had. 1. Their sin was great, in speaking evil of what they did not know, (they reviled dignities and magistrates, the usefulness of whom they knew not) and possibly condemned the mysteries of the christian faith which they understood not, understanding they called themselves Gnostics, and pretended to higher degrees, and larger measures of knowledge than other men. Learn, That truth is usually slandered by ignorant and conceited men; because men do not understand the things of God; therefore they do condemn them. 2. Their wickedness was great in abusing the knowledge that they had, and in acting contrary to it. What they knew naturally, or by the light of nature, to be sinful, in those things, as brute beasts, did they corrupt and defile themselves. Here note, 1. That where sin reigneth, it turneth man into a brute beast Psalm xlix. 12. Hence they are compared to dogs for filthiness, to swine for uncleanness, to wolves for cruelty; of the two it is worse to be like a beast, than to be a beast; the beast is what God has made it; but he that is like a beast, is what sin and the devil has made him. 2. That it is a sign of a man turned to a beast, to follow the lusts and passions of corrupt nature. "Like brute beasts they corrupt themselves." It is just with God to leave them to be led by sense, who will not be guided by grace, and to suffer them to fall into the ditch of beastly sensuality, who forget that they are men.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

Our apostle goes on in charging these seducers with several crimes; particularly with the malice and envy of Cain, with the sordid covetousness of Balaam, with the sedition and gainsaying of Core; they hate their brethren, and so are murderers, like Cain; they have adulterated the truth for bare gain, and so have followed the example of Balaam, "who loved the wages of unrighteousness;" and as Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, rose up against Moses and Aaron, so have they seditiously opposed both magistracy and ministry,

Learn hence, 1. That the practice of wicked men now, and from the beginning, is still the same. 2. That satan entices his slaves to divers sins, to the malice of Cain, to the covetousness of Balaam, to the sedition of Core. 3. That such as sin now may read their destruction in the destruction of those that sinned before them. "Woe unto them, they have gone in the way of Cain, and perished, &c."

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they* are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Our apostle having set forth these seducers in the foregoing verses, by sundry examples, he now comes to set them forth by several similitudes and resemblances. 1. He calls them spots in their love-feasts, (the infamy of their lives being a blemish and scandal to their christian assemblies) feeding without fear of offending either God or man. 2. He calls them clouds without water, promising rain, but yielding none; making a show of knowledge, but indeed having none, and they are driven (as clouds by the wind) from one vanity to another. 3. Trees they are, but like them, in autumn, which have neither leaves nor fruit; nay, trees twice dead, in sin, before conversion; and in respect of their apostasy, after their conversion, and so shall be plucked up by the roots. 4. They are like raging waves of the sea, turbulent and tumultuous, foaming out at their mouths the filthiness and impurity that boileth in their hearts. 5. Wandering stars, or teachers unstable, departing from the true faith once delivered to them; but for these illuminated and knowing teachers, "is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches*, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

The apostle having described the sin of the seducers in the former verses, declares the certainty of their destruction in the verses now before us; assuring us, that Enoch of old by a Spirit of prophecy, did foretel the sins of such persons, and their condemnation also at the general judgment,

when Christ shall come gloriously attended to execute judgment upon the ungodly in general, and on such as speak contumeliously on him and his in particular. Here note, 1. That the doctrine of the day of judgment is very ancient, foretold by the prophets from the beginning. Man was made an accountable creature, capable of rendering an account of his actions: and the sentence of death, denounced in paradise against him for his sins, did necessarily imply it; the drowning of the world, and burning of Sodom, were both types and forerunners of it; though there are atheists upon earth that do not believe a future judgment to come, there are none in hell; feeling and experience must teach some men that which the spirit, scripture, reason, and conscience could never learn them. *Enoch prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh.* Note, 2. How Enoch here prefixeth a note of incitement to his prophecy, *Behold the Lord cometh to Judgment*; implying, that great is our natural backwardness to believe and mind the coming of Christ to judgment; and intimating, that we should always realize the day of the Lord to ourselves, and represent it to our thoughts as certain, and near at hand. Note, 3. How royally attended Christ will come to judgment, *Behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his saints.* Christ will be attended only with holy ones at the last day; such as meet him now in purity, shall meet him then in peace. How cheerfully then may saints think of the last judgment, and observe the number of his attendants? Not a few saints, but ten thousand of them, Rev. v. 11. They are called a number which no man can number. This is a comfort against the paucity and small number of those that are now upright with God; in heaven we shall have company enough; God's family, when it comes together, will be very numerous, or rather innumerable, Heb. xii. 23. Observe, 4. The work of Christ at the day of judgment, namely, to convince and judge. Conscience shall then have an exact view of all that sinners did and said: sin will find them out, and testify against them at Christ's tribunal; and when conscience has convinced, Christ will condemn, and whom he has condemned, he will execute. Observe, 5. The persons whom Christ will convince and judge, *the ungodly.* The process of the last day lies chiefly, though not only, against the ungodly: these shall not stand in the judgment, because ungodliness doth chiefly provoke; not but that unrighteousness will then be condemned also. Rom. i. 18. and sinners sent to hell for neglecting the duties of the second table, no less than the first. Observe, 6. That not only the deeds of ungodly men, but their words, especially their *hard speeches* against God and his children, shall be brought into judgment. A wicked tongue is a rugged tongue; it speaks words sharper than swords; pray we for wisdom to make as good an use of the reproaching tongue of an enemy, as of the reproving tongue of a friend; that the sword of the tongue may let out the corruption that is in our hearts, and do us good against the will, and contrary to the intention, of our enemy.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Our apostle having asserted in the former verse, that

Christ will at the great day convince and judge all the ungodly; in this verse he declares that these seducers were of the number of the ungodly, whom Christ will certainly judge, because they were *murmurers, complainers*; discontented with, and always complaining of their lot, and present condition; because they had not as much as they desired, they murmured against God, as if they had nothing: walking after their own lusts, contrary to the restraint of nature, and the laws of God, *their mouths speaking great swelling words.* It has been the constant course of heretics to speak high, and talk big, like mountebanks, hoping thereby to set off, and put off the better their counterfeit and false ware; but he is no wise man, whom great swelling words will seduce from the ways of wisdom. Not the words of the speaker, but the weight of what is spoken, is to be minded; yet though they talked these swelling words to their inferiors, at the same time they could flatteringly admire the persons and actions of others from whom they expected any benefit or advantage; *having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.* Now, from the whole of this large character, which St. Jude here gives of these heretical seducers and false teachers, we learn, That miserable and most deplorable is the condition of the misled followers of seducing teachers; the seducer follows his lust, and the follower is led by the seducer. Here the blind leads the blind; God pity them both! When teachers offer themselves to us, we should consider who leads them, who are so officious to lead us, and follow them only as they follow Christ; no wise man will set his watch by the clock, but by the sun.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 *How* that they told you, there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts,

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Having largely described those seducers, our apostle now comes to exhort those to whom he wrote, to *beware* of them, assuring them, that the apostles of Christ, St. Paul, and particularly St. Peter, had expressly foretold of those wicked scoffers which would arise in the church in the last times; which mockers and scoffers, he shows were such as without any just cause separated themselves from the church's communion, pretending greatly to sanctify, but addicted to sensuality, and destitute of the Holy Spirit. Note here, 1. That the scripture speaks much of the sin and sinners that should be found in the latter times; we ought not therefore to be troubled at what is foretold, nor be unarmed when we are so often forewarned. It is a shame for them, who have oft heard and known the doctrines of the apostles, to be surprised by seducers. St. Jude expects that these Christians, who know what the apostles had delivered, should vigorously oppose all seducers and seduction. Learn, 2. That a causeless separation from a church, of which we are members, is culpable and sinful; a separation from corruptions, and a separation from them that are corrupt, are two distinct things; the former is always a duty, the latter not so. Learn, 3. That those that separate from the assemblies of

the faithful, are usually *sensual*, and have not the Spirit; they have not the Spirit either to guide them, or to quicken them, or to comfort them. "These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Our apostle having, in the former part of the chapter, warned the christians of the danger of seducers, he closes his epistle with directions and advice how they may be preserved from seduction, and what means they should use for their perseverance and establishment in the doctrine of Christ. First, he directs them to *build up themselves in their most holy faith*; that is, in the doctrine of faith contained in the gospel. Where note, 1. That the faith of christians is a most holy faith; holy in its principles, holy in its pattern, holy in its encouragements and rewards. 2. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour of every christian to build up himself, and others also, in the faith of the gospel: the best way for christians not to be losers of what they have, is to be laborers for what they want: progress in christianity is the best means to preserve us from apostasy. Secondly, He exhorts to prayer, *praying in the Holy Ghost*; that is, with holy reverence, with humble confidence, with fervent importunity, with those holy affections and desires which the Spirit of God excite in you: the concurrence of the Holy Spirit is necessary both to assistance and acceptance in prayer; it enables us to pray in faith and love, with sincerity and importunity; without the Spirit there is no acceptable praying, and without prayer vain is the pretence of the Spirit. Breathing is the first evidence of life. St. Paul was no sooner converted, but behold he prayed. Thirdly, He directs that they *keep themselves in the love of God*; no such way to keep ourselves from error, as to preserve ourselves in that love which God bears to us, and in that love we bear to him; take we care that there be no intermission of the acts of love, and no remission of the degrees of love, but that we be rooted and grounded in love, and then we are proof against seducers and false teachers. Fourthly, He directs them to look up to heaven, if they would be steady and steadfast in the faith here on earth. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Here Observe, That heaven, or eternal life, is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy it is called, because bestowed on the miserable, that could never merit or deserve it, and because it is the effect and fruit of free and special mercy, and because bestowed on the vessels of mercy, and because it is the perfection and consummation of all mercy; and it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he purchased it, he prepared it, he exhibits and gives it. Observe farther, That christians are to look for eternal life as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to believe it, to meditate upon it, to have ardent desires after it, and patiently to wait for it; "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life."

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire: hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

In these words our apostle directs them how to carry and behave themselves towards those who were seduced, in order to their recovery, namely, after a different manner. 1. He advises to christian lenity and gentleness, to compassion and tenderness towards some: *Of some have compassion.* Learn thence, That though reproofs are to be given to backsliders, yet must they be given in compassion, and with holy grief. Our words must have bowels in them, and proceed not from passion, but from pity. 2. For those that are more entangled, corrupted, and hardened in their errors, he advises that they endeavour to *save them with fear*: that is, terrify them with the fear of God's judgments and wrath, and by a sharp admonition recover them out of their errors, as Lot was snatched out of the fire of Sodom. There is a time when severity is not only useful, but absolutely necessary, yet necessity must be the mother of severity. Lenity must be first used; if that fails, severity must succeed.

—Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

By this the apostle means every thing that doth defile though in the least degree; he forbids all affinity or nearness to the errors and vices of these sinners, implying, That some sinners are so filthy and unclean, that there is no keeping company with them without defilement; and intimating, That christians, in their conversing with erroneous or vicious persons, whom they labor to recover, should take great care that they be not corrupted nor debauched by them, they being only to deal with them as physicians, not as companions; "Hating the garment spotted with the flesh."

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle shuts up his exhortation with prayer; having exhorted them to duty, he commends them to the divine grace, intimating, that the fruit of all must be expected from God, without whose blessing all exhortations and endeavours will nothing avail. Observe, 2. The person who is the object of prayer and praise, Christ, described by his power. 1. *He is able to keep us from falling*; that is, from apostasy: he speaks not of his absolute power, so Christ is able to keep us from all sin, but of such a power as is engaged by promise and office; all believers are Christ's charge, and he will preserve them from final destruction. 2. *He is able to present us faultless*; it is Christ's office to preserve his church until he presents it

spotless to the Father, *before the presence of his glory*; that is, at his glorious appearance, when he shall come to judge the world *with exceeding joy*, on both sides no doubt, both on Christ's part and ours. O sweet interview betwixt Christ and believers! He will joy to see us, as well as we rejoice to see him. Learn, That Christ will one day make a solemn presentation of his people unto God. 2. That when he doth present them, he will present them faultless. 3. That the day in which he does present them, will be a very glorious day in itself, and a very joyful day to all his people; when the impenitent world howl, they shall triumph.

—To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Our apostle shuts up his epistle (as is usual) with a doxology; where observe, 1. The person to whom the praise is given, to God, the wise God, the only wise God, so called because he is originally and independently wise; because he is infinitely and transcendently wise; all the wisdom of the wisest of men is nothing in opposition to his wisdom, nor in

comparison with it. Observe, 2. That Jesus Christ our Saviour is worthy to be accounted the only wise God, as he is God, he is called *the wisdom of the Father*; and in the book of the Proverbs he is represented under that title, and spoken of as a person, chap. viii. As he was a man, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were found in him; he received the habit of all created knowledge and wisdom, together with all other graces without measure. Observe, 3. As the person described to whom the praise is given, so the description of the praise which is given to this person, *Glory and majesty, dominion and power*; by which understand the greatness and eminent excellency of the divine nature, which results from his perfections, and whereby the divine nature is infinitely exalted above all other beings. Learn hence, That we ought to have such a sense of God's transcendent excellencies and perfections as may oblige us to ascribe all things that are honorable and glorious to him, therefore are so many words here used. Observe, 4. The duration, *now and ever*. Learn thence, That believers have such large and vast desires for the exaltation of God's glory, that they would have him glorified everlastingly, and without ceasing, not only in the present, but to eternal ages. To him be glory now and ever. Amen.

THE

REVELATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

The title of this book is the Revelation, so called, because it contains in general a discovery of such secrets, as no wisdom of man could have manifested or foreseen, and in particular reveals such divine things concerning the state of the church, which before lay hid in the purpose and counsel of God. Concerning this book, Observe, 1. The penman that wrote it, St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, (as it is believed) the Disciple whom Jesus loved; his hand held the pen, whilst the Spirit of God indited the mysterious matter of this book. Observe, 2. The time when, and the place where he received the commandment to write what he wrote; the place was in the Isle of Patmos, into which it is said that St. John was banished by the emperor Domitian, and there received and wrote this revelation, after he had, by a miraculous providence, escaped death at Rome, being there put into a caldron of burning oil. As to the time when he had his commandment to write, he tells us it was on the Lord's Day, chap. i. ver. 10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard a voice, saying, What thou seest write in a book. The more conscientious we are in observing our Lord's Day, and the more zealous and fervent in the religious duties of it, the more receptive we are of divine favors, and the better qualified for receiving discoveries from God; The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; that is, devoutly worship and perform their duty to him. Observe, 3. The persons to whom this epistle and prophecy

is written, namely, to all the servants of God in general, and to the seven churches of Asia in particular, to remain a perfect record for the use of the church to all succeeding ages, the state of the universal church-militant being herein laid open. Observe lastly, The authority of what is here written, it is the revelation of Christ Jesus, chap. xxii. I Jesus have sent my angel to testify these things unto the churches; that is, for the instruction and consolation of the church in all ages are these things written, ver. 7. And blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book; from whence we may infallibly gather, that it is the mind and will of God, that this book should be read by the church in all ages, and by all her members; for how can they keep the words of this prophecy, except they know them? How can they know them, except they read them, and study them! Add to this, that besides the prophetic part of this book, there is such a spirit of holiness breathing through it, the main articles of the christian faith so clearly and plainly held forth in it, and many religious and moral duties so strictly enjoined by it, that it is the unquestionable duty of the ministers of God to study this book with that modesty and sobriety which becomes them as inquirers, and likewise the people's duty to give themselves to the reading of it with fervent prayer, and simplicity of mind to be guided and directed by it as becomes learners.

CHAPTER I.

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

That is, "This revelation God the Father gave to Christ, his Son, as Mediator; and therewith a commission to impart it to his faithful servants, especially the ministers of his church, and particularly to St. John, who bare record in his gospel, and in his epistles, that Jesus Christ was the essential and eternal word of God, and also bare record of the testimony of Christ; that is, of his doctrine and miracles, of his death and sufferings, declaring all things that he saw, namely, in his visions, and as they were represented to him." Here note, 1. The favor granted to St. John, he had a vision or revelation of future things. Revelations from God were sometimes by vision, sometimes by voice, and sometimes by dreams; this revelation, which St. John had, was of a mixed nature, partly by vision, and partly by voice. Note, 2. The primary Author of this revelation, God the Father, the first person in the Trinity; he revealed it: *the revelation which God gave.* Note, 3. The order in which God gave forth this revelation; first, it is given to Christ, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him;" next unto the angel, then unto St. John, to reveal it to the church. Christ, as God, knew all things from eternity, but as a man and mediator he received his revelation from God the Father, and imparted it by the angel to his servant John; we see then that Christ in his state of exalt-

ation, continues to execute his prophetic office, by revealing to his servants the mind and will of God. Note, 4. The subject matter of the revelation, *Things which should shortly come to pass*; mark, not things which were already past, (then this book had been an history, and not a prophecy) but which should certainly and suddenly come to pass: that is, they should shortly begin to be accomplished, and to take effect, not that they should all be immediately performed, but in God's time; in respect of whose eternity, a thousand years are as but one day. Note lastly, The fidelity and great integrity of St. John, in making known to others all things that he saw; that is, he had by his writings told the churches what Christ by his angel told him, even all that he heard and saw in this vision, as St. Paul did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. (he doth not say he had declared the whole counsel of God, for who but God himself could declare that?) So St. John here "bare record of the whole word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw and heard."

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Observe here, The great encouragement which the Spirit of God gives to all christians to read and regard, to consider and meditate upon the things contained in this divine book, that is, the necessary parts of christianity, which are here mixed with darker passages; all must read, study, and practise these, that hope for blessedness; "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Hence note, That although the book of the Revelation be in itself a very abstruse and mysterious part of Holy Scripture, yet christians ought not to be debarred, much less to debar themselves from reading of it, and consulting with it; *blessed is he that*

readeth, that is, attentively, understandingly, and affectionately, and "blessed is he that keepeth the things that are written," that is, in his mind and memory, in his affection and practice, so as to adhere to the truth, whatever trials and temptations it may expose him to.

4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, *who* is the faithful Witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.---

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom St. John writes, and the particular churches which he does salute, namely, the seven churches of Asia, which were then the most famous and flourishing churches in the christian world, but now overrun with barbarism. Sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing churches and kingdoms. Observe, 2. The apostolical salutation given to these churches, *Grace be unto you and peace*; by grace understand the free favor and rich love of God, in pardoning, sanctifying, and saving; and by peace, the inward sense of that love, and all outward mercies and temporal blessings whatsoever. Observe, 3. The persons in whose name, or from whom this salutation is sent and given. 1. From God the Father, who is described by his eternity and immutability, *which is, which was, and which is to come*. 2. "From the seven spirits, which are before the throne;" that is, from the Holy Ghost, who is thus described in regard of the perfection and variety of his gracious operations; the Holy Spirit is called *seven*, because he is perfect in working; and he is said to be before the throne, because continually present with God, and ready to perform what is needful for the church of God. 3. From Jesus Christ, who is described according to the threefold office of a prophet, priest, and king; his being called *the true and faithful witness*, points out his prophetic office, that he is the great Prophet of his church, who reveals the will of the Father fully and faithfully to the sons of men: his being styled *the first-begotten of the dead*, points out his priestly office, and intimates that he died, that he rose again from the dead, and that he first arose, or was the first-begotten from the dead; that is, the first that arose from the dead by his own power, to a state of immortality, and never to die more; some indeed rose before him, but then they were raised by him, he was the first that ever raised himself; others were raised from the dead, as Lazarus, before Christ, but they died again; whereas Christ rose from the dead never to die more; he entered into a state of immortality after his resurrection, and lives forever to make intercession for us. Lastly, Christ is styled *the Prince of the kings of the earth*, which phrase shows both his influence upon them, (as giving laws and rules unto them) and their dependance upon him, who do receive their power and government, their protection and dominion, all from his hand.

—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

In the former verse our Saviour was considered in the excellency of his person, and with respect to what he is in himself; in this verse he is considered in the execution of his office, or with respect to what he is unto his church. And here observe, 1. His affection in general towards us, *he hath loved us*; our blessed Redeemer has given us full and ample demonstration of his great and wonderful love unto his church and people, and none doth so properly and passionately love the church as Christ himself; before conversion he loves his people with a love of commiseration and compassion; after conversion, he loves them with a love of complacency and delight. Observe, 2. The discovery and manifestation which Christ has made of this his love particularly towards us, "he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood;" that is, he hath given himself a sacrifice for our sins, and by the merit of his blood freed us from the guilt of sin in our justification, and also by the efficacy of that blood cleanseth us from the filth of sin in our sanctification; the blood of Christ has both a pacifying and purifying influence; it pacifies God's wrath, and purges the sinner's conscience; the blood of Christ merited the Spirit of God for our sanctification, and so reconciled us to God, as well as obtained pardon for us, in a way of meritorious satisfaction, and so reconciled God to us; "he washed us from our sins in his own blood." Where note, a great emphasis in the double word of propriety. 1. Our sins, that is, every one of our own sins, without any limitation or exception whatsoever, as to the number or heinous nature of them; the sin against the Holy Ghost is indeed excepted; but this proceeds from the incapacity of the sinner, not from the inefficacy or insufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for sin. 2. There is also an emphasis in the word of propriety with respect to Christ, when it is called *his own blood*: the Levitical priests sprinkled the people with blood, but it was not their *own blood*, but the blood of bulls and goats; but Christ spared not his *own blood*, and he did not barely sprinkle us with it, but washed us in it: it was not the blood of his finger, but the blood of his heart, his very life went with it; "he washed us from our sins in his own blood." Observe, 3. The consequent effect, and happy result of all this love of Christ towards us, and undertaking for us, "he hath made us kings and priests unto God." 1. Kings, not in a temporal but in a spiritual sense; they reign as kings over their unruly lusts and corruptions, over satan, over the world, over death the king of terrors, they begin their reign upon earth, without which it were impossible to perfect and complete it in heaven. 2. Priests, consecrating themselves a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God, and offering up, not expiatory, but gratulatory sacrifices unto him, namely, prayer and praise, supplication and thanksgiving. 1 Pet. ii. 5. "Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." Observe, 4. After this description of Christ, follows an ascription of all that glory and honor, dominion

and power, which is his due, and our duty to ascribe unto him; *To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.* Where note, That the same honor and glory, dominion and power, being here attributed and given to Christ, which Christ teaches us to ascribe and render unto God, Matth. vi. it is a sure testimony that Christ is God, and as such to be acknowledged and adored by us: *To him be glory, &c.*

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: Even so, Amen.

These words are a majestic description of our Saviour's coming to judgment; they are ushered in with a note of attention and admiration, *Behold!* which denotes also the truth and certainty of his appearance, and upbraids us likewise for our natural backwardness to believe, mind, and meditate upon the coming of Christ; we are so much guided and governed by sense; what we see nothing of, we believe little of; therefore St. John here begins with a note of incitement, in the word *Behold!* It follows, "he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him." This was fulfilled, 1. When Christ came by the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem, by taking vengeance on his murderers, when his crucifiers might discern that those heavy and direful judgments were inflicted on them for their crucifying Christ, and persecuting Christians. But, 2. It will be more eminently and universally fulfilled at the general day of judgment, when Christ will come riding upon the clouds, as in a triumphant chariot, and all human eyes shall then see him, his persecutors and despisers particularly, beholding him, but not all alike; such as pierced him, but repented, whose hearts were afterward pierced for their piercing of him, these at that day shall see Christ with astonishing joy, though they put him to bitter sorrow; the death of Christ has procured mercy for those whose cruelty did procure his death; but as for such as pierced him, but never repented, both such as pierced him in his person or in his members, they shall also see him to their sorrow, and shall wail, or take on heavily, because of him; that is, because they must be judged by him. Lord! how will the sight of a pierced Saviour then pierce their souls with sorrow, with vexation of heart, and anguish of spirit? To behold Christ with an eye of sense then, will be very grievous to them that do not behold him with an eye of faith now; see him they shall, they must; but alas, they had rather be covered with mountains, and hills falling upon them, than thus behold him! Observe farther, How St. John closes this description of Christ's second coming, with a pathetic option in his own and the church's behalf, in the last words of the verse, *Even so, Amen;* intimating that the saints, or church of God, do expect and believe that assuredly it will be so, and do also earnestly desire and pray that it may be so. Learn hence, That Christ will undoubtedly come to put an end to the sufferings of his afflicted church, and to punish his and their persecutors; with whose coming the saints are well pleased, and do earnestly desire and long for it; behold he cometh—*Even so, Amen.* Come, Lord Jesus.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning

and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Observe here, 1. That what was applied to God the Father, at the fourth verse, namely, that he *was, is, and is to come,* is here by Christ applied to himself at the eighth verse; "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come." Alpha is the first, Omega the last letter of the Greek alphabet, and as such they inclose all the rest, Christ calling himself the first and the last, that is, the first cause and the last end, (as nothing began before him, so nothing can out-last him) he does hereby discover his divinity to us, that he is co-essential and co-substantial with the Father, the same attributes being given to both; understand we then that this text plainly speaks the Godhead of Christ, against the Socinians, Christ calling himself *the first and the last,* takes to himself absolute perfection and power, sovereignty and dignity, and eternity and divinity: he is the first because he was before all beginning, and because from him all things had their beginning; he is also the last, because he shall continue for ever; without end, because he is the end of all things, and because when we have attained him, we are at the highest and last of our attainments; we rest, and have no more to seek when we have found Christ: for he brings us to the Father, in whom we have eternal rest through himself the Son; and the last title Christ assumes to himself, namely, *the Almighty,* bespeaks his divinity; he is God Almighty, able to accomplish his promises to his people, and to execute his threatenings on his enemies: and if the adversaries of our Saviour's Godhead, in the glass of this text, do not see his divinity, it is not because they cannot, but they will not see. "I am," says Christ, "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, which was, and is to come, the Almighty."

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day; and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: And, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

The preface being ended in the foregoing verses, here begins the body or visionary part of this book; the first vision is here before us, concerning the seven Asian churches,

In which vision we have observable, 1. The person that received it, he is described by his name John. *I John*; by his spiritual relation, *I John your Brother*; by his then present condition, your companion in tribulation; undergoing like sufferings with you; your companion in the kingdom of Christ; that is, in expecting of, and hoping for the same kingdom of heaven and glory which ye expect; and I am also your companion in patience, called the patience of Jesus Christ, because in his word he requires it, because by his Spirit he produces it, because in his own example he gave us a pattern of it; and perhaps principally, because the present state of the kingdom of Christ in this world calls for it. Observe, 2. The place where St. John received this vision, in the isle of Patmos, not far from the Asian churches, into which the emperor Domitian banished him. (Having, as is said, cast him first into a caldron of burning oil, out of which he miraculously escaped.) Ecclesiastical history says, St. John was very near an hundred years old, when he was, by that bloody emperor, banished into Patmos, for preaching the word of God, and for bearing testimony to this truth, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world. That the greatest honor which an apostle, an aged apostle, a beloved apostle, can be admitted to the participation of, is to suffer banishment and death for bearing a faithful testimony to Jesus Christ. Observe, 3. The time when St. John had this glorious vision of Christ, communion with him; and communications from him; it was upon the Lord's day; *I was in the spirit*, that is, in spiritual meditation, in a spiritual ecstasy, in a transporting rapture by the Spirit, under his more immediate illumination and powerful influence; on the Lord's day; namely, the first day of the week, so called, because Christ at his resurrection took possession of it for his own, and because the end of its institution was to commemorate Christ's resurrection, and because applied to his special worship and service, and as such religiously observed by the apostles, Acts ix. 7, and by the universal church, ever since the apostles' days. In that St. John, in a solitary island, kept the christian Sabbath, we learn, that the religious observation of the Lord's day is a duty incumbent upon all persons, and in all places. Learn, 2. How Christ owned his own day, and encouraged St. John in his religious and strict observation of it, by the influences of his Holy Spirit upon him, and by communicating extraordinary revelations to him: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice." Observe, 4. The vision and revelation itself, which began with his hearing a loud voice like a trumpet! that is, the voice of Christ, full of majesty and power, spake unto him, saying, *What thou seest*, that is, what thou shalt see and hear, *write in a book*, and send it to the seven churches. Here note, 1. That the book of the Revelation was written by Christ's own direction, therefore warranted to be of divine authority. Note, 2. That what Christ commanded St. John carefully to write; it becomes us heedfully to read; for though what St. John wrote and sent concerned the seven Asian churches at that time, and had a particular respect to their present state; yet all scripture is written for our learning, and we are to beg spiritual wisdom from God to make a right use and holy improvement of what is written.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks:

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

As if St. John had said, "I turned to see the person whose voice I heard speaking with me, and I beheld seven golden candlesticks, representing the seven Asian churches, and in the midst of those candlesticks I saw one in the shape of a man, which reminded me of Christ the Son of man, clothed in garments much like unto Aaron's the high priest, who was an illustrious type of Christ our great and merciful High Priest, who made an atonement for us on earth, and maketh now intercession for us in the highest heavens." Note here, 1. The comparison made between the churches of Christ and the golden candlesticks; they are called candlesticks in regard of the light which they hold forth; the candlestick doth not give light of itself, but holds it forth to others; it is the church's duty to keep within herself the pure word of God, and to keep herself pure from being besmeared with errors in doctrine, or vice in conversation. Churches, the holiest and purest of churches, are rather candlesticks than candles; Christ is the light, the word is the lamp, the church but the instrument to convey the light unto us. Again, the churches are golden candlesticks: Gold is the most precious of metals, the church is the most excellent of all societies; for it beautifies all societies whatsoever, that are members of the church of Christ. Note, 2. How Christ was seen by St. John walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, present in and with his churches; that is, St. John had in his vision, a very lively representation of Christ in his human nature; not that St. John now saw Christ in his manhood really, for that was then in heaven, but he had a resemblance of it in the vision. Note, 3. The description given of Christ, as walking in the midst of the gospel church. He is, 1. described by his attire, habited like Aaron the high priest, with a garment down to his feet, and girt with a golden girdle, to signify, that as Aaron was of the Old, so Christ is the high priest of the New Testament, presenting continually to his Father the memorials of his death, the merits of his sacrifice, and making intercession with the Father for our gracious acceptance with him. 2. He is next described by the parts and members of the body. His head and hair as white as snow and wool, signify his eternity and his purity, that he is the Ancient of days, even the Father of eternity, and perfectly innocent, pure, and holy; His eyes like flaming fire, denoting his piercing knowledge; that as head of his church

he espies out all her ways, words, and thoughts: "His feet like burning brass, and his voice like many waters;" which expressions represent the dread and terror of Christ towards the enemies of his church; and that vengeance he would execute upon his murderers, in particular, at the destruction of Jerusalem; and upon all the impenitent rejecters of his gospel grace, at the general judgment: then will they understand what they now will not believe, that it is a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." 3 He is next described by what he had in his right hand, namely, seven stars, representing the seven angels, bishops, and ministers of the seven churches. These are called stars, their office and duty being to enlighten the church, both by the light of life and doctrine; and as stars are seated above, so should their conversation be in heaven, and their afflictions not set upon the things below. Stars give direction, light, and influence to others; they were not made for themselves. Ministers must not chiefly seek their own, but others good. Stars are swift in their motion, and their motion is constantly in their own orb and sphere. Vain is the pretence of care and concern for other churches, whilst we neglect our own. Finally, ministers are stars, as in respect of their situation, and in respect of their constant and regular motion; so in respect of their continuance and duration. Stars are fixed in heaven, so are ministers in the church; Christ holds them in his hand, otherwise the world would soon have them under their feet. 4. He is described by a sharp two edged sword coming out of his mouth, denoting the piercing power of the word of God to conquer sin, convert sinners, and to condemn and slay the unconverted. Lastly, it is added, That "his countenance was as the sun that shineth in his strength;" that is, very glorious in itself, and very comforting and refreshing to those that are his members, his sincere disciples and followers. This part of the description of Christ sweetly follows the former: when his feet were as burning brass, to tread down and consume his enemies; his countenance was as the sun, to cheer and cherish, to comfort and refresh his friends.

17 And, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Observe here, 1. The effect which this glorious representation of Christ in this vision had upon St. John, he was astonished and amazed at it; and fell down at Christ's feet as one almost dead. Note from hence, That the holiest man on earth is not able to bear the presence of Christ here, nor able to stand before his gracious manifestation of himself, when he comes to reveal himself in mercy towards him. See Hab. iii. 15, 16. Lord, how unable then will the wicked be at the great day to stand before the manifestation of thy fury! if at this visionary representation of Christ, St. John trembled, and fell at his feet as dead, how unable will the impenitent world be to look him in the face at the great day, when he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty an-

gel, rendering vengeance to them that know not God? Observe, 2. The reasonable care of Christ for St. John's relief in this great exigency: "He laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not." Hereby Christ discovered both his readiness to help and his ability to help: the right hand is the supporting hand, the strengthening hand; Christ did not send an angel to comfort St. John, but laid his own hand upon him, to assure him both of safety and succour. Observe, 3. As what Christ did, so what he likewise said, for St. John's comfort and support under the burden of his fears; "Fear not, (says Christ,) for I am the first and the last; that is, I am an eternal being, without either beginning or end." Again, "I am he that liveth, and was dead." As if Christ had said, "Fear not death or dying, for I have overcome death by dying, conquered the king of terrors in his own territories; but behold, 'I am now alive for evermore,' for the benefit of my church, and to protect and defend my faithful servants." Nay, farther, to show that his life was not a bare subsistence, but clothed with power, Christ adds, "I have also the keys of hell and of death;" that is, a sovereign power over the whole invisible world, to let into heaven, and to lock into hell, as I please. The keys are an emblem of authority and power; the steward who has the keys of the house, commands the house. There are four keys which Christ keeps in his own hands: the key of the womb, the key of the clouds, the key of the earth, as of the granary of corn, and the key of the grave. When Christ says here, "I have the keys of hell, and of death," the meaning is, that he has a sovereign dominion over both worlds; over this in which we live, and over that into which we die, whether the one or the other part of it, heaven and hell both; for the words must not be understood with a debasing limitation, only respecting hell, as if Christ had only the keys of the bottomless pit: but the original word *Hades* signifies the invisible world, consisting of both heaven and hell; and he has a power over both, and also over death too, which is the common passage into both places. Learn hence, 1. If Christ has the power of death, and keep the key of the grave in his own hand, that men do not die at random, by accident and chance, but by determination and judgment: Christ by an authoritative act turns the key, and gives man his exit out of the world. Learn, 2. That Christ, who has the key of death, has also the key of *Hades*; the upper and lower *Hades*, heaven and hell; and such as go out of the world, go not out of being, but go into one of those two states and places. Learn, 3. How admirable, and yet how amiable, Christ should be in all our eyes, who hath these keys in his own hand, with such merciful intentions towards us; and how willingly should we die, when the keys of death are in so great, so kind a hand as his! O how happy is it when this power of our great Redeemer over death and the grave, and a placid resignation to his pleasure, do concur and meet together, not from stupidity, but trust in him that keeps the keys! Lord, when the key is turning, and thou art letting in souls into the invisible world, let thy servant depart in peace, and everlastingly see thy salvation.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars

which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: And the seven candlesticks, which thou sawest, are the seven churches.

This chapter concludes with a solemn charge given by our Saviour to St. John, to write and record the vision of the seven stars, and seven golden candlesticks, which he had newly seen; letting him into the mystery of both, by telling him, that the seven stars are seven angels; that is, signify seven angels, and the seven candlesticks are, that is, signify seven churches, and represent them. In like manner, when Christ says in the sacrament, *This is my body*; the meaning is, this bread signifies and represents my body. Here note, That the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers of the church, are called angels, because they are sent by God on his message, because they had the commission from him; and to signify that unspotted purity which should be found with them, both in life and doctrine: and they are represented by stars, to denote their dignity and duty, their usefulness and beneficialness, the swiftness and constancy of their motion, but especially in regard to their nature. A star is of the same nature with the heavens, celestial: not earthly, not elementary; ministers should be heavenly, holy, blameless, inoffensive; they should teach by tongue and hand, and instruct by lip and life. God grant, that in our hearts we may experimentally find the works of holiness, and in our lives express the power of holiness. *Amen.*

CHAPTER II.

This book of the Revelation being full of prophetic visions, St. John in the former chapter had a vision of our blessed Saviour, as appearing in priestly garments, chap. 1. 13. Wearing a garment down to his feet, in allusion to the priestly ephod, and the curious girdle under the lace. From whence we may comfortably collect, that Christ now in glory remains still his church's priest. And pursuant to that his priestly office he discovered then in heaven his great care for his church's good here on earth, by commanding St. John to write epistles to the seven Asian churches, commending, reproofing, directing, warning, threatening, and comforting them suitably to their respective conditions, and as their present case required. Quest. But seeing there were so many famous churches then in the world, as Rome, Corinth, Galatia, and others, why must St. John pass by them, and only write to those of Asia? Ans. Possibly because Patmos, where St. John was now in banishment, was nearer to these churches, and possibly because these churches were under his more immediate care and charge. For although the apostolical authority were universal over all the churches, yet the apostles did every one by mutual consent, assume such a part of the world as their most especial charge; and accordingly Asia the Less, with her churches, did fall under St. John's care, who therefore, at the command of Christ, writes, and sends the following epistles to them contained in this and the next chapter; in which he thus bespeaks them:

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Note here, 1. That the church of Ephesus, with the other six churches of Asia, were, at the time of St. John's writing, very flourishing churches, favored as much with the special presence and influence of Christ, as ever any churches were. Note, 2. That these churches are written to as a sort of types of all the Gentile churches unto the end of the world, and patterns also which the Gentile churches were to take warning by, Christ hereby declaring what all other churches, offending and declining in the same manner, might expect. Note, 3. That the first church St. John is commanded to write unto, is the church of Ephesus, and what is written is directed to the angel, the bishop, the president and chief minister in that church, to be communicated to all in the church, both ministers and people, as that which nearly concerned them all. Note, 4. That Christ, in the beginning of every epistle, doth notify himself by some one of those characters which he gave of himself in the former chapter, either as "the faithful and true witness, or, as the First: and the Last, or as having the seven stars in his hand." Thus here, "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand." Mark, He holdeth the stars in his hand, to show his tenderness; in his right hand, to show his power, supporting and directing them for the good of his people. It is added, that Christ "walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Which expression denotes Christ's gracious presence with them, his strict observation of them, his tender care over them, his protecting and defending of them, in doing their duty to him, his encouraging or reproofing, his rewarding or punishing, as there should be cause: "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Learn hence, 1. That the ministers of Christ are stars, yet but stars, they shine but with a borrowed light, with a light derived from the sun; they shine, but for a time, the day fastens when these stars shall disappear for ever. Learn, 2. These stars are in the right hand of Christ, in his power, and at his disposal; he appoints them their orbs, where they shall shine, and appoints them also their time for shining. Learn, 3. That the church is a candlestick, a golden candlestick. As a candlestick has no more light than what is put into it, and must be continually maintained by a new supply of oil, such is the state of the church; and as a candlestick is a moveable thing, remove the candlestick, and the light is removed with it; so when God removes the light of the gospel from a people, he unchurches them. Farther, The church is called a golden candlestick, because as gold is the purest of metals, and excels all other metals in preciousness; so God expects his church should differ as much from the world, as gold doth from common clay. Learn, 4. That there is a special gracious presence of Christ with his church in all her administrations; "He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." It denotes his presence with them, and this presence of his is an holy presence, and a joyful presence.

2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Observe here, 1. A general declaration which stands in the front of the several epistles, *I know thy works*, both thy inward and outward works, to observe and mark them, to punish or reward them, as the case requires. This proves the divinity of Christ, that he is truly and essentially God; he knows the hearts of men, which none but a God can know. Ver. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart." Observe, 2. The commendation which is here given of this church for her labors, in propagating the gospel, for her patience in bearing affliction and persecution for it, for the strictness of her discipline, that she did not bear with, nor tolerate and endure such persons as were either erroneous in judgment, or scandalous in practice; for her faithfulness in trying the authority of those who pretended to an immediate call from God to be apostles, but were found liars and false apostles; such were those two seducing heretics Ebion and Cerinthus, and their followers. Mark here, How our Lord Jesus Christ doth observe and approve, doth commend and praise, whatever is good in his church, and whatever is commendable and praiseworthy in the members of it; yet at the same time, when he commends them for what is good, he reproves them for what is evil and amiss; and accordingly, observe, 3. The reprehension given, ver. 4. "Nevertheless, I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." As if Christ had said, "I observe amongst you a great abatement of your former zeal and fervor; you have not that hearty love to me, and to one another, which you had at first, but verily you grow colder when you should grow better." Learn hence, 1. That where there is truth of grace there may yet be a sad decay and declining in grace. 2. That Christ takes notice of, and is displeased with, such decays and declining in grace, and severely checks and reproves his people for them: "I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

5 Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

We had Christ's commendation and reprehension of the church of Ephesus before, we have his admonition and exhortation now. The words before us, are partly monitor-

and partly minatory; minatory in the former part of the verse, "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent." Note here, That Christ did not surprisingly come upon this church at unawares; they were admonished before chastised, warned before laid waste; Christ doth premonish before he punishes. In the minatory part we have a great guilt and sin supposed, a great judgment for that guilt denounced, the unchurching of them that had committed it, and the means prescribed for the averting of that judgment; to wit, repentance. Learn hence, 1. That a people professing religion and godness may fall. 2. That fallen professors should and ought to remember from whence they are fallen. 3. That falling professors should be repenting professors, and do their first works. 4. That without repentance and reformation, God will certainly remove a people's candlestick, take away the gospel from them, as the severest judgment which he can inflict upon them; "Remember, repent, and do thy first works, else I will remove thy candlestick out of its place;" that is, such a tempest of persecution shall arise, as will shake your tottering candlestick out of its place. The universal church only has a promise of stability; any particular church may be unchurched finally.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

As if Christ had said, "Though thou art not what thou shouldest be, yet this thou hast commendable in thee, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, (who held community of wives, and eat things offered to idols) which impure sect I also hate for their licentious doctrine, and lewd practices, which tend to the ruin and base of human societies." Note here, 1. That it is not unlawful to call heretics by the name of their leaders; Nicolaitans are here, so called from one Nicholas, supposed to be the deacon mentioned Acts vi. who having a beautiful wife, exposed her as common to avoid the imputation of jealousy. Note, 2. That Christ hated all licentious doctrines, and loose practices, and so should we.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches;—

That is, "Let all that hear or read these words unto the churches, which the Holy Spirit has uttered, consider them, set their hearts to regard them as matters of great importance, and which nearly concern them." Observe, That this form of speech, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear*, Christ often used at the end of his parables, when he would stir up the people, to more than ordinary attention; and he uses it here in this, and the next chapter, at the end of every one of these epistles to the several churches.

—To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life; which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

As if Christ had said, "Let all such as fall away from their holy profession for fear of persecution, consider what they lose, even eternal life, which I will only give to such as persevere; for to him that overcometh trials and temptations, will I give a share of my merits, and thereby a title to eternal happiness, signified by the tree of life in paradise."

Note here, 1. It is not said, to him that striveth or resisteth, will I give the crown of life, but to him that *overcometh*. *Lazy wishes* are so far from saving men, that endeavouring, yea, striving against temptation, without conquering and overcoming, will not save. It is not enough that we resist, but we must conquer; not sufficient that we strive, but we must overcome; *To him that overcometh, &c.* Note, 2. From the promise that Christ makes of eternal life, *I will give*, a clear argument for Christ's being God, essentially God; how is it else that he assumes to himself a power of disposing eternal life; *I will give to eat of the tree of life*.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Here we have the second epistle which St. John wrote by the command of Christ to the church of Smyrna, a famous city in one of the provinces in Asia where Polycarp was bishop, and suffered martyrdom. Now, in this epistle we have these particulars considered. 1. The description which Christ is pleased here to give of himself, namely, *the first and the last, which was dead and is alive*, and the suitableness of this description, for the consolation of this church; which was now under great tribulation. It is as if Christ had said, "I am an eternal being, the first cause and last end; I was myself put to death, but I am alive again; therefore fear neither sufferings nor death, for I will assist and strengthen you, and if you lose your lives for my sake I will raise your bodies again to everlasting life." Observe, 2. The commendation given by Christ of his church at Smyrna, it is large and full; nay, Christ blameth nothing in this church; she kept her purity best, because always in affliction; not but there were failings undoubtedly in this church: but almighty God mercifully overlooked them. As in the case of Job, no mention is made of his impatience, though he showed much, but we are called upon to behold him as a pattern of patience. Observe next, The particulars of this church's commendation. I know, says Christ, that is, I approve, commend, and praise, *thy works*, and *thy tribulation*, and *poverty*; that is, thy labor and sufferings,

and worldly poverty, which thy profession of the gospel hath brought upon thee: but though thou art outwardly poor, yet art thou inwardly rich; rich in grace, rich in faith and patience, rich in meekness and humility; rich in courage and christian fortitude. And farther, I know also the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not; that is, I know the malicious reproaches and evil speeches of your enemies; cast upon you, partly by native Jews, who glory in circumcision and the law; and partly by false christians, professing faith in Christ, but not daring to own him, for fear of persecution. These belong to satan's synagogue, not to Christ's church. None are so bad as they who only profess and seem to be good. Observe farther, The encouragement which Christ gives this church to persevere in the faith, though they should suffer much sharper things than ever they yet suffered; fear none of the things you may be called forth to suffer; what though the devil by his instruments casts some of you into prison, and you suffer for a short time, be faithful unto your profession until the day of your death, and I shall reward you with a crown of life. Note here, 1. That satan by his instruments has been the cause of all those bitter and bloody persecutions which christianity in all ages hath undergone. Note, 2. That though satan's malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; he cannot do all the mischief he would, and he shall not do all he can: satan shall cast you into prison, but not into hell; and not all of you into prison neither but some only. Note, 3. How mercifully almighty God overrules the devil's rage and malice, making it subservient to his own glory, and the church's good, causing that which satan intended for destruction, to serve only for probation and trial. The devil's design by all those floods of wrath, which he pours out against the church, is, that she may be destroyed: but God's intent is only that she may be tried; even as the wise refiner, when he casts his gold into the furnace, designs the purifying of the metal, and only the consuming of the dross. Note, 4. That the sufferings of good men for the cause of christianity, though they may be sharp, yet shall they be but short; *Ye shall have tribulation ten days*; that is, for a short space of time. Note, 5. That a persevering faithfulness in the service of Christ in this life, is indispensably necessary to our obtaining the crown of life and immortality in the world to come: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Observe, lastly, The conclusion of this epistle to the church of Smyrna: this is partly hortatory: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The warnings of the Holy Spirit to the churches are recorded as of great concernment for all to mind; and partly promissory, *He that overcometh*; that is, conquereth the love of this world, and the love of life, when God calls him forth to suffer, he shall not be hurt of the second death; that is, he shall escape eternal misery, that living death, and that dying life, which will be the assured lot and portion of the wicked and ungodly world.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write: These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where satan's seat is: and

thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

In these verses is contained the third epistle, which St. John by direction had wrote and sent to the church at Pergamos, in which (as in the former) we have, 1. A description of Christ, as having a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth, denoting the word of God, and that piercing power which accompanies it to conquer the lusts and corruptions of men. As also, 2. A commendation of what was good and excelling in that church, *I know thy works*; that is, with a knowledge of intelligence and observation, as also with a knowledge of approbation and acceptance. I know thee to be good in bad places, and in the worst of times, though thou dwellest where satan's seat is; that is, where satan bears sway by idolatry and persecution, yet dost thou hold fast my name; that is, the doctrine of the gospel preached in my name, and by which I am made known to the world as a man is by his name; and hast not denied my faith, but openly professed it in a time of persecution, even then when blood and slaughter attended the professors and profession of it, namely, when Antipas was slain, (who probably was a bishop, or some minister in Pergamos of extraordinary piety; for upon such the storm of persecution generally falls) who died a faithful witness to the truth of my gospel; even then and there. I say, hadst thou the courage to profess my name, and bear witness to the truth. Mark here, what an honorable mention Christ makes of the services and sufferings of his people; nothing we either do or suffer for Christ, but it is recorded, and shall be remembered to our commendation and honor in this life, and to our consolation and happiness in the next. Yet note, farther,

The holy impartiality of our blessed Lord; at the same time, when he commends this church for what was commendable and praiseworthy, he reproves her for what was faulty or blameworthy: verse 14. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, and the Nicolaitans;" that is, the doctrine of the impure Gnostics, who teach men now to eat things offered to idols, and to commit fornication, even as Balaam of old, directed Balac to ensnare the Israelites, by committing fornication with the Moabitish women, and to eat of what they sacrificed unto idols then. Here observe, That it was not the being of those heretics and heresies among them that Christ blames them for, but the tolerating of these in their communion, who made light both of adultery and idolatry. They ought to have executed church-discipline upon them, and denounced the church-censures against them, as had been done by the church of Ephesus before them, that Christ might have said of them as he did of those, verse 6. "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate." Observe next, The counsel which Christ gives this church, *Repent*; that is, be humbled for this thy connivance at, and tolerating of this wicked sect, and damnable doctrine, and amend, or verily I will come quickly upon thee and them, in a way of judgment, and fight against them with a two-edged sword; that is, with my holy word convince, wound, and condemn them, &c. The want of zeal and severity against sin, and incorrigible sinners, is very displeasing to Christ, and provokes him to anger greatly. Observe, lastly, The conclusion and close of this epistolary letter, which is partly exhortatory, *He that hath ears let him hear*, and with his mind ponder and consider what the Spirit saith, by way of counsel and caution, unto the churches; and partly consolatory, *To him that overcometh will I give, &c.* Mark, He doth not say, to every one that fighteth: no, nor to every one that conquereth in one, two, or more particular acts of resistance; but to him that persevering conquers, and finally overcomes both tempter and temptations, both persecutors and persecutions, both false teachers and false doctrines; to them will I give the *hidden manna*, laid up, not in the earthly tabernacle, but the heavenly sanctuary; by which understand Christ himself, and the joys and consolations of the Holy Spirit, which are hidden from the world, and the peculiar portion of such as sincerely believe in him, and cheerfully suffer for him. It is added, "I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name;" that is, absolution and pardon of sin, together with the privilege of adoption; it being a custom anciently to give a white stone in token of absolution, and a black stone as a sign of condemnation, on which stones were written the names of the innocent and guilty; accordingly this new name signifies God's pardoned and adopted ones; the sweetness and comfort of which privilege no man knows, but he that is possessed of it: the happiness of God's sons both here and hereafter cannot be expressed; only they that are so, know what it is to be so; and whereas Christ says, *I will give the hidden manna, I will give the white stone, and the new name*, to them that overcome, surely it affords a good argument to evince and prove his divinity: who but a God can pardon sin, and sanctify and save sinners?

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a

flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

The next epistle is directed by Christ and written by St. John, to the church at Thyatira; in which epistle observe, 1. The name given to Christ: he is styled the Son of God; that is, by eternal generation, being the only-begotten of the Father, as well as begotten of the Father only; and partaker of the Father's essence, as well as of his likeness; he is here called the Son of God, as being a distinct person from the Father; yet is he the *first* and the *last*, which denotes his eternity; and who *is*, and who *was*, and is *to come*, the Almighty, which are essential attributes of the Godhead. Observe, 2. The description here given of Christ, *his eyes like flaming fire, and his feet like burning brass*; denoting thereby his piercing and discerning sight to see and observe his enemies, his fiery indignation, and his fierce wrath, ready to take hold of them, and his irresistible power and strength to vanquish and tread them under his feet. Observe, 3. The great and special commendation which Christ gives to this church: greatly she is commended for her charity to Christians in distress; for her service in ministering to them, and in comforting of them; for her faith and constant adherence to the profession of Christianity, and for her patience under persecutions for the gospel's sake; but her special and peculiar commendation was this that *her last works were more than her first*; that is, her last works were better, did exceed and excel the first: Ephesus was best at first, and worst at last; but Thyatira's last works were best. It is a blessed thing when Christians grow in goodness, in-

crease in faith and holiness, when their last days are their best days, their last works, and their last fruit, their best, their fairest fruit. Observe, 4. The reprehension follows the commendation; as good as Thyatira was, she needed to be better. She was remiss and negligent in her duty of re-proving, censoring, excommunicating vile seducers, the Gnostic and Nicolaitans, the disciples of Simon Magus, and his lewd Helena, as some think compared to Jezebel, because she enticed Ahab to worship Baal, as this woman (whosoever she was) calling herself a prophetess, and teaching the lawfulness of fornication, and eating things offered to idols. Some observe, That there was scarce any heresy broached, but it had some woman or other for the propagator and promoter of it, who took upon them the name of prophetesses. Simon Magus had his Helena; Montanus had his Priscilla and Maximilla; Carpocrates his Macellina. Concerning this person it is affirmed, that *God gave her space to repent, but she repented not*. Learn hence, That great is the sin, folly, and danger of deferring and putting off the duty of repentance, when God gives us time and space sufficient to perform it. 1. Great is the sin, because it is a mocking of God's patience, and undervaluing of his service, a contempt of his authority, a presuming on his goodness, a defiance of his displeasure. 2. Great is the folly, as well as the sin of it, because we put it off to the most improper and unfitting season, and because we hereby make the work more hard and difficult, in what season soever we set about it; and the longer we delay our repentance, the more work shall we make for repentance. 3. As great is the danger is either the sin or folly, because it puts a person upon a mighty hazard, it runs a desperate venture, not knowing whether he shall live an hour longer; and because we forfeit by our delays that special grace, without the assistance whereof we can never repent. Observe, 4. How severely God threatens Jezebel here, and in her all sinners, to whom he gives space for repentance, but it is not improved for that end; I will cast her into a bed of tribulation and torment, instead of her bed of lust and uncleanness, unless she repent. Behold here how great and immeasurable the patience of God is towards the greatest, the vilest, and the worst of sinners, they have space for repentance, they have invitations to repent, they have judgments threatening to prevent their final impenitence; but if they prove incorrigible and un-reclaimable, nothing is to be expected but approaching ruin; *I will kill her children with death*; that is, such as are seduced by her shall suffer with her, if judgments threatened be not by repentance prevented. Observe, lastly, The end and design of Christ in bringing upon vile sinners these exemplary punishments, namely, to declare his omniscience, power and justice. *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts*; that is, all the churches in and about Thyatira, says Christ, shall know, that I not only observe outward acts, but take notice of the secret counsels, motions, and designs of men's hearts, and will judge every man according to his works: a full and clear text to prove the divinity of Christ: he that searcheth men's hearts, and renders to all men according to their works, is God: but Christ doth both, and therefore is essentially and truly God.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, (as many as have not

this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden:

25 But that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 (And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers:) even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning-star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Here Christ returns in his counsel and charge given to the church at Thyatira: *unto you I say*: that is, to you the angel, the governors and pastors, and to all the members of the church; I say unto you all who have not owned nor entertained these doctrines of the Gnostics, who proudly call their filthy opinions profound mysteries and depths of knowledge, though they are indeed the depths of satan, his policies and devices; as if Christ had said, "These vile seducers call their opinions depths, and so they are, but depths of satan; that is, such depths as satan has brought out of hell; they are the whisperings and hissings of the old serpent, not the inspirations of the holy God; to you I say, that I will not impose or put upon you any new doctrine, but charge you to hold fast the old, that apostolic doctrine, which you have received; persevere therein till I come to relieve you, and to release you from your persecutions, which will soon be at an end: *hold fast till I come*." Observe farther, How our Saviour concludes this epistle to the church of Thyatira, as he did the former, with a consolatory promise to such as overcome temptations, persecutions, all, and all manner of opposition in their christian conversation, and faithfully persevere in well-doing to the end; to him, says Christ, *will I give power over the nations*; that is, power with me, and in subordination to me, to judge the world, wicked angels, and wicked men, at the great day; then shall you rule them with a "rod of iron, and dash them to shivers like a potter's vessel, even as I received of my Father;" As if Christ had said, "I have received power, as Mediator, from my Father, effectually to subdue and conquer all mine and your enemies, and I will make you partakers of it in some measure, you shall exercise an irresistible power over them, by consenting to, by approving and applauding of that righteous judgment, which I shall denounce against them, and execute and inflict upon them. Learn, That believers shall sit as assessors with Christ in judgment, and approve the equity of his proceedings, against the finally impenitent then, though never so near and dear unto them now. Observe, lastly, The full and final reward which Christ promises to him that finally per-

severeth and manfully overcometh, *I will give him the morning star*: that is, myself and Spirit to comfort him, and the light of glory to shine upon him to all eternity. Note, Christ is called a Star, because he enlightens all with the light of natural knowledge, and his church with divine illumination; and the *Morning-star*, peradventure with respect to his incarnation, because as that rises not at the beginning of the night, or at the middle of it, but towards morning; so Christ came not in the beginning or middle of the dark time under the law, but in the last age of the world, in which he has shined forth to the joy and comfort of all nations.

CHAPTER III.

AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write, These things saith he that had the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

This chapter begins with the fifth epistle, which Christ wrote and directed to the church of Sardis. In which observe, 1. The glorious description given of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, that he *has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars*: that is, according to some, he hath the holy Spirit of God proceeding from him as from the Father; and because he had power to send the Holy Ghost, together with the Father, he is therefore said to have the seven Spirits of God; so the Holy Ghost is called, because of the perfection and variety of his gifts and graces, influences and operations. Others by the seven Spirits understand created angels; and the seven spirits being joined with seven stars, intimate, according to these, that Christ is the Lord of angels and ministers, he upholds his ministers, and has angels always at hand to defend his members: Observe, 2. This church's partial opinion of herself; in her own and others esteem, she was alive: thou hast a repute for an excellent church, thy profession causes many to think and speak well of thee; *thou hast a name that thou livest*. Observe, 3. Christ's impartial judgment concerning her, as one that knew her better than either others did, or herself could know her; thou sayest thou art thus and thus, alive and lively, but alas! thou art no better than dead, thou art

dead or dying, thyself and others are deceived concerning thee. Learn hence, 1. That it is possible for a professing people to be alive in their own and others esteem, and yet to be dead or dying in God's account; at the same time that they make a splendid and glorious profession of religion, they may be under the veign and power of hypocrisy. Learn hence, 2. That no religious pretences, no fair shows can possibly hide a person's or a people's hypocrisy from God's eyes; thou sayest that thou art thus, but I know thee better than others do, or thou canst know thyself; thou hast a name to live, but thou art dead. Observe, 4. The counsel given by Christ to this languid and languishing church, 1. To be watchful; to shake off her drowsiness and formality; no reformation can be expected, if due consideration, watchfulness, and care, be not exorcised. 2. To strengthen the things that are ready to die; that is, blow up every spark of grace which lodges under the ashes of much corruption, and keeps it from going quite out. Spirituals are to be succoured and strengthened, if once they grow languishing and dying, lest they grow quite dead. 3. To remember what they had received and heard from Christ's apostles and ministers, to hold fast, the truths received, and to repent of what is evil, and to reform what has been done amiss: intimating, that it is the duty of christians to remember those truths which they have heard and received: and also to hold fast what they have heard and received; and that renewed repentance is the duty of christians as well as initial repentance. Observe, 5. The complaint which Christ brings in against this church of Sardis, *I have not found thy works perfect before God*; not full, says the original; that is, not filled up with that sincerity and zeal which God requires: a man may be full of good works, and yet his works not be full; a man may be full of prayer, pray much, pray often, and yet his prayer not full, but vain and empty; sincerity is the fulness or filling up of all duties; it is not common frailty, but the want of sincerity and soundness, zeal, and seriousness, which Christ complains of. Observe, 6. The danger threatened to security and slothfulness; *If thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief*; that is, "I will surprise thee with my judgments in the midst of thy security, as a thief does persons when they are asleep, and least expect him; the expression plainly intimates, both the suddenness of the judgment, and the severity of the judgment threatened.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

Note here, That though the greater part in Sardis were dead or dying, that is, declining and decaying, yet here were some that kept their innocency, and preserved themselves from error and false worship, from erroneous principles and debauched practices. Note farther, That these few which keep themselves pure above the rest, are not commanded to separate from the rest. Doctrines crying up purity to the prejudices of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity as well as purity. Note also, The reward promised to such as kept themselves in Sardis pure both from error and vice; *they shall walk with Christ in white*, like persons of dignity and honor, like kings and conquerors, who

of old wore white garments; they shall have the reward of their innocency and uprightness, for they are worthy of it, according to the law of grace, which promiseth it to them; they have walked worthily, with a worthiness of meetness, not with a worthiness of merit; they are therefore meet receivers, though not meritorious purchasers of this reward.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Observe, Christ doth not say, he that conqureth, but he that vanquisheth; not he that conquereth once or twice, in spiritual combat, but he that overcomes at last the temptations and persecutions from without, the lusts and corruptions from within, he shall be clothed with white raiment; that is, with robes of glory, as the reward of his innocency and virtue, and as a mark of dignity and honor; and farther, *I will not blot his name out of the book of life*; that is, they shall be enrolled in it, and certainly saved, and I will present them to my Father yea, I will publicly own them, and confess them before God, angels, and men. Lord! what an honor is this, to know thy people by name, and to call them by name before thy throne, and there publicly to acknowledge them, and proclaim the good done by them! Oh let it be our care to get first the white garment of grace on earth, and then we shall not miss of the white robes of glory in heaven.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

These words are the same exhortatory conclusion which we find added by Christ to all the foregoing epistles; and plainly signify thus much, that all persons should look upon themselves as concerned in these several messages which the Spirit of Christ sends unto the churches; hence it is so oft repeated both in the former chapter and in this chapter, because it is of such universal use, and so nearly concerns us all.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write, These things saith he that is holy; he that is true; he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth:

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie: be-

hold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Here we have the sixth epistle indited by Christ, written and sent by St. John to the church of Philadelphia, which name signifies *brotherly love*, and we may reasonably suppose that grace of love, unity and concord, was eminently found with and amongst the members of this church, and had a mighty influence upon them in the practice of universal godliness, in as much as we find not this church blamed by Christ for any thing; nor that she was wholly faultless, and altogether unblameable, but being free from those gross miscarriages which were in other christians, and abounding with love to Christ, and one towards another. Christ graciously passes by and overlooks her failings and infirmities, and only proclaims her virtues and good works. Sincerity and love, though they do not blind Christ's eye, that he cannot see sin in his people, yet it causes him to look upon their failings with a pitiful and compassionate eye. Thus Philadelphia is said to be a mean city, not far from Sardis, yet here Christ had a very eminent church, not faulted for any thing; it is not the grandeur, but graciousness of a people, that renders the place renowned: in this epistle to the Philadelphians, we have these particulars observable, 1. A lusty description of Christ, by whose authority it was written, he is *holy and true*, holy in himself essentially, holy with respect to us communicatively, the author, approver, and dispenser of all holiness, and *true*, that is, a lover and approver of truth. This title assures the church of the truth of all his predictions, promises, and threatenings; these two titles, *Holy*, and *true*, are generally ascribed to God in the Old Testament; these Christ, in the New Testament, often attributes to himself, which he had never done, had he not been truly and really God. The other part of the description of Christ follows, *that hath the key of David*; that is, of the church, of which David was a type; by the *key* power is denoted: Christ, as Mediator, has an absolute power over the church, being Lord and head of it, and has committed a ministerial power of the keys to the governors and pastors of it, and having this key of the church in his own hand, by virtue of it "he opens and none can shut; and shutteth and none can open;" that is, he can open, when he will, the door of success to his faithful ministers, by opening the hearts of his people through the power of converting grace, and no man can shut that door, which Christ will thus open; and again, when he shuts the finally impenitent out of the church and out of heaven, no man can open and bring them in against his will; "he openeth and can shut, he shutteth and none can open." Observe, 2. The special favor which Christ indulged to this church, namely, the favor of success in her gospel-administrations; "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." Under the metaphor of *an open door*, the success and progress of the gospel in the preaching and dispensation of it, is shadowed forth; it is a special favor from God when he opens a door of advantages to us to do good, the least good, either by convincing and converting sinners, or by edifying, strengthening and comforting saints, and when God is pleased to open such a door, none shall shut it. Observe, 3. The commendation given by Christ, of this church, *thou hast a little strength*; a little spiritual and inward strength, and but a few

external and outward helps and advantages, *yet hast thou kept my word*, my doctrine of faith, and my precepts for holy walking; these hast thou kept pure, and hast not denied my name, but adhered constantly to the profession of me and my gospel, notwithstanding all the temptations thou hast met with, by sufferings and reproaches. Note here, How Christ took notice of that little measure of strength which this church had, and accepted it; weak grace, if sincere, shall always find acceptance with Christ; thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word. Observe, 4. The gracious promises made by Christ unto this church, that her enemies should submit themselves unto her, and worship before her feet; *behold*, says Christ, *I will make them of the synagogue of satan*, which falsely call themselves Jews; I will make them, namely, by the power of my grace, to come and worship before thy feet; they shall reverence thee, and pay a civil respect to thee, and shall know that I have loved thee. Learn hence, That the submission, which the enemies of the church shall be forced to make unto her, by the power of Christ, is great and wonderful.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. And he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is New Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Still our blessed Saviour proceeds with promises and encouragements to this church, *because thou hast kept the word of my patience*. Here note, That the doctrine of the gospel is called the word of Christ's patience, partly because it teaches patience in persecuting times, and partly because it is a doctrine, which cannot firmly be adhered to without patience, *thou hast kept the word of my patience*. To keep this word of Christ's patience, implies not only the keeping his doctrine pure and uncorrupted from error, but also the observing and practising all the duties of a good life. And note, The reward promised to this church for the performing of this duty, *because thou hast kept—I will keep thee*; Christ will not be behind-hand in rewarding our obedience, no, not in this life, I will (here) "keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." Here note, 1. That a time of affliction, much more of persecution in a time of temptation, because an afflicted and

persecuted state hath many circumstances attending it, by which all are tried, and some ensnared. Note, 2 That a time of trial and temptation will come, most certainly come, sooner or later, upon all persons that dwell upon the earth, upon sinners as well as saints, upon hypocrites as well as sincere christians; which trials will infallibly discover the faith and constancy of the one, the corruption and apostasy of the other; "because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation."

11 Behold, I come quickly: Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Observe here, Notwithstanding this church's constancy, yet Christ exhorts her to steadfastness, *hold fast*; the steadiest and most steadfast christians have need to be often cautioned and counselled against backsliding. Observe also, The encouragements which Christ gives his church to hold fast her innocency, fidelity, and patience; the first is drawn from the shortness of her sufferings, by reason of Christ's sudden coming, *behold, I come quickly*; that is, to deliver my faithful people, and to destroy their enemies; the second is drawn from the hazard which they run of losing the crown, for want of an unfainting perseverance, *hold fast that no man take thy crown*. Where note, That only the persevering christian shall be crowned, and that each persevering christian shall have his own crown; there are probably differences of reward in heaven, as well as degrees of misery in hell; for quality the glory will be the same, they shall shine as the sun, for degree it will likely be differing as much as one star differs from another in glory; *let no man take thy crown*.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, &c.

In this verse Christ promises a threefold reward to them that finally overcome all the temptations and trials of this life. 1. They shall be *pillars* in God's temple, that is, honorable and glorious members of the triumphant glorified church, and shall have a fixed happiness therein; possibly the Holy Ghost here alludes to the pillars in Solomon's temple, which were very beautiful. 2. *They shall go no more out*; the pillars in Solomon's porch were removed and carried away by the Chaldeans, but these pillars shall be perpetual, their glorious state shall be a fixed unchangeable state; when all the pillars of the earth shall tremble, these pillars in the temple of heaven shall remain immovable to eternal ages. 3. As in pillars erected by men, their names were written and engraved, in like manner does Christ here promise the inscription of a threefold name upon these pillars, the name of God, the name of the city of God, and his new name. *The name of God* signifies the person to be an adopted child of God; *the name of the city of God*, declares such a person to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem, which is said to come down out of heaven, that is, the knowledge of it comes down to us from God, otherwise we had never known it, nor could ever have conceived it; and Christ's new name, is that of the glorious Redeemer, and signifies him that overcometh shall be honored as one of Christ's redeemed ones; the whole name put together, to wit, the name of God, the name of the city of God, and the new

name, signifies an adopted son of God, and heir of the New Jerusalem, and a living member of Christ the glorified Redeemer; thus shall it be done to them whom Christ delighteth to honor in the New Jerusalem, above shall they spend an eternity in the rapturous and ravishing admiration of that love which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bestowed upon them, in making them first the adopted, and now the glorified sons of God.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This is again the close and conclusion of this as it was before of all the epistles, in which Christ calls upon all persons to hear and consider what he saith by his Spirit to his church, and to lay it deeply to heart for their instruction and admonition. The counsel which is given by Christ to one particular church, he requires and expects should be applied to all, and improved by all.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot: I will spue thee out of my mouth.

This epistle to the Laodiceans is the seventh and last epistle which Christ commanded St. John at this time to write; most of the churches were found faulty before, but none like this here. Formality and hypocrisy, coldness and indifference, in religion, had so far prevailed in this church, that we find nothing commended in them, nothing of good spoken of them, and none of them exempted from the general charge brought in against them for that lukewarmness and hypocrisy. In this epistle now before us, Observe, 1. A description of Christ in his deservedly glorious titles, thus saith the *Amen, the faithful and true witness*, that is, he that is verity and truth itself, both in his promises and in his threatenings, who is holy, and cannot lie; righteous and cannot deceive; wise, and can never be deceived; therefore Christ takes upon him this name here of the faithful and true witness, to awaken these drowsy hypocrites, to see and consider that he knows their state and condition, and will testify and witness against them. There is no such effectual remedy against hypocrisy, lukewarmness, and indifference, in the matters of religion, as a firm belief of Christ's omniscieny and veracity. The other title given to Christ, is *the beginning of the creation of God*; that is, the beginner of the creation of God, the original and first cause, by which all the creatures of God had their beginning. Christ is not only *principium principiatum*, but *principium principians*; not the passive beginning, or he that first created, but the active beginning, or he by whom the creation was begun, both the old and new creation. Now, Christ takes upon him this title to encourage the Laodiceans to

come unto him (according to the invitation given, verse 18.) to recover them from their formality, seeing he is omnipotent, and can give a being and beginning to grace in the new creation, as he did to nature in the old and first creation. Observe, 2. The reproof here given to this church of Laodicea, *I know thou art neither hot nor cold*, thou art not for open heresy or infidelity, but likest well a profession of christianity; you receive the gospel and so are not quite cold, but you want zeal to suffer any thing for it, and so are not at all hot; I see nothing in thee but a lukewarm indifferency, for which I disown thee, nay, disdain thee. Learn hence, 1. That Christ loaths lukewarm persons, who profess christianity with reserves for worldly safety. These Laodiceans were neither enemies to Christ, nor true friends, but served God and gain, Christ and the world by turns as occasion served. Learn, 2. That though God abominates lukewarmness and want of zeal, yet he will not disown those who have any spark of true zeal, though defective, and culpably remiss, he will not quench smouldering flax, but blow it up into a holy flame; but all that have not so much zeal as to prefer Christ before the world, shall be accounted his enemies, and disowned by him.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

Observe here, 1. This church's partial opinion of herself, her vanity and vain-glorious ostentation, accompanied with self-esteem, *she said she had need of nothing*. Observe, 2. That this boasting and vain-glorious ostentation did very probably spring from, and was occasioned by, this church's worldly prosperity; *thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods*. We are apt to mistake the warm sun for God's blessing, and to apprehend when we are great, that we are gracious; and because rich in goods, conclude ourselves rich in grace: but alas! God lifts up the light of his common providence upon thousands whom he does not lift up the light of his reconciled countenance upon. Observe, 3. Christ's impartial judgment concerning this church of Laodicea. *Thou sayest thou art rich, and needest nothing*, but I say, *thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. Behold here, how some have little or no grace who yet conceit they have much grace; as some reckon their temporal, so there are others that value their spiritual estate, at many thousands beyond what it really is, and when upon a just balance of account, they are worth nothing. Ah miserable souls! empty and guilty, poor and penniless in spirituals, wanting every thing, but especially a sight and sense of their poverty and wants. Observe, 4. The

counsel given by Christ to this church, very suitable to her condition; what pinches more than poverty? Here is gold to enrich us. What shames us more than nakedness? Here is a promise of raiment to clothe and cover us. What afflicts and grieves us more than blindness? Here is eye-salve to anoint us. But observe the order of the words, 1. Christ says not, *I command thee*, but *I counsel thee*. O infinite condescension! the Lord Jesus does not always command like a king, but sometimes counsels like a friend; he counsels us by his spirit, he counsels us by his ministers, he counsels us by our own consciences. 3. Christ's counsel is to *buy*; that is, earnestly to desire, and sincerely to endeavour, the procuring such spiritual blessings as we want; we buy with our prayers, our tears, our endeavours. 3. The blessings offered, *tried gold*, that will bear the touchstone, that faith and holiness which will give thee boldness in judgment. White raiment, or the merits of the Mediator, which covers our shame and nakedness out of the sight of God. And eye-salve, or the grace of spiritual illumination, whereby we see the want and worth of these spiritual blessings.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.

Here Christ lets the Laodiceans understand, that although he had been sharp with them, in reproving them for their formality and lukewarmness, yet it was upon a merciful design towards them; it proceeded from a principle of love in him, for *as many as I love*, says Christ, *I rebuke and chasten*. Christ does not therefore hate his children because he corrects them, but he therefore corrects them because he loves them. Nay the favorite whom God loved too well to strike; nay, commonly there go the severest exercises, where there has been the greatest love. Let not then God's chastenings of us abate our love to him; necessity compels God to correct; nothing is done by rods but what could not be effected without them: *Be zealous, therefore, and repent*; as if Christ had said, O Laodicea, lay aside thy lukewarm indifferency, and be fervent in my service; repent and amend your ways, if you would escape your chastenings and rebukes, for I had much rather give you the kisses of my lips than the blows of my hand; if then you love not correction, prevent it by zeal and reformation.

20 Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

These words are very expressive of the tender love and gracious condescension of Christ towards poor sinners, full of heavenly rhetoric, to win and gain their hearts unto himself. Here observe, That man's heart is Christ's door, that this door of the heart is naturally shut, yea, locked and barred against Christ by ignorance and infidelity; that notwithstanding this, Christ knocks graciously at the door of men's hearts by his word, by his rod, by his Spirit; knocking is a vehement motion, a reiterated motion, we knocked again and again; a gradual motion, first more gently, then loudly; and it is a finite motion, men will not always continue knocking, but if none answer, they turn their

backs and go their way. All the knocks of Christ will cease and end, his spirit will not always strive. Farther observe, Christ does not only knock, but stands knocking, it denotes the assiduity of Christ in waiting upon sinners, and his patience in knocking; standing is a waiting posture, it denotes an earnest desire and patient expectation. Observe, Though Christ knocks at the door of men's heart, he doth not break it open, he doth not offer violence to men's wills, and save them against their wills, but the Holy Spirit inclines them to hear Christ's voice, and enables them to open the door to him, causing them to approve of and consent to the offer and call of Christ. Observe, That the door is no sooner open, but Christ comes in and sups with the sinner; his *coming* in denotes our union to him; his *supping*, our communion with him, imperfect on earth; complete in heaven: there is a mutual, sweet, and intimate communion between Christ and believers here on earth; there will be a perfect, complete, and uninterrupted communion with him in heaven, when they shall ever be with the Lord.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Here our Saviour concludes this epistle, as he did the former, with a promise to the persevering christian, to him that *overcometh*, namely, all the trials and temptations of this life, and keeps his faith, love, and obedience entire to the end, *I will grant*, not in a way of merit, but of free gift and grace, to sit down with me in my throne, namely, to partake of the same power and glory, and kingdom, that I as Mediator do now partake of. Where observe, Christ here distinguishes between his own throne and his Father's; the former seems to be his mediatorial, the latter his essential, throne; and he plainly tells us, that as he obtained his glory by overcoming satan and the world, so must we, to him that *overcometh will I grant—even as I also overcame*; the way to heaven for Christ and all his members is the same; as he conquered and finally overcame on earth before he was crowned in heaven, so must they.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Thus Christ shuts up this, as he did all the preceding epistles before, with a repeated exhortation to all christians to the end of the world, to hear, read, attend unto, and observe all the cautions and warnings, all the reproofs and counsels, all the promises and threatenings, contained in this and the other epistles, as matters that do greatly concern all christians to understand and know, *Let him that hath an ear hear*.

CHAPTER IV.

In the foregoing chapters we had St. John's first vision from Christ, relating to the state and condition of the seven churches of Asia; in this he has a farther vision of the glorious and incomprehensible majesty of God in heaven, wherein were represented to his intellectual eye and sight

God's celestial throne, his sitting upon his throne, his heavenly attendants, his presence, his displayed glory, and unspeakable praises, as in the sequel of this chapter is declared.

AFTER this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

As if St. John had said, After my first vision was over, being desirous farther to understand and know the mind of God, I looked upwards to heaven, from whence divine revelations come, and it was represented to me as if a door were opened to the third heavens: and I apprehended that I heard that former voice, which spake to me in the first chapter, now speaking to me again, namely, the voice of Christ, sounding like a trumpet in my ear, and saying, *Come up hither, and I will show thee*, or give thee a clear representation of, *things that shall be hereafter*. Where note, 1. That such a soul as has tasted the sweetness of communion with Christ, does long for the farther and fuller enjoyment of him. After this I looked: it was a gracious vision he had of Christ in the first chapter, but it did only whet his desires after more communion with him, and clearer manifestations from him. Note, 2. That the knowledge which advances and improves a man's understanding on earth, comes all from heaven: thither we must look up, and from thence, if we will know the things of God; *I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven*.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

I was in the spirit; that is, in an ecstasy, in a trance, in a rapture of delight and joy, ravished in spirit. This vision was represented to his mind more lively than any corporeal objects could be to his outward senses, which were now all bound up. Observe here, 1. The vision itself, a throne set in heaven; St. John's mind was not taken up with earthly matters: worldly crowns and sceptres were now poor things in his esteem, and will be so in the estimation of all others, who have a prospect of a throne in heaven, as our apostle had. Observe, 2. The person whom he saw sitting upon his throne, God the Father, in royal Majesty, whose power and glory was represented by the similitude of precious stones, particularly by the jasper and sardine stone; which stone, say some, being of a red and fiery color, represented how terrible God is in judgment, clothed with omnipotent power and inflexible justice; but to allay the terror of this vision, St. John saw a rainbow round about

the throne, in sight like unto an emerald: this was very comforting, for the rainbow was of old a token of God's covenant, Gen. ix. that he would never more drown the world by water; here it denotes the covenant of grace, whereby the church is secured from the deluge of God's wrath by the blood of a Mediator; and mark, this rainbow was round about the throne; let God look which way he will, here is that which reminds him of his covenant and promise; and the color of this rainbow was like an emerald; that is, of a most pleasant and delightful greenness; signifying, that Almighty God, in mindfulness of his covenant, takes unspeakable delight, and pleasure in the exercise of mercy towards his children, even then when it appears clothed with terror, to judge and sentence an impenitent world. Blessed be God, that he that sitteth upon the throne of judgment has a rainbow about him, giving full assurance that, for his covenant sake, the floods of his wrath shall not overwhelm his children when his enemies are swept away with the deluge of destruction.

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment: and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

St. John having described Almighty God as sitting upon his throne in the former verse, here he declares whom he saw about the throne as assessors with him, namely, *Four and twenty elders*; by which some understand the patriarchs and apostles, as representatives of the Jewish and Christian church; others understand hereby the whole body of private Christians, a certain number being put for an uncertain, who are represented, 1. *As round about the throne*, to denote their nearness unto God, and their communion with him. 2. *As sitting*, to signify their state of rest and ease, and to denote their settled and secure condition of happiness which they now enjoy. 3. *As clothed with white raiment*, to represent their priestly dignity, that they were all priests unto God: as also their celestial purity and glory. 4. *As having on their heads crowns of gold*; this kingly dignity, and as kings they do, and shall reign with Christ for ever and ever, who having "loved them, and washed them, from their sins in his own blood, has made them kings and priests unto God." 5. They are called elders, to signify their great wisdom and experience; such as with patriarchs and apostles have done the greatest services for God on earth, shall share with him in the highest dignity and honor in heaven, sitting nearer the throne than others; St. John saw the elders not only near the throne, but sitting round about it.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

By the throne, God is represented as a Judge; by the *thunderings, and lightnings, and voices*, is represented the terribleness of God in judging sinners. As the law was de-

livered upon mount Sinai in lightning and thunder, so will there be the same, nay, far greater dread and terror, when God comes to judge and plead with sinners for their wilful and repeated transgressions of that law. By the *seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*, some understand the holy Spirit of God in its manifold gifts and graces, enlightening, quickening, warming, comforting, the church of God; others understand the holy angels, who are continually waiting upon this Judge, and attending of this judicature, who are as his eyes and feet; that is, his ready instruments to execute his pleasure. God, in the judgment of the great day, will be attended by his saints as assessors, by his angels as assistants.

6 And before the throne *there were* a sea of glass like unto crystal.—

By this *sea of glass* there seems to be an allusion to that large vessel of water in the temple, called the brazen sea, in which Aaron and his sons did wash themselves before they administered in holy things; signifying that purity which is required in all the worshippers, but especially in all the ministers of God; and because the use of this sea, in the temple, is made good in Christ, the laver of his blood might be signified by this sea of glass here represented, which is compared to crystal; denoting the spotless innocence of his person and sufferings, and the purity and clearness of his justified members. Others, by this sea of glass, will have the world represented to St. John's visionary view: the world (say they) is compared to a sea for its instability, tempestuousness, and uncertain motion; to a sea of glass, for its slipperiness, and for its brittleness; glass yields no good footing to any that stand upon it, nor does the world to any that stay themselves upon it; and to a sea of glass like crystal, because of the clearness and transparency of it to God; he sees quite through it, all the counsels and actions of men being naked and open before God and the throne. It follows,

—And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast *was* like a lion and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him: and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

By the four beasts here, understand the four evangelists in special, and all gospel-ministers in general, who went forth to preach the word in all quarters of the world: and here we have a most stately emblem of the true gospel-ministers, they have the courage of the lion, the strength of the ox, the loftiness of the eagle, the face, that is, the prudence and discretion of a man. Farther, they are described as full

of eyes; they have eyes looking before them to God for direction, looking behind them to the flocks they lead, and within them to their own hearts. They have also six wings; with two they cover their faces, manifesting their deep reverence of God; with two they cover their feet, manifesting the humble sense of their infirmities; and with two they fly with cheerful expedition to the service of God. Observe next, What was represented to John, as the perpetual employment and work of heaven; namely, incessantly to admire, love and praise the holiness of God, which is the excellency of all other excellencies. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." Learn hence, That the celebrating of the praises of the most high and holy God, is the incessant work of glorified saints and angels in heaven, and a very great part of the work and duty of the faithful ministers of God here on earth. Again, learn, 2. From this example, how much it is the duty of the ministers of Christ, to study and endeavour to make God known in all his glorious attributes, particularly in his holiness and his power; as also in his eternity and simplicity, as he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without variation, and shadow of changing.

9 And when those beasts give glory, and honor, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever.

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

Observe here, How St. John saw both beasts and elders representing ministers and people, unitedly joining together; and with one consent sounding forth the high praises of their God; intimating, how the whole body of sincere christians ought heartily to join with their faithful ministers in that blessed work of praising and worshipping the eternal God. Observe, 2. That as a farther act of homage and adoration, the four and twenty elders cast their crowns down to the ground: not in a way of contempt and disdain, as if they slighted the glory conferred upon them by God, but in a way of humble gratitude, attributing their victory and reward to God, and not to themselves; and acknowledging that whatever honor they have, they have it from God's hand, and are willing, very willing, and ready to lay it down at God's feet, and to divest themselves of it, that they may put honor upon God; professing hereby, that all the goodness wrought in them, or done by them, does proceed from God's free grace and mercy, and that the glory of it is entirely due to him. Observe, 3. The hymn of thanksgiving itself, which was jointly sung among them, "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power." As if they had said, That God thou

art, unto whom all the homage and adoration of thy creatures are justly and peculiarly due; for thou hast created all things by thy omnipotent power, and for thy pleasure, and the manifestation of thy glory, they are still preserved as they were at first created. Where remark, That every moment's preservation is virtually a new creation, and that the same omnipotent power is necessary every moment to preserve us, which was at first requisite to create us. Therefore worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and everlasting praises, as thou art he who givest being to all creatures, and therefore givest it them, that they might love and laud, magnify and bless, glorify and serve, honor and obey thee, their great Creator, and gracious preserver. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within, and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

In this chapter we have a continuation of the vision recorded in the former chapter: there St. John saw a throne set in heaven, and a person sitting upon that throne in majesty and great glory, representing to him God the Father. Here he beholds the same glorious person sitting upon the throne, with a book in his right hand, written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. Observe here, 1. What St. John saw, namely, a book, by which Mr. Mede and others understand a roll, containing God's decrees and counsels, his purposes and resolutions, concerning the future state of the church, as they were to be fulfilled according to prophecy, and brought to pass in several ages, as the providence of God should order and see fit. Observe, 2. The person in whose hand this book of the secret counsels of God was; namely, in God's own hand, and in his right hand, thereby denoting his authority to impart and communicate the knowledge of this sealed book to whom he pleased, and also his power to execute his purposes and counsels when he pleased, and as he pleased. And as none but God himself can declare who God is, so none but God himself can declare what God does, and what in after ages he will do. Observe, 3. The copious fulness of this book, it was written within, and on the backside, inside and outside filled up, so that there was no room left either for addition or alteration. Observe, 4. It was a sealed book, yea, sealed with seven seals, denoting the matters that are therein contained to be most divine and excellent, secret and mysterious, certain and unalterable, and the knowledge of them impossible without the help and favor of special revelation.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.

Observe, 1. Here is a proclamation made by an extraordinary angel, like an herald or officer, inquiring, who was *worthy*, either in regard of *authority*, or in respect of *ability* to open this book, and unloose the seals; that is, to disclose the secret counsels of God, and to make them known unto the sons of men; *implying*, that every angel in heaven is not worthy or meet to be the expositor of God's mind and mysteries unto man. Observe, 2. The great silence which there was in heaven upon this proclamation, amounting to an absolute and peremptory denial, that not any one, either in heaven or earth, or under the earth; nor any angel in heaven, nor any saint living upon earth; nor any dead saint, under the earth, nor any devil or infernal spirit was either worthy to open the book, or able to foresee and foretell the least event concerning the church, farther than revealed to them. Learn hence, That neither angels nor devils do understand the mysterious counsels of God, or can reveal future things to man, any farther than as God is pleased to reveal the same unto them. Observe, 3. St John's great and bitter lamentation, because no person was found worthy to open the book, and reveal unto the church the secret counsels of God concerning her; *I wept much*; fearing no doubt, lest the church of God should be deprived of the benefit and comfort of this revelation. Such as are the true members of the church are greatly afflicted with all the providential dispensations of God which do befall her; but nothing goes so near them, as to have the mind and will of God hidden and concealed from her. Observe, 4. A seasonable consolation given to St. John; one of the elders that were about the throne said to him, weep not, for care is taken for the opening and revealing of the book. Christ, who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Son of David, as man, and the root of David, as God, is found worthy in regard of the dignity of his person, and the pre-va-lency of his merits, to open unto the church all the mysteries of God, which are meet and convenient for her to understand and know: *Quest.* Why is Christ called the Lion of the tribe of Judah? *Ans.* In allusion to Jacob's blessing, Gen. xlix. where Judah is called a lion's whelp, denoting the dignity and superiority of that tribe above the rest. Now, Christ descended of this tribe, and is called a lion, in regard of his kingly power and strength, in regard of his stoutness and courage, in regard of his mildness and clemency, and true nobleness of spirit to them that submit and yield unto him, and in respect of his vigilancy and watchfulness over his church; all which are the known properties of the lion: and as that creature is the king of beasts, so is Christ King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only potentate; dominion and fear are with him. *Quest.* But how could Christ be called David's root, when we know that David did not spring from him, but he from David, according to the flesh? *Ans.* In a natural sense,

David was the root of Christ, but in a spiritual sense, Christ was the root of David. David, as man, was the root of Christ; Christ, as mediator and God-man, was the root of David. Thus he was both David's Lord, and David's son. Psal. cx. 1.

6 And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right-hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation:

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Observe here, 1. That St. John had a vision of Christ in the former verse, under the representation of a lion: here he is represented under the form and figure of a lamb, as wounded, bloody, sacrificed, and slain; as bearing upon him the signs and scars, the marks and tokens of his by-past death; his appearing as a lamb slain, denoted his death; his standing denoted his resurrection. *There stood a lamb as it had been slain*, it is added—*having seven horns*, the strength of a beast lying in its horns: this expression of *seven horns* denotes that omnipotent power which Christ has in himself, and that fulness of power which he does exert, and put forth on all occasions in defence of his church. It follows, *and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God*; these represent the Holy Spirit of God in its manifold graces given by Christ unto the church, as his agent and advocate upon earth; so that here in the text and context are all the three persons in the Holy Trinity, whose divinity we believe, and in whom we trust; God the Father upon the throne, with a book in his hand; Christ the Lamb in the midst of the throne opening the book, and the seven spirits, or Holy Ghost, distinct from the two former. Observe, 2. The office, which Christ, as Mediator, of God-man, performs: he goes to the throne, and takes the book out of the Father's

hand; that is, he received power from God to open the book of mysteries, and to execute them: Christ sat upon the throne as God, but went to the throne for the book, as God-man; this power was due unto him as the reward of his sufferings. Observe, 3. The joyful acclamations accompanied with the profoundest adorations, which were deservedly given by the holy inhabitants of heaven to Jesus Christ, as the only person worthy to take the book, and to open the seals; *They fell down before the Lamb, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us.* Note here, divine worship given to Christ the Lamb, which proves his deity; they sing an hymn of divine praise to the blessed Redeemer, with harps and golden vials in their hands, a *new song*; that is, a most excellent song, setting forth the benefits, and extolling the praises of the Lord the Redeemer. Observe, 4. The church's celebration of those benefits and blessings, which by the death of Christ she had received, namely, 1. They were redeemed unto God out of every kindred and tongue, people and nation; which shows the universal extent of the gospel church scattered over the face of the whole earth, in and among all the nations of the world. 3. They were by him made kings and priests unto God, to reign on earth; that is, spiritual kings and priests unto God, to reign over sin, satan, and the world, trampling their spiritual enemies under their feet, not expecting an earthly dominion.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Observe here, 1. The office of the holy angels in heaven declared, they stand round about the throne of God continually, as nobles and chief ministers of state attend upon a prince, awaiting his pleasure, and expecting his commands. Observe, 2. The numberless number of them,

Thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand: and as Almighty God is attended by an innumerable company of angels in heaven, so do the holy angels stand ready to accompany and protect his people here on earth, Psalm xxxiv. 7. *They encampround about them.* Observe, 3. How readily and cheerfully the holy angels joined with the elders, in blessing and praising Christ for the invaluable fruits and benefits of man's redemption; those beneficent spirits rejoice in our happiness; they joy at the conversion of a sinner, and triumph at the glorification of a saint. Here they are said to sing with a *loud voice*, to show their affection and zeal in the work of blessing and praising God for Jesus Christ, who is an head of confirmation to them, as he was an head of redemption unto us. Observe, 4. How the angels give the same worship, pay the same homage, ascribe the same honor to Christ, which they do to God the Father; this had never been given, had he not been essentially God: the angels pronounce and proclaim Jesus Christ worthy of omnipotent power; and that honor, glory, and blessing, do appertain to him for evermore. Observe, lastly, That not only all the angels, but all the creatures in heaven, in earth, under the earth, and in the sea, all and every of them, do worship Christ with religious worship, and pay him divine honor; adore him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb for ever and ever, that is, the rational part of the world, to wit, angels, and men, actively: the sensitive part of the world, objectively: the diabolical part, passively: Christ extorts that glory from them by their torments, which they refuse to give unto him by confessions, and voluntary acknowledgments. What greater argument than this can we desire for our satisfaction, that Christ is truly and essentially God? He thinks it no robbery to be equal with God, to share with him in all that honor and homage, in all that adoration and religious worship which the whole creation do pay to Almighty God; for thus do the angels and elders above, and the whole church militant here below, chant forth the praises of the Creator and Redeemer, saying,

*Blessing, and glory, and renown,
We now give altogether,
To him that on the throne sits down,
And to the Lamb for ever.*

Amen, Hallelujah.

CHAPTER VI.

AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come, and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

The former chapter acquainted us with Christ's receiving of the sealed book; this, with the opening of it seal by seal. Christ reveals unto St. John the deep counsels of God, which were hidden and secret: the only begotten Son that lay in the bosom of the Father he hath revealed them, he only received authority, and he only was endued with ability to reveal them. Note, 1. The preparation made for St. John's vision of the seals; he standing afar off with profound reverence, heard a voice like thunder proceeding out of the mouth of one of the four beasts, who performed the office of a public crier, saying, *Come, and see*. It is dangerous searching into God's secrets, and prying into his hidden counsels, till we have a call and commission, a command and invitation, from God himself so to do; thus had St. John here: one said unto him, *Come near, and see*. Note, 2. The vision itself, *I beheld a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow and a crown, &c.* By the white horse is generally understood the gospel, so called in regard of the divinity and spotless purity of its doctrine: the rider upon this horse is Christ, who rode swiftly in the ministry of the apostles and our faithful teachers in the first ages of christianity; and he rode with a bow in his hand, and a crown on his head; with a bow, that is, with threatenings and terrors denounced against his enemies before they were inflicted upon them, as the bow is first held in the hand, then the arrow prepared upon the string, and at last shot forth: and with a crown, denoting that royal state of kingly dignity and honor, to which Christ the Lamb that was slain was now exalted, and thus he rode on conquering and to conquer, till he had consummated his victories in a glorious triumph over his enemies, namely, in the conversion of some, and destruction of others; thus the opening of the first seal gave the church a very encouraging and comfortable prospect of the victories, successes, and triumphs of Christ, notwithstanding the rage, subtlety, and power of all his enemies: Christ rode on with a bow in his hand, and with a crown on his head, conquering and to conquer, till his arrows were sharp in the hearts of his crucifiers; and will thus ride on till the people fall under him, and all his enemies become his footstool.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, *Come, and see*.

4 And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

The second seal opened did represent to St. John's visionary view a *red horse*, of a bloody color, denoting first the dreadful executions of God's wrath upon the Jews, embroiling the land with wars, divisions, bloodshed, unspeakable tumults, killing and ruining one another, to which purpose he apprehended that he saw a sword in his hand that rode upon this horse, signifying the great slaughter which would be committed by the Jews upon one another. Others, secondly, by this *red horse*, understand the bloody Roman emperors, Nero, Trajan, &c. and the persecution which the

primitive church underwent in their days: Eusebius relates, that so fierce was their rage against the poor christians, that a man might see cities full of dead bodies, old and young, men and women cast out naked, without any reverence of persons, or regard to sex. From hence we may learn, What little reason the christian church has to think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing happened to them; when as we see all the rage and cruelty, all the blood and violence, which the christian church has fallen under in the several ages of it, have been from the beginning revealed and prophetically foretold.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, *Come, and see*. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*.

The third seal opened, sets forth the great calamity which should befall the church by famine, which some understand literally, others figuratively and mystically. 1. A literal famine in Judea, seems here to be prefigured by a person riding on a black horse with a balance to weigh food in his hand; famine discolours the face of men, and makes them look black, sad, and dismal; accordingly it is represented by a black horse; and the rider having a pair of scales in his hand to weigh corn by the pound, and not to measure it by the bushel, imports the great scarcity that there should be of bread; and St. John heard a voice, saying, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny*. The Roman penny was the ordinary wages for a day's work to a laborer, so that the quantity of bread was but sufficient to keep persons alive for one day. Famine is a very sore and terrible judgment, it consumes a people by piece-meal; other judgments cut off suddenly, but this is a lingering and a languishing death: Lord! help us in the midst of our fulness, when we eat the fat, and drink the sweet, to remember how righteously thou mayest cut us short of our abused mercies; how is it that we have not long ago sinned away our plenty, who have so often sinned with our plenty? 2. Others understand the famine here represented by the black-horse, to be meant of a spiritual famine, a scarcity of the word of God, which fell out in the time of the ten persecutions, when the storm fell upon the bishops, and most useful ministers in the church, when many bright and burning lamps were extinguished, others hid under a bushel: a dismal gloomy day, when the church of God did eat her spiritual bread by weight, when all the spiritual food men could get to keep their souls alive from day to day could be but sufficient for that end.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, *Come, and see*.

8 And I looked, and behold, a pale

horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The fourth seal opened presents a pale horse, (pestilence,) with death riding upon it; and hell, that is, the grave following it, denoting, say some, all the calamities of sword, pestilence, and famine, which Christ, (St. Mark xiii.) foretold should come upon the Jews, and cause an universal devastation of their city and nation, and as universal a destruction of their persons. Note here, 1. How death is represented as sitting upon a pale horse; by a horse, for his strength, there is no resisting of him; for his swiftness, it is always posting towards us; for his office and use, which is to cut off and carry away: and by a pale horse for its ghastliness. Death has a grim and ghastly countenance, that strikes terror into all hearts, and paleness into all faces. Note, 2. As terrible as death was, it must and did receive power before it could destroy and kill; "I beheld a pale horse, and he that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him, and power was given to them." Learn thence, That all the executioners of God's wrath and vengeance, sword, pestilence, and famine, death of all kinds, do act by commission, yea, they all come forth with limited commission; power was given to them; others conceive that by this pale horse the persecution of the primitive church was represented under the Pagan emperors, who made her face look pale like death, by the loss of a vast quantity of blood and spirits, when the church was mowed down like a meadow, and sprang as fast.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Here we have the fifth seal opened; under which Christ represents to St. John the condition of those precious souls of the holy martyrs who died for the testimony of Christ, by the bloody hands of tyrants; the design whereof is to support and encourage all that were to come after in the same bloody path. Observe here, 1. The vision which St. John

saw, namely, the souls of the martyrs: but how could they be seen? *Ans.* Not by the external senses, being immaterial substances, but in spirit they were seen by him; he had a spiritual representation of them made to his mind. Observe, 2. The place where he saw them, *under the altar*; that is, lying at the foot of the altar, as sacrifices slain and presented unto God. Where note, That however men look upon the death of the martyrs, yet in God's account they die as sacrifices; and their blood is no other than a drink-offering poured out to God, which he highly prizeth, and graciously accepteth. Observe, 3. The cause of their sufferings and death described, it was for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; as one of the martyrs of the Marian days held up his Bible at the stake, saying, "this is that hath brought me hither." They die not as malefactors, but as martyrs, giving a threefold testimony of the truth, a lip testimony, a life testimony, and a death or bloody testimony: they held the profession of their faith faster than they held their own lives. Observe, 4. What St. John heard, a loud cry, saying, *How long?* Note, 1. That souls can speak audibly to the ears of men; nor, 2. That they have any sense of sufferings when they are in glory, it doth not imply that souls there are in a restless state, or that they want true satisfaction and repose, when they are out of the body; much less, 3. Doth this cry suppose, that they carried with them to heaven any angry resentments, or revengeful dispositions towards their murderers; but this cry supposes in them a vehement zeal for the glory of God, a flagrant desire that God would clear their innocency, and make known his justice among men, that he would abolish the kingdom of satan, and consummate the kingdom of Christ, making all his enemies to become his footstool: so that they pray for what Christ waits in glory, Heb. x. 13; all the revenge here desired was only a vindication of God's holiness and truth, which he himself had promised. Observe, 5. The gracious answer which God gave to the cry of these gracious souls, in which he speaks satisfaction to them these two ways 1. By somewhat given them for the present. 2. By somewhat promised them hereafter; first, white robes were given at present to every one of them, that is, large measures of heavenly glory, as the reward of their sufferings and services, beyond other saints; as if God had said, "Though the time be not yet come to satisfy your desires in the final ruin of satan's kingdom, yet it shall be well with you in the mean time, you shall walk with me in white, and enjoy my glory in heaven." Secondly, That is not all, but the very things they cry for shall be given them after a little season, for God had more to call unto sufferings besides them, and they having conquered shall be crowned together; as if God had said, "You, my faithful witnesses, wait a little while till your brethren be got through the Red Sea of sufferings as well as you, and then you shall see the feet of Christ upon the neck of all his enemies, and justice shall fully avenge the precious innocent blood of all the saints, which in all ages has been shed for the testimony of the gospel, from Abel the martyr to the last sufferer; rest for a little season, until your fellow servants also, and their brethren, shall be killed as you were." Now from the whole learn these lessons of instruction; Learn, 1. That the souls of men perish not with their bodies, but do certainly outlive them, and subsist in a state of separation from them; the bodies of these martyrs were destroyed by divers sorts of torments, but their souls

were out of the reach of danger, they were in safety under the altar, and in glory, clothed with their white robes, when their bodies were either turned to ashes, or torn in pieces by wild beasts; we shall not cease to be, when we cease to breathe; our souls do not vanish with our breath. Learn, 2. That as the soul is alive in a state of separation from the body, so is it awake also, and doth not sleep with the body. Mark, These souls cried with a loud voice, then they were not asleep, though their bodies were asleep in the dust; the opinion of the soul's sleeping with the body till the resurrection, is a wicked dream; it is granted that the organical acts of the soul, that is, such acts as do depend upon the members of the body, must cease when the body ceases; but we find, when we are asleep, that our soul can act of itself, without the assistance of the body; the soul grieves and rejoices, hopes and fears, chooses and refuses, therefore the soul is not only alive, but awake also in its state of separation from the body. Learn, 3. That there are not only praises but prayers in heaven, and that for justice to be inflicted upon persecutors here on earth. O the miserable condition of bloody persecutors! when heaven and earth both pray against them. Learn, 4. That there is no sin committed upon earth, which doth more loudly call for vengeance from God in heaven, and which he will more certainly and severely punish than persecuting and wronging of his saints and servants. Learn, 5. That one reason why the suffering servants of God are not presently delivered from their persecutions is this, because more of their brethren must suffer besides them, before their persecutions are ripe and ready for signal vengeance. Learn lastly, That the souls of God's martyrs shall be under the altar in heaven clothed in white, enjoying divine glory, before the fatal day of final vengeance come upon the persecuting world; for though the patience of God suffers long, yet the holiness of God cannot permit that innocency should always suffer, and violence with persecution go unpunished, but in the mean time they shall put on their crown and their robes.

12 And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake: and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together: and every mountain and island were moved out of their places:

A threefold interpretation is given relating to this sixth seal, and the opening of it. 1. Some apply it altogether to the Jews, and that their destruction in Judea and at Jerusalem was so dismal, that it was represented to St. John as the darkening of the sun, and the moon looking like blood, and the stars falling, such calamities impending as if in heaven and earth were dissolving; doubtless at and before the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem there was a confluence of such calamities so dismal, and so dreadful, as can very difficultly be represented or described. 2. Others apply it to the overthrow of Paganism, and the destruction of the heathen emperors; the fall of Paganism, by means of Constantine's conversion to the christian faith, was the most terrible judgment that ever fell upon the devil's kingdom; and accordingly by the earth's quaking, the sun's becoming black, the moon's becoming blood, and the stars falling from heaven to earth, is to be understood the great changes that were made in the Roman empire, by overturning the whole Pagan state, and making christianity the religion of the greatest part of the world; so that the sense of the foregoing expressions is metaphorical, and signifies a great and general alteration of the face of affairs, as if the world was to be another thing. But, 3. There are that interpret all this of the great and horrible confusion of the christian world under antichrist, when Christ the Sun of Righteousness began to be obscured, that is, his doctrine concerning his offices and benefits darkened; the moon or church turned into blood, the stars or pastors fallen from heavenly offices, the scriptures like the heavens rolled up, forbidden to be read; the mountains, kings and princes in jeopardy, and the islands brought under antichrist's yoke and tyranny. Lastly, Some apply all this to the last dissolution of the world, and the final judgment at the great day, according to what follows in the three next verses:

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

(Observe here, That if this was meant of the ruin of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, it was exceeding dreadful, and bespake all sorts of men, from the highest to the lowest, to be under a most dreadful consternation, when they saw an inevitable vengeance coming upon them for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his members, which made them run into rocks, and call upon mountains to hide them: if it be applied to the judgment of the great day, it shows the justice of Christ in forcing those to call upon the mountains to hide them, who by persecution had driven his members to hide themselves in mountains, dens and caves of the earth; any sorts of hope of deliverance would be then welcome: but alas! all help will fail, and all hope will be then in vain; neither greatness nor numbers will save any from misery and terror, when that day of vengeance is come. Learn hence, That wicked men, how numerous, how powerful and strong soever, shall fall before the wrath and indignation of Christ; if when Christ appears like an angry lamb, the greatest in the world fall before him, what will they

then do when Christ shall put on the fierceness and severity of a roaring lion? *Mæstissima sententia quæ a milissimo justice denunciatur.* If the wrath of the Lamb cannot be borne; if the unbelieving kings and potentates of the earth shall be cast down at the sight of Christ, where shall the wicked and the sinner appear? If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what will the wrath of God, of an angry God be? Let us now be cast down at the sight of sin, and we shall not be cast down hereafter at the sight of God; but when others, at his appearance, cry to the rocks to cover them, and to the mountains to fall upon them, such as have seen sin to their abasement and humiliation, shall see a Saviour to their joyful satisfaction, and spend an eternity in the rapturous contemplation and ravishing fruition of him. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

The former chapter gave us a general view and description of God's terrible vengeance on his church's enemies, that is, upon the obstinate Jews in Judea, the crucifiers of the Son of God, say some; upon the pagan world, or heathen emperors, say others, under whom the christian church suffered a bitter and bloody persecution for the first three hundred years, namely, till the time of Constantine the Great.

Now, the following chapters give an account of the execution of those denounced temporal judgments upon the Jews according to some, or according to others, they represent the dark kingdom of Antichrist, wherein a great storm of heresy did arise, and a flood of errors and false doctrines did flow down to the corrupting such vast numbers, that the whole world is said to wonder after the beast. Lest then the faithful should faint, as if the apostasy would be universal, and the christian church totally fail, Almighty God declares to St. John his pleasure in this chapter, to seal an hundred forty four thousand, that is, to preserve a very, very great number from the stroke of this judgment, be it temporal or spiritual; if temporal, he would mark them, as he did the Israelites in Egypt, that the destroyer might pass over them; if spiritual, he would preserve a number in his church, which should not apostatize; so that the church should not fail, a number of sealed ones, having the promise of preservation from God.

AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Observe here, 1. That if a temporal judgment on the Jews be here intended, then this vision represented to St. John God's decree and purpose for suspending the dreadful execution of the threatened and intended vengeance upon Judea for a time, namely, till God had sealed his number, that is, marked them for preservation, according to Ezek. ix. 4. *Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men, &c.* that is, preserve the penitent believers from the common destruction, as the Israelites were preserved in Egypt from the destroying angel. I beheld four angels, that had power to inflict

judgments, famine, sword, and pestilence, foretold chap. vi. upon Judea, I beheld these angels making a stay and stop, before they would suffer those mischiefs to break forth upon the earth. Where note, That the office of the holy angels in heaven is at God's command, and by God's direction, to execute vengeance, and to inflict all temporal judgments upon obstinate sinners here on earth; yet glad they are, when it pleases God to stay and stop them from a speedy execution of his wrath and vengeance: for as judgment is God's strange work in which he does not delight, so neither is it pleasing to the angels as an act of punishment, but only in obedience to the command of God, and with an eye and respect to the glory of God. Observe, 2. That if a spiritual judgment be here intended, as others apprehend, namely, the calamities befalling the church by reason of an apostasy under antichrist; then by the winds they understand heresies, and false doctrines of all sorts, which have an impetuous force and violence, like winds, to drive unstable souls from their steadfastness in the truths of God, into damnable errors. Now, God takes special care that these winds should not blow, those antichristian errors, and false doctrines, should not overflow the earth, until he had sealed his people, that is, secured them from that danger, preserving them from spiritual defilement, as the undoubted fruit of their sealing: where we see, that in all times of public calamity, be it temporal or spiritual, God has a special care of his own, and bears a special regard unto his own; here he commands the angels to hold the winds from smiting the earth, till the number of his sealed ones was completed.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their forehead.

Observe here, 1. The special and distinguishing care which God took of his church and faithful people before he suffered the approaching storm to come upon the world: he did by another angel cry to the four angels that were ready, as God's executioners to hurt the earth, that they should hurt nothing till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads; and his crying with a loud voice intimates his great care to preserve his faithful ones. *Quest.* What was this sealing? *Ans.* Some understand it of an external visible sealing, by setting a mark upon their foreheads for preservation, according to Ezek. ix. 4. The letter *Tau*; doubtless there was some notification made by Almighty God to the destroying angels, of every one whom he would have preserved. Others do understand this seal to be internal, by sanctification; and from thence we may gather, that inward holiness is the best guard against temporal or spiritual judgments. But take this sealing, in either sense, either for an outward or inward sealing, the notion doth imply, 1. That the persons sealed, are of precious and excellent esteem with God. 2. It imports preservation, and

security from danger; God sealeth his people, that the destruction coming upon others, may escape them: thus here God's servants were sealed, that they might be preserved; that they are kept either from sin and error, or from judgment and danger is not from themselves, but from God's care and love towards them in the sealing of them, the angel said, "Hurt not the earth, &c. till we have sealed the servants of our God, &c."

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed; and there weresealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Observe here, 1. That the true church is represented in this book by the name of the Jews, and the false church by the Gentiles; so that by the tribes of the children of Israel is to be understood the whole universal church of sincere and serious christians, all that profess and practise the faith of Abraham, and so are his spiritual seed. Note, 2. That these hundred forty and four thousand are particularly mentioned, chap. xiv. 1. as the pure virgin church distinguished from the adulterous; this number then comprehends all such as during antichrist's tyranny should be kept from his delusions, of whatsoever nation they be; all that adhere to Christ against antichrist are sealed, to preserve them from that defection wherein others would be involved. Note, 3. The great care which Almighty God takes in a time of general apostasy, to preserve a number in all his churches from that fatal mischief, that the catholic church may not fail: God has a number sealed; and such as are sealed shall be preserved. Note, 4. That though the number of

God's sealed ones be great in itself, 144,000, yet how small is it in comparison of the not sealed. Note 5. That as God had a number out of all the tribes of Israel, so doth he gather to himself a people out of all nations, ranks, and conditions of men, in and throughout the whole world. Note, 6. That the tribe of Dan is here left out; the reasons assigned for it are various; because, say some, antichrist was to come of that tribe; but it doth not any where appear, that ever Almighty God punished a people before they committed a sin: others with more reason conceive it was the great idolatry which this tribe fell into and continued in till the captivity, see Judg. xviii. 30, and Amos viii. 14, yet we must not suppose that none of this tribe were saved, because here not mentioned; for we find Samson of this tribe, and reckoned among those worthies, whose names are recorded, Heb. xi. *By faith Samson*. Note, 7. That Levi or the Levites, who had no inheritance in the earthly Canaan, but were dispersed and scattered throughout all the tribes that they might teach the people the law of the Lord, and so could not be numbered there; yet, says the learned and pious Dr. Hammond, in Christ their portion was as good as the rest, and therefore were not omitted here. Behold here a consideration which administers much comfort to us the ministers of the gospel, though many of us have no earthly possessions, and some cut short of outward comforts, yet our title to the heavenly inheritance is good, and we shall not miss of it, as the reward of our faithfulness. Note lastly, That although Levi had the charge of all the tribes, and had the peculiar favor above all the rest to stand before God, and administer to him in holy things, yet no more are sealed of this than of the other tribes; all were teachers, but all were not sealed: all are not saved that are of the holy calling, and who may be instrumental to save others. It was a solemn speech of an ancient father, *Non temere dico, sed ut affectus sum, ac ut animo sentio: Revera puto sacerdotes non multos esse qui salvi fient, ut plures esse qui pereunt*. With whom agrees St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 27. "Fearing lest having preached to others, he himself should become a cast away."

9 After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.

12 Saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory,

and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

St. John having had in the former verses a visionary view of the church militant, under the denomination of *sealed* ones, in these verses a prospect is given him of the church triumphant in heaven; a most magnificent description of which we have here before us. Where note, 1. The triumphant church above, is described by its multitude; "A numberless number which no man can number:" according to the promise made to Christ, of *bringing many sons unto glory*. 2. They are described by their variety; *some* out of every nation, tribe, people, and language, according to that of our Saviour, Matt. viii. 11. "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." 3. They are described by their posture, they *stand* before the throne, and before the Lamb, as servants attending upon their Lord, a most happy station, as such accounted by them; not that they stand perpetually gazing upon God, and doing nothing else; but they express their love unto him, by attending upon him, to execute his command. 4. They are described by their habit, they are *clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands*; white garments import their dignity, their purity, their joy. The saints' dignity in heaven is great, they are kings and priests unto God: their purity great, being purified as he is pure; their joy great, being entered into the joy of their Lord, this joy being too great to enter into them. Note farther, How these glorified saints do ascribe all their glory, happiness, and salvation to Christ, and nothing to themselves. "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb" *Sancti quasi sanguine tincti*, say some; "Many of these saints were martyrs that shed their blood for Christ." But mark, Their garments were made white not in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb. Again, They are described *with palms in their hands*, as well as clothed in white. Now, this denotes their victory, and the reward of their victory. Palms were amongst the Roman's ensigns of victory. All the saints enter heaven with palms in their hands, having conquered sin, satan, and the world, and the whole host of spiritual enemies. Observe next, How the holy angels in heaven do join with the saints and martyrs in worshipping God, and adoring the Lamb, verse 11. "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and fell on their faces and worshipped God," concurring with the church in their congratulations, adding their *Amen* to what the palm-bearers had said, and much more of their own, ascribing "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto him for ever and ever." Where note, How the triumphant church is made up of an innumerable company of angels, as well as saints: Heb. xii. besides the spirits of just men made perfect, makes mention of an innumerable company of angels, as part of the church of the first-born. (*Angeli gratia Sancti Avastant debent Christo mediatori*, says one,) And St. Paul, Eph. i. 10, says, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Whence it appears, that though angels sinned not, yet Christ gathered them and us into one society, and is an head both to them and us.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

As if St. John had said, One of the elders, not out of ignorance as to himself, but out of desire to inform me asked me, Whether I knew what these were that stood arrayed in white? And I told him, I did not know, but desired him to inform me. He replied, They were such as had suffered great tribulation for Christ, and were now accepted of him, and dignified by him; not for their own worthiness, but for the sake of his sufferings. Note here, 1. The present state and condition of the church of God, and members of Christ in this world, they are *in tribulation*, yea, in great tribulation here; as long as there is a devil in hell, and wicked men upon earth, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer tribulation. Note here, 2. The future state which they shall be advanced to, they shall *come out of great tribulation*; the saints' sharp sufferings and persecutions shall have a joyful issue and glorious end. Yet note, 3. That though the cross was the way to the crown, yet the cross did not merit the crown: their suffering would not, could not, bring them to heaven, without having their *souls washed in the blood of the Lamb*, much less could their sufferings merit and purchase heaven; but it pleased God of his free grace thus to reward their sufferings. "They were washed in the blood of the Lamb," whose blood paid the price of their salvation. Note, 4. the description which is here given of heaven; it is called a temple in allusion to the Jewish temple, in which God dwelt of old; as God by his gracious presence dwelt in his temple on earth; so by his glorious presence he dwells among his glorified saints in his temple in heaven; and accordingly the glorified saints in heaven do temple service, they worship God continually, and serve him day and night. In allusion this is probably spoken, the priests standing in the material temple; and serving in their courses night and day, Psal. cxxxiv. 1. Heaven is a place of employment and service, as well as of pleasure and joy; and the greatest joy results from the greatest service.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst

of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Here St. John proceeds in giving a farther description of the place and state of the blessed ; he acquaints us both with the private evils they shall everlastingly be delivered from, as also with the positive good they shall eternally rest in. As to the former he assures us, that glorified souls shall be acquainted with no wants, and exposed to no afflictive providences, *They shall neither hunger nor thirst ; that is, they shall be in a condition free from all, and all manner of wants whatsoever.* "Neither shall the sun, nor the heat light upon them;" that is, the scorching heat of persecution, to which they were exposed here, shall never more affect or afflict them there. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; that is, all cause of sorrow and mourning shall everlastingly cease. Farther, he acquaints us with the positive good which glorified saints do eternally rest in, the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them; that is, Christ shall satisfy them with a satiety of joy, and fulness of pleasure : and lead them to the living fountains of water, that is, to the never-failing comforts of God's presence. O happy place and state ! which will at once cause the saints to forget all former sorrows for time past, and happily prevent any farther cause of affliction and sorrow for time to come ; where no sin shall afflict them, no sorrow affect them, no danger afflict them, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, all sorrows banished from their hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess their souls : where they shall obey their God with vigor, praise him with cheerfulness, love him above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, being perfectly like unto God, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality. Lord, strengthen our faith in the belief of this desirable happiness, and set our souls a longing for the full fruition and final enjoyment of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

When he had opened, that is, when the Lamb, who opened the six foregoing seals, did open the seventh, there was silence in heaven about half an hour, by way of allusion to what was done in the temple at the time of offering incense. The end of which silence was to give St. John an opportunity to contemplate those high mysteries which he had revealed to him, and to prepare him for new visions, as silence is cried before the proclamation of great and weighty matters. When great things are to be uttered, great attention is expected, and great silence prepares for great attention.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God : and to them were given seven trumpets.

Observe here, 1. The readiness of the holy angels to execute the will of God at all times ; *They stand before God,* namely, to minister at his pleasure, and to execute judgments at his command : whether these were good angels or bad, it is not material to dispute, seeing God makes both the executioners of his judgments when he pleases. Observe, 2. The number of these angels, they were seven, and no more, because it pleased not God to pour down his whole wrath at once upon the rebellious world, but at divers times, and gradually. Observe, 3. That to these seven angels, were given seven trumpets to publish God's judgments to the world. These trumpets signified that God would proceed against the world in fearful hostility, and appear against it as an enemy to battle, proclaiming as it were open war, with sound of trumpet, and beat of drum, and hanging out a flag of defiance against it. The patience of God, though lasting, yet will not be everlasting. These angels sounding the alarm of judgments before they did inflict the following dreadful judgments upon the world, shows that God warns before he strikes : he doth usually pre-admonish before he punisheth. Judgment is a strange work, he delights not in it. But when sin calls upon him to arise out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, he doth it with unspeakable reluctance and regret, like a tender-hearted father, with a rod in his hand, and tears in his eyes.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer : and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it unto the earth ; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Observe here, That all along in the visions which St. John had, a representation was made to his mind of things pertaining to the Jewish worship ; his visionary temple, the altar, the incense, the fire, the censer, which he saw, were in allusion to the material temple, and to the worship and service performed there at Jerusalem ; and accordingly this other angel here mentioned, represented the highpriest, (who was an illustrious type of our Lord Jesus Christ,) whose office it was to offer incense at the altar, and therewith to offer up prayers for the people. Observe farther,

That Christ is here represented as having a golden censer, whereas the high priest's was only of brass, to denote that he was a more excellent highpriest; and the *much incense* given to him, represents his abundant merits, whereby he renders the prayers of all his saints acceptable to his Father. Learn hence, That as Christ was the only mediator of redemption, so is he also the only mediator of intercession; his mediation is found upon his satisfaction; none had to do with the censer to offer incense, but he that had to do with the altar to offer sacrifices: who durst offer to intercede with an offended God on the behalf of sinners, but he that has first satisfied the justice of God for sin? Now, to satisfy an offended God, is Christ's peculiar, therefore to intercede with God authoritatively on the behalf of offenders, is Christ's sole prerogative. Again, Christ's intercession gives virtue and effect to our supplications. This truth was signified, ver. 4, where it is affirmed, "That the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand; that is, the virtue and efficacy of the Mediator's merits, which came up with the prayers of the saints, and perfumed them, did both plead for, and procure acceptance with God. Behold here the true reason why our poor and broken supplications do find acceptance with God; namely, because perfumed with the odors of Christ's merits, and presented to the Father by his own mediation and intercession. The Father heareth him always, and so he doth all them whose prayers are offered by him. Observe lastly, The success and efficacy of the saints' prayers thus perfumed and presented unto God; there followed *voices, and thunders, and lightnings*, signifying the wonderful effects of prayer, or the terrible things that would follow after their prayers, even dreadful judgments upon the earth; that is, upon the land of Judea, say some; upon the Roman empire, say others. However it was, we may gather thus much from it, that in times of national provocation, the fervent prayers of God's faithful servants have a mighty prevalency with God, for staying off for a time national ruin and destruction.

6 And the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound,

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Note here, 1. The readiness of the holy angels in heaven to execute the will and pleasure of God here on earth; they knew that the execution of God's judgments was to be performed by them, and accordingly they prepare themselves for it. Note, 2. The judgments denounced by the first angel, *Fire and hail mingled with blood*. A strange storm, alluding probably to one of the plagues of Egypt, mentioned Exod. ix. denoting, say some, the direful temporal judgments which God would bring upon Judea in general, and Galilee in particular, by bloodshed and insurrections. The trees, says Dr. Moore, signify the great men, and the grass the common people. Others by this storm of hail and blood

understand a spiritual judgment, namely, an inundation of heresy upon the christian church, which is of a fiery and bloody nature wherever it prevails, it is a dreadful plague, and a consuming storm; justly inflicted by God upon a people for their contempt of the gospel, and not receiving the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood;

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

Observe here, 1. The universality of the judgment inflicted; the former judgment was upon the earth, this upon the sea, that no place might escape, a storm of hail and blood falls upon the former, a mountain of burning fire is cast into the latter; both signifying increasing wars and bloodshed by sea and land, accord up to some; the mighty prevalency of error and heresy, say others, and particularly of the Arian heresy, which puffs up, and swells with pride, and is the harbinger and forerunner of ruin and destruction; as only by pride cometh contention, so after pride, or along with pride, cometh destruction.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

The next judgment inflicted, or rather the farther progress of the former judgment, was the infecting of the waters and rivers with a mortal bitterness by a bitter star falling from heaven into them; denoting, say some, the fall of a great captain amongst the Jews in Judea; others understand it of heresy in general; of the Arian heresy in particular; and some apply it to the fall of Rome, the seat of the western empire: so Mr. Mede. If it be understood of heresy, it shows us what a poisonous, bitter, and deadly nature, error and heresy is of. Error is as damnable as vice, the one is an open road, the other a by-path to hell and destruction; and accordingly that person, and that people which have a due care of their soul's salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as they are of debauched practices.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the

third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying, with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Observe here, 1. That by sun, moon, and stars, in scripture prophecies, the potentates and powers of a state are understood; accordingly the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, signifies generally the fall of some great powers either ecclesiastical or civil; others who interpret these judgments, spiritually by the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, do understand the prevalence of ignorance and error in the church, occasioning a fearful eclipse of that saving and comfortable light which would illuminate our eyes, and direct our steps in the way that leads to eternal happiness. Observe, 2. That in this and all the former judgments, the third part only is mentioned as smitten, which shows that the Lord corrects in measure, and delights more in mercy than in justice, and desires rather the conversion than confusion of sinners, by making the punishments of some instructive warnings unto others. Observe, 3. God's way of dealing with his people in giving warning of future and severe judgments before they come, "I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth;" thus God warns of approaching judgments before they come, that sinners may repent: and his own people being forewarned, may be forearmed ere the judgment comes upon them. *Præmoniti, præmoniti, prævisa jacula minus feriant*, darts foreseen are dartsless.

CHAPTER IX.

AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the

earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

Observe here, 1. That those who understood this woe denounced by the fifth angel, to denote a temporal judgment, apply it to the Jewish seducer, who healed the turbulent zealots; he was a ringleader of most hellish villains, and the zealots under him did all the mischief imaginable, marching up to Jerusalem, plundering the city, seizing the temple, and killing the highpriest, with the rest of the priests; but by God's providence it so happened, that this judgment of the zealots fell not upon the christians, signified by the trees and green things, but upon the Jews only, because they were not of the faction of zealots. Observe, 2. That those who understand this woe to intimate a spiritual judgment, apply it some to the first rising of the Turks and Mahometans, others to the papacy and papal clergy: Mr. Mede applies it to the former, King James to the latter; "By locusts and grasshoppers (says he) understand monks and friars, who seem to fly a little from the earth, but indeed are gorbelled devourers: in locusts you see little but a mouth and a belly; in monks you see a mouth to mumble over masses, and a belly to consume; they seized, when time was, upon the meadows, the fat and pleasant parts of the land, and like grasshoppers consumed every green, that is, every good thing." Yet observe, 3. The commission and command given to them not to hurt the tree: such as are fruit-bearing and fruitful bearing christians, are preserved, and the storm falls upon drossy hypocrites; whence we may remark, That in times of error and seduction, as well as in times of judgment and calamity, God takes a special care of his faithful ones for their preservation; and has a special regard to the fruit of the trees of righteousness: "It was commanded them that they should not hurt any tree."

5 And to them (which had not the seal of God in their foreheads) it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

That is, God would bring such dreadful judgments and calamities upon the wicked world, that men should prefer death before life; and it should be an affliction beyond all other afflictions, that they could not die; to flee death is a great misery; but to have death flee from us, or flee before us, and not be able to find it, is a far greater misery: God can so imbitter life by afflictions and sufferings, that those who dread death may yet desire to die! not for any good that they see in death, but only to get rid of the troubles of this life: "In those days men shall seek death and shall not find it."

7 And the shapes of the locusts were

like unto horses prepared unto battle: and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

9 And they had breast-plates, as it were breast-plates of iron: and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

11 And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he hath *his* name Apollyon.

That this is a metaphorical description of a terrible army of cruel men seems very plain; some understand it of the Jewish zealots, who appeared as warriors, and were devouring waters; they looked like men, kind and friendly, and pretending to be redeemers of the people, saviours of, and benefactors to their country; but at the same time plundering and carrying away the spoils of their brethren, without any tenderness or compassion. Others apply all this to the papal clergy. *numerous*, like locusts; *well fed*, like horses for battle; *mighty*, for earthly possessions; *crowned*, like petty princes; *alluring*, like women with their hair, and other ornaments, &c. Others again make the application to belong to the Turks and Saracens, who are represented as having many crowns on their heads, and as moved with wings, in regard of the many and vast conquests, says Mr. Mede, which they made in a short time, even Palestina, Syria, America, Asia the Less, and many others; as to the king named here Abaddon and Apollyon, some understand it to be the devil, others Mahomet, others the Pope; to whom, to every one of whom, the name of a destroyer too fitly belongs, as seeking and endeavouring to destroy men's souls, and by blood and persecution to destroy and lay waste the church of Christ.

12 One woe is past; *and*, behold, there cometh two woes more hereafter.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had

the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

Note here, 1. From these words, *One woe is past, and two more are to come*, that God has a storehouse of judgments, as well as a treasury of mercy, and when one judgment will not do, he has more to inflict. Note, 2. The golden altar, which is here said to be before God, signifies our Lord Jesus Christ, his purity and excellency, and his appearing continually in the presence of his Father for us, as our Intercessor and Mediator. Note, 3. That this vast army of horsemen, consisting of two hundred thousand thousand, is expounded generally of Turks and Arabians, who have vast armies beyond all nations, whom God makes the executioners of his vengeance at his pleasure. Note, 4. Whereas it is said, that the four angels were bound in the great river Euphrates, and, till loosed by God's command, could never hurt nor stir, it teaches us, that the Lord has satan and all his instruments, in his own power to loose them for our sins, and to bind them again for our repentance; though their malice be infinite, yet their power is bounded; they cannot do all the mischief they would, and they shall not do all they can. Note, 5. That when these destroying angels were loosed, their time of hurting was limited to a year, and a month, and a day! showing, that the set and determinate time of the wicked's insolvency is appointed by God, to be either shorter or longer as he thinks fit; yea, they executed nothing but with a divine permission; nay, nothing without a special warrant and commission from God. "I heard a voice, saying, Loose the four angels which are bound in the river Euphrates; and they were loosed for an hour, &c." This is matter of singular consolation to us, that evil angels and wicked men are limited as to power; they cannot move much less hurt, till God loose them; *A voice said, Loose the four angels*.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breast-plates of fire, and of jacinth and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the

smoke, and by the brimstone which issued out of their mouths.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men, which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

St. John proceeds here in describing this vast army of Turks and Arabians, that with incredible swiftness did overrun and ruin the eastern churches: all these expressions of fire and brimstone, and smoke, denote that cruel devastation and destruction which was occasioned by the Turks and Mahometans. Behold here the instruments of satan, how his own cruel and destructive nature is discovered, how exceedingly he is delighted in the perdition of mankind, having been a murderer from the beginning. In the two last verses St. John declares, 1 What were the sins which procured so great a plague, namely, idolatry and worshipping the works of their own hands, a sin very odious to God, and for which God suffered the Turks to be so severe a scourge to Christendom; what little reason had the christians then to call their wars against the Turks, the *holy wars*, when idolatry, the cause of it, was not repented of? what success could they expect, as long as the idolatry of christians, and their other provoking sins, were so many? Observe farther, What was the end God aimed at by such strong physic, by such terrible judgments as he then brought upon the world? it was to bring them to repentance; but so mad was the antichristian world upon their idols, that they would not be reformed by the judgments they saw upon their brethren. Hence learn, That when God once begins to enter into judgment with a sinful people, he will follow them with a variety and succession of plagues and judgments one upon another, till he has either brought them to himself, or brought them to nothing.

CHAPTER X.

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left foot on the earth.

This angel is concluded to represent our Lord Jesus Christ the angel of the covenant; he is called a *mighty* angel, in opposition to the mighty enemies of his church, mentioned in the foregoing chapter; he is said to come down from heaven, to intimate his signal and seasonable appearing for the relief of his church; *clothed with a cloud*, representing the manner of his coming in the clouds at the final judgment; with a *rainbow on his head*, signifying that covenant of peace which he had made with his church, and his continual mindfulness of that covenant; *His face was as the sun*, to denote that light of comfort and deliverance which he would bring to his church in his own time: *His feet as pillars*, signifying the steadiness and stability of his purposes and actions, that where he sets his feet, none can remove him; and as *pillars of fire*, denoting his ability to tread down his enemies under him, and also to consume them; this is according to the description of his person given, chap. i. 15, 16. The emblems and figures by which he is represented here, are the same by which he was described there; consequently, he is the same person. Observe next, the account of what he did, *He had a little book in his hand open*, to distinguish it from the former book sealed; a book in which the purpose and decree of God was made known, concerning what should happen to the church; a book sealed and shut to us, but obvious and open to Christ. Christ that lay in the bosom of the Father, reveals his Father's secrets to us, so far as is needful and necessary for us to know them. *And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth*, to let us know his sovereignty and dominion over the whole world; as well over the turbulent and unquiet, as over the quiet and more peaceable part of it; and also to signify his ability to tread down his enemies, wherever they are; a consideration that administers much comfort and consolation to his church; his dominion is over the earth and sea, none can dispossess him of his power, and none can escape his presence.

3 And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

This angel, who represented Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is said to cry like a roaring lion, whose voice is both loud and terrible; this, some conceive, shadowed forth efficacious and successful preaching of the gospel, and that the seven thunders signified the same; but others apprehend hereby the thundering judgments of God, which were shortly to be inflicted on the wicked world: and particularly on Jerusalem by Titus, say some; upon

antichrist and his adherents, say others. The judgments of God are fitly set forth by *thunder*, because they do not fly at random, but by divine direction; the loudness, the swiftness, the forcibleness of thunder is known, and the terrible-ness of God in his doings towards the children of men, has been sufficiently understood. Observe next, St. John's intention to write what these thunders uttered, for the benefit of the church, as conceiving them to be of great concernment to her; but he receives a command from Christ to the contrary, not to do it at present; God foreseeing that the opposers would not hear, but despise; therefore these judgments shall be known by experience, and not by words. Others say, this inhibition was only temporary, not perpetual: write them not, that is, conceal them for the present, till thou hast those things represented to thee in other types, and till they are nearer their accomplishment; hereafter he might write them, for what God revealed to John, was to be showed to his servants, chap. i. 1.

5 And the angel, which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The angel that represented Christ, is here represented to St. John as *swearing*. Where observe, 1. The ceremony used in swearing, *lifting up of the hand to heaven*, appealing thereby to God as a witness, and a judge. 2. The person sworn by, God, described. 1. By his eternity, *He lives for ever*, before and after all time. 2. By his omnipotency and almighty power in the work of creation, making heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein. An oath is proper to God, and as we are to swear by God, so God is only to be sworn by. Observe, 3. The thing sworn, namely, *That time shall be no more*; that is, that there should be no further delay of time, for the destruction of Jerusalem, and the obdurate Jews, say some; for the ruin of the Roman empire, for the destruction of antichrist, say others; the performance of God's word, both in his promises of deliverance to his church, and in the execution of judgment on her enemies, are now at hand. Observe, 4. The promise made, and the assurance here given, namely, *that the mystery of God should be finished*, that is, the deliverance of the church should be completed; and the final confusion of her enemies shall be accomplished; which is called a *mystery*, because the world understands it not, nor will they believe the same. As mysteries have their own time to be made manifest in, so, to the

comfort of the faithful, and the terror of the wicked, a day was then approaching, in which the happy condition of the afflicted should appear, and the calamitous state of the ungodly be discovered.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Expositors generally make this *little book* the emblem of the holy Scriptures, and the command given by the angel to St. John to *eat* this book, imports the great duty of studying diligently the holy Scriptures, inwardly digesting them, and making them our own by particular application. What we eat is turned into nourishment, and becomes one substance with ourselves; thus the mysteries of the gospel must be eaten by the interpreters of gospel-mysteries. It is not enough that we know divine things, but we must know them divinely; we must have a savory knowledge of them, and an experimental acquaintance with them. 2. The effect which eating this book had upon St. John, it was in his mouth sweet as *honey*, in his belly very *bitter*; that is, the knowledge he had of the divine mysteries, was in itself very pleasant, but the knowledge of the persecutions and cruelties which the christians were to suffer and undergo, was very bitter to his *soul*. Learn hence, That though communication of light from God, and the revelation of the mind and will of God, be in itself very delightful to his ministers, yet in respect of the sad messages contained in his word, it is very burdensome and bitter to them: however, it being the burden of the Lord, they must bear it, they must carry it. Every good man, much more every gracious minister has a very high estimation of the word of God, he esteems it as food, he esteems it as necessary food; he esteems it more than necessary food; but when God sends us to denounce judgments upon sinners, *our belly trembles*, our lips quiver, anguish takes hold upon us, we desire not the woeful day, Lord, thou knowest. Observe lastly, The assurance God gives St. John of farther revelations of his mind unto him, "As thou hast prophesied, so thou must prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings;" see here in St. John's person the true end and reason why God

calls his ministers, and fits them with gifts, and why they furnish themselves with acquired abilities, it is to render themselves the more serviceable in his work, that they may speak of his word before kings, and not be ashamed.

CHAPTER XI.

AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Observe here, 1. The command given by God to St. John to take a survey of his church, his spiritual temple, consisting of living stones, and built upon the chief corner-stone Jesus Christ. God's faithful and true worshippers are only those whom God will have to be measured, and take notice of as being his part and portion, his tabernacle in which he will dwell. And, blessed be God! in the worst of times they are measurable, even in times of epidemical degeneracy, and universal apostasy, God has a number to stand up for his name, and to bear witness to his truth. Observe, 2. That the temple, the altar, and the worshippers therein, are here all joined together, and the command given, is to measure them together. "Arise, and measure the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein;" intimating, that the true church, and the true worshippers, are ever found together; and by the true worship, and true worshippers, is the true church ever known; so that if the question be asked, "Where is the true church?" the answer is, Where the true altar is; and where the true worship is, there the true church is: that worship which will bear God's measuring reed, the scrutiny of the scriptures, and the examination of his holy word; where that worship is found, there the church of God is found.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Observe here, What St. John is forbidden to measure, and commanded to leave out as no part of the true church, namely, *The court which is without the temple*; that is, that part of the visible church which is over-run with idolatry, and antichristian worship, as bad as gentilism, and accordingly shall be treated as gentiles, and trodden down under foot, as drossy hypocrites; *Measure the temple*, says God, but not *the outward court*. The temple had but few worshippers, the priests only, in comparison of the outward court, where the body of the people was; whence we see that the true church is but *small, very small*, in comparison of the false and antichristian church, and consequently multitude can be no right note of the true church. Observe farther, That whereas these gentiles are said to tread under foot the holy city forty-two months, thereby is signified, that they should kill and persecute the true spouse and Church of Christ, (called the holy city, in allusion to the earthly

Jerusalem) during the time of antichrist's prevalency, yet here we have the church's ground of comfort and support, that her pressures, and antichrist's prevalency, shall be but for a limited time, a short time, *The holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months*.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Observe here, 1. That the church of God during antichrist's prevalency, shall not want witnesses or faithful teachers, though removed by persecution into corners. Observe, 2. By mentioning *two* only, we may gather the paucity of faithful teachers, during the time of antichrist's prevalency, *two* are a number, but the least of numbers: we must not have our eye upon the multitude, or conclude that it is not truth which is not embraced and practised by the most; the train of Christ is not large, nor are his ways thronged as they ought, few comparatively there be that walk in them. As they, whom he calls forth to be eminently his witnesses, are not many, therefore called *two*; so they that received their witness are but few, for *the world wonders after the beast*. *Quest* But who and what are these witnesses? *Ans*. The whole succession of faithful ministers, martyrs, and confessors, which Almighty God, from time to time, has raised up in his church to be the assertors and maintainers of divine truth, and to bear their testimony for Christ against all heresies, blasphemies, idolatries, and usurpations in the time of antichrist's reign. Observe, 3. The proper work of these witnesses declared, it is to *prophesy*, that is, to instruct the people how to worship God according to his word and will. The manner of their prophesying is said to be in *sackcloth*; that is, in much affliction, and with great lamentation, bewailing the pollutions of the church by the overspreadings of idolatry; and the time of their prophesying is said to be a *thousand two hundred and threescore days*; that is, during the time of antichrist's reign, so long the witnesses shall have a mournful time of it; during the whole reign of antichrist. God will have a true church, a true ministry, and faithful witnesses, whom though antichrist will fight with, yet he shall never prevail against. Observe, 4. How God is pleased to own and bear witness to these his witnesses. 1. He calls them *his, my two witnesses*. 2. He gives them *power to prophesy*; that is, they have their commission and authority from him, and they are enabled, assisted, and succeeded by him in the discharge of their testimony: their resolution and courage is from God, who calls them forth to bear their testimony for him. Learn hence, That when God calls any of his to a martyr's fire, he does endue them with a martyr's faith; he furnishes his ministers and faithful servants with noble endowments, answerable to their great employments; God evermore gives much grace, where he tries grace much. As the command of God makes every duty necessary, so the assistance of God makes every duty and service gainful and advantageous.

4 These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Observe here, A double title given by God unto the two witnesses, spoken of in the former verse. they are styled *olive trees and candlesticks*. As the olive-tree is always green, so the ministry of these witnesses is lively and efficacious; as the olive is a sign of peace, and the oil that drops from the glive an emblem of grace, so the ministry of these witnesses was a ministry both of grace and peace. Again, they are called olive trees, because they are to minister oil to the candlesticks, which are to hold out light unto others. Here note, that the title of candlesticks given to the churches, chap. i. is here given to the ministers of the church; partly to show the near relation that is between them, and partly to point out the duty that is mutually incumbent upon them; namely, to hold forth the light of truth unto others. And farther, These candlesticks are said to *stand before the God of the earth*, signifying their fidelity in the discharge of their duty, as in the presence of God before whom they stand. Observe, 2. The efficacy and power of these witnesses' ministry in the certain effects of it. What was said of Elijah and Elisha literally, is applied unto them spiritually. 1. As Elijah brought fire down from heaven which devoured the enemy, so fire proceeds out of these witnesses' mouth, not by way of imprecation, but by way of denunciation, pronouncing the threatenings and judgments of God against them, continuing in their impenitency. 2. As Elijah had power to shut heaven, so have these witnesses power to do the like during the time of their prophecy; that is, God is provoked for the world's ill-treatment of his faithful witnesses, to withhold the spiritual rain of the word, and the refreshing doctrine of the gospel from them. Again, When it is said that these witnesses have power to *turn the water into blood*, and to *smite the earth with all plagues*, there is a manifest allusion to Moses and Aaron, who exercised such a power, Exod. vii. Accordingly, God being provoked by the indignities offered to his faithful witnesses, permits the pure doctrine of the gospel to be corrupted, and avenges their cause by bringing judgments on the world, as Moses did upon Egypt, according to the threatenings denounced by them. Whence we may learn, What great credit and esteem the faithful witnesses and ministers of Christ are in with God; what power and prerogative is given to them, far surpassing the power of any mortal prince, even a power to open and shut heaven, to turn waters into blood, and to smite the earth; that is, God doth all these things upon a just occasion, in vindication of them, and in revenge for the injuries done unto them.

7 And, when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

These verses set before us the barbarous usage which the two witnesses should meet with from the antichristian world, for the faithful discharge of their duty, *they shall be slain* politically and civilly, say some, deposed, silenced, imprisoned, and laid aside as useless and dead. Literally, say others, they shall be put to death for the testimony of Jesus, by bloodshed, fire, and faggot. *They shall overcome them*, that is, in their persons, but not in their cause. See here the christian church founded in blood, that of Christ, its head; watered with blood, that of his ministers and members. God suffers his sometimes to be actually slain, for his own glory, their honor, and the church's good; but mark the time specified when the witnesses were slain; it was *when they had finished their testimony*, and not before then, but not till then. So long as God has special work and service for his witnesses to do in the world, their mighty and cruel enemies cannot touch an hair of their heads, much less can they take away their lives *till they have finished their testimony*. Observe, 2. Besides the antichristian cruelty, in killing these witnesses, their barbarous inhumanity in denying them burial, not suffering some to be buried at all, and digging up the bones of others that have been long buried. The place where this was done is called *Sodom and Egypt*, and the great city where our Lord was crucified; which if literally understood, signifies Jerusalem, compared to Sodom for the abominable sins of the Gnostics committed in her: and to Egypt for oppression; but if mystically understood, Rome, or the Roman empire, is conceived by most Protestants to be here intended by Egypt and Sodom; like Egypt for idolatry, tyranny, spiritual darkness, obstinacy, and obduracy; like Sodom for uncleanness, yea, worse than Sodom, uncleanness being not only practised, but tolerated, yea, allowed publicly, licences being there given to such public houses, and books written in defence of Sodomy at Rome, where Christ may be said

to be crucified in his members as long as this apostate power holds up. Observe, 3. The great joy and exultation which is here discovered at the slaughter of these witnesses; the antichristian rabble triumph, and make merry, rejoice, and send gifts to one another. Lord! how madly do the wicked rejoice at the death of those men that used their utmost endeavours to have saved them? "They that dwell on the earth shall rejoice and make merry." Observe, 4. The special reason assigned why the members of antichrist's kingdom did thus triumph at the death of the witnesses, and their supposed utter extinction, namely, because the two witnesses, *tormented them that dwell on the earth*; that is, by their public preaching, by their private reproving, by their denouncing of God's judgments against them: for not suffering them to go on quietly and undisturbedly in the ways of sin, they grew very uneasy with them, and rejoiced when they thought the world fully rid of them. Lord! how does the preaching of thy word, which comforts and supports thy children, which is sweeter to them than the honey, and more esteemed by them than their necessary food, how does the same word preached torment notorious sinners? and instead of receiving the message, they rage at the messenger, and triumph and dance with Herod, to see that head cut off whose tongue was so bold to tell them of their faults: "They rejoiced, because these two prophets that tormented them were slain."

11 And after three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them: and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

The death of the witnesses was described in the foregoing verses, their resurrection is declared in these. This is understood politically by some, that they who were civilly dead, that is, laid aside as useless, were now politically alive; that is, restored to their political work and employment in the church again, God causing princes and magistrates to own and favor them; and accordingly by their ascending up into heaven they understand their re-entering into the church, their re-enjoying their public liberties and gospel privileges, which in comparison of the low and sackcloth condition they were in before, was like heaven and earth unto them. And they *ascended in a cloud*, that is gloriously, and their enemies beheld them with an envious eye, because of the work in their hands, which it was not in their power to hinder. Others understand this resurrection (in the manner forementioned) to be meant not of the same men, but of men of the same spirit and office, restored to the same work, to the admiration of the good, and consternation of the bad; and that the voice of Christ spake to the slain witnesses, saying, Come up hither, that is into heaven, to receive the reward of your sufferings and services, and others that succeed you in office shall partake of your spirit, and perfect that work which you began and carried on. Where note, That oft-times God's faithful wit-

nesses, namely, such magistrates and ministers as have done great things for the church of God, are taken up to heaven before they behold the desired issue, which is left to their successors to see completed.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

These words are conceived by interpreters to set forth the great success of the witnesses' ministry after their resurrection: it was accompanied with a mighty earthquake, or a great shaking of the kingdom of antichrist; inasmuch that a *tenth part of the city fell*: that is, many nations and kingdoms under antichrist's tyranny and dominion shook off the yoke, and disowned his jurisdiction, and fell off from him. Observe farther, What this earthquake and fall produced, namely, a two-fold effect. 1: *Seven thousand were slain*. 2. Others were *affrighted*, turned from their sins, and gave glory to God. Behold here the great power of the word of God, and the happy success thereof, to the shaking of antichrist's kingdom, which falls not at once, but by degrees as it rose. The man of sin is to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth at first, which is a gradual death, till at last he be quite abolished by the brightness of his coming. Upon the whole then we may comfortably conclude, that whatever ground antichrist on the one hand may seem to have gained of late in any place, that yet he is certainly in a deep consumption; nay, far gone in it, and will languish more and more, till he draws his last breath; and on the other hand, whatever clouds may overspread the church of Christ in any place, it will not be long ere they will vanish, and that affairs are moving forwards towards the church's highest outward prosperity and most flourishing condition that she shall ever arrive at on this side heaven, which is to be under the blessed millennium, or thousand years, which began probably with the resurrection of the witnesses at the beginning of the protestant reformation, by the preaching of Luther. Thus speaks our learned Dr More, Myst. Iniq. p. 447. 'I doubt not,' says he, 'but this vision of the resurrection of the witnesses, was a prediction of our Protestant reformation, begun at Spire in Germany, anno 1529, when several German princes and imperial cities made a solemn protestation against the innovations and usurpations of the church of Rome; from whence came the name of Protestants, which continues to this day. This therefore,' says he, '[mark his inference] 'should make our reformation the more sacred, and keep all persons that wish well to our holy religion, from casting any dirt upon our first reformers, whose names ought to be had in honor, and will be so in the church of God throughout all generations.'

14 The second woe is past, and behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded: and there were great voices in heaven,

saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

An account is here given of the angel's sounding the seventh trumpet, at the beginning of antichrist's ruin and downfall. St. John heard great acclamations and shoutings in heaven for the victory which Christ by his witnesses had gotten over him, saying, *The kingdoms of this world*, that is, several kingdoms, or main bodies of kingdoms and nations, are now brought in to acknowledge Christ for their Sovereign and Lawgiver, who did not so before; but whereas formerly they owned another master, namely, antichrist, now they do especially own and acknowledge Christ, by professing to believe in him, and becoming a pure church to him; *And he shall reign for ever and ever*. Even under antichrist's reign and tyranny Christ had a kingdom, but he will have a more visible kingdom in the world, and which shall continue without any eclipse by antichrist, or any other, as it suffered before.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple, the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This chapter concludes with a doxology and solemn thanksgiving in heaven, for the victory which Christ obtained over antichrist here on earth; that is, for the begun victory over him. Here observe, 1. The persons rendering praises, *the four and twenty elders*; all the ministers of the church, say some: the whole church, say others, who are said to sit before God: denoting, 1. That they rest from their labors; they *walked* as pilgrims before, they *sit* now. Would we with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *sit* down in the kingdom of God in heaven? we must with Abraham

walk before God in uprightness here on earth, Gen. xvii. 5. 2. It denotes their honor and dignity unto which they are now advanced; as servants they *stood* before, as friends they *sit* now: but upon this great occasion mark their humble gesture, their protestations and adorations before God, "They fell upon their faces and worshipped." Observe, 2. The ground and occasion of it; what it is which they thus solemnly bless God for; namely, for Christ's victory over his enemies, for assuming to himself his great power, and universal dominion: and because the "kingdoms of the world were now become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ" For if there be joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner unto Christ, what is there, suppose we, at the conversion of nations and kingdoms unto Christ? Behold here the whole host of heaven, the church triumphant in the new Jerusalem, breaking forth into the highest praises for establishing the public exercise of religion in its purity, never more to be driven into corners, as it was twice before; first by pagans, next by pagan christians. Observe, 3. The doxology or thanksgiving itself, *Lord God Almighty, we give thee thanks* for this begun overthrow of antichrist, which by thy almighty power thou wilt certainly carry on, being always the same, and as able to help thy church as ever, "because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." As if they had said, In the time of antichrist's full power, when thy church was under a bitter and bloody persecution, thy power seemed to be laid aside, and thou seemedst not to reign, having thy power obscured by his tyranny; but now thou showest thyself to be a ruler over all the world, both King of saints and King of nations. Observe, 4. The indignation and wrath which the friends of antichrist express upon this occasion, verse 18. *The nations were angry*, that is, the idolatrous nations; they who formerly persecuted, do now fret because they are overcome; they gnash their teeth at the successful progress of the gospel; and because *thy wrath*, that is, the time to execute thy wrath, *is come*, upon all idolaters and false worshippers. And the time of the dead that they should be judged and rewarded: that is, the time is now come, when those witnesses, which were civilly dead, and accounted as dead by the world, shall revive again, or, *the time of the dead*, that is, of those that have been slain by antichrist; the time is come that their blood shall be avenged, and all thy faithful servants and sufferers recompensed and rewarded; particularly *thy prophets*, whose work being greater, such shall their reward be also. "And all that fear thy name, both small and great;" that is, all true believers of a more private capacity, who have cleaved unto Christ's pure and undefiled religion, how obscure soever they have been in the world, none of these shall miss of a recompence, when God's time of rewarding is come, and then "he will destroy them which destroy the earth," that is, those bloody persecutors, who destroy the inhabitants of the earth by persecutions, or false doctrines. Observe, 5. The great blessing which follows upon the downfall of antichrist, verse 19. "The temple of God was opened;" alluding to the frequent shutting up of the temple at Jerusalem by idolatrous princes, Ahab and others, when the ark in which the law of God lay, was not seen; but Hezekiah and Josiah, those two reforming princes, opened the temple, and restored the true worship of almighty God. In like manner, during antichrist's reign, the temple of God was shut up, his true worship suppressed; but now since antichrist's

falling, the temple is opened, the ark seen, the pure word of God expounded, and a more than ordinary presence of God (of which the ark was a symbol) found in his church. Well might the church then, upon this happy occasion, triumphingly say, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

CHAPTER XII.

In this chapter St John has, in a vision, a very clear representation given him of the state and condition of the true church; as also of satan, her grand adversary and assailant; together with the battle between them; the church's victory over him; and the triumph of the faithful for victory.

AND there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;

Observe here, 1. That by the woman we are to understand the christian church in her militant state, called a woman in regard of her weakness and dependency; as also in regard of her fruitfulness, she bringing forth many children unto God, which are born upon her knees. Observe, 2. This woman, the church, is said to appear in heaven, having her original from heaven, her conversation in heaven, her tendency towards heaven, and her dependency upon heaven. Observe, 3. The woman described by her rare perfections, which are three, 1. *Clothed with the sun*, that is, adorned with those graces, which Christ the Sun of Righteousness has put upon her, and environed with the pure light of the gospel shining about her. Having the *moon under her feet*, that is, the legal worship, according to some: the christian church out-shining now the Jewish state of imperfection, casting off, and trampling under the yoke of the Mosaic dispensation. Others by the *moon* understand the world, which is like the moon, full of spots, defiling and polluting, full of changes and alterations, the *fashion of this world passeth away*, 1 Cor. vii. 31. It is never long in one garb; and her having the *moon under her feet* implies, the church's being enabled by Christ to overcome and trample upon all the enjoyments and satisfactions of the world, and to despise all the affronts and insults of the world. 3. *Upon her head a crown of twelve stars*, that is, holding fast the pure doctrine of the gospel, first preached by the twelve apostles, and after them by succeeding ministers, which is as a crown on the church's head. Where note, That the apostles, and all faithful ministers, with them, are styled *stars*. As stars they shine before men, by the light of life and doctrine. As stars they shine with a borrowed light derived from the Sun of Righteousness. Again, as *stars* are in continual motion for the good of the universe, so are ministers of the gospel for the good of the church; as stars they

shine in their own orb, attending the proper duty of their place and station; and as stars shine brightest in the cold winter-nights, so do they in the times of affliction and persecution.

2 And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

The church, typified by a woman, was described in the former verse, by her rare perfections, in this verse by her weak and perilous condition, she cries like a woman in travail for delivery to God in her prayers, to men in her apologies. The plain sense is this, "that the christian church was possessed with an earnest desire to propagate the christian religion throughout the world, and she earnestly cried to God to assist her therein, and strove with utmost endeavours to accomplish this her design; and was truly solicitous to see the success of her labors to the lives of her members." Many and sore have been the sick and breeding fits which the church has conflicted with, by means of heretics and persecutors, which sometimes gave occasion to fear that she would certainly miscarry; but at last God sent her ease from heaven by the birth of a child, which caused the woman to forget all her sorrows; and the prayer of faith was then in the greatest activity, when the woman was found to be in the greatest extremity.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.—

The church was described before; her arch enemy, the devil, is described now; he is called a *dragon* for his subtilty, a *great dragon* for his power, a *red dragon* for his fiery cruelty. His *seven heads* denote his manifold subtleties, and mischievous contrivances, his devices and wicked imaginations against the church; his *ten horns* denote his vast power and great strength, both in himself and his members; also the number and power of his agents, who serve as *horns* to punish and hurt the church. His *seven crowns* upon his head denote his regal power, which he holds by usurpation, and his many victories and conquests which he obtains in the world, yet over none but those who are willingly overcome by him. The whole of the description represents satan as a powerful, subtle, cruel, victorious adversary. All which properties he discovers in the assault he makes upon the ministers of the church, called the *stars of heaven*, which he endeavours to cast down to the earth; that is, to hinder their shining in the firmament of the church. Hence learn, 1. What a mighty enemy the church has, fierce and fiery, red and bloody, full of craft and cruelty, of power and policy; and how deplorable her condition would be, if the Lord himself was not on her side. Learn, 2. Who is the prime author of all that cruelty and bloodshed against the church of God, even the *red dragon* with its heads and

horns, his ministers and agents: the greatest monarchs upon the earth, if they gore and hurt the church, are the base heads and horns of this monstrous dragon.

—And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

That is, "As Herod watched to destroy Christ as soon as he was born, Mat. ii. so while the church was endeavouring to propagate christianity, and make converts to Christ, the dragon watched, intending to devour them." The devil's great design is to crush every good thing in the beginning, to nip grace in the bud, to kill the infant church in the cradle, he is therefore said to *stand before the woman*; to prevent all possibility of her child's escape. Behold his bloody cruelty! but though he stood before her, he had no power to hurt or touch either mother or child; behold his powerful restraint! Observe farther, The child's birth, preservation, and preferment. 1. Its birth, she brought forth a *child*, not *children*, to see the paucity of the church's members, and also their unity; they are all but one man-child, make up all but one body, and the dragon's purpose was to devour all but one, and all at once. 2. Its preservation, the child is *caught up to God and to his throne*; that is, heaven took it immediately into his care and protection, out of the dragon's reach, to his shameful disappointment. 3. Its preferment, it was to *rule all nations with a rod of iron*: that is, with such severity, mixed with lenity, as was needful; the church shall prevail against all opposers. Observe lastly, After the woman's delivery, or flight into the wilderness, is set down, and her continuance there for a time together, with God's protection over her, and provision for her; a plain allusion to Elijah's flying into the wilderness from the rage of idolatrous and bloody Jezebel, and God's feeding him extraordinarily at the brook of Cherith. From the woman's, that is, the church's flying into the wilderness for a while, we learn, That the visibility of the church is not always conspicuous, to her enemies especially. 2. That it is sometimes lawful to fly in time of hot and bitter persecution; *the woman fled into the wilderness*. 3. In that the woman had a place, and food prepared for her, we learn, God's provident care for his church in the day and hour of her greatest extremities; when she lurks and hides herself in obscurity. During the time of antichrist's reign, God will take care that some shall feed her with wholesome food, the doctrine of the gospel, that

sincere milk of the word, to the intent that she may grow thereby.

7 And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels;

8 And prevailed not, neither was there place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

By Michael and his angels understand Christ, whose the angels are, and so much the name imports. Michael, that is, *who like God*: Christ is the likeness of his Father, his essential likeness. St. John in a vision beholds Michael and his angels combating with the dragon and his angels; yea, vanquishing and overcoming them. This may comfort the church under all her conflicts, that at length her Michael will finally prevail, and she in him. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the powerful preaching of the gospel, has weakened the kingdom of sin, satan and antichrist. His angels are his ministers, martyrs; and confessors, those particularly of the first ages, who by their cries to God and apologies to their rulers, by their holy lives, and patient deaths, did overcome their enemies. And thus Michael and his angels, Christ and his ministers, fought against the dragon and his angels, against satan and his cruel instruments, who were so far from prevailing, that they lost ground continually; the christians overcame them by their faith and patience. And *the great dragon was cast down*: he was by the preaching of the gospel deposed from being worshipped as a God, and his power was taken away. From the whole note, 1. That though Michael, *Christ alone*, be able to overcome the dragon, and all his angelic powers, yet for his own greater honor, and their greater confusion, he overcomes him and them by his ministers and faithful servants. Note, 2. If Michael our prince be with us, Christ Jesus the captain of our salvation, our leader, then though the combat may be sharp, yet the victory is sure: for if he be for us, who can (successfully) be against us? Note, 3. That satan and his angels were cast out together; for of the devil and his instruments, the lot shall be alike; they sin together, and they shall suffer together; and shall never be parted. Lord, how dreadful will an imprisonment with devils and damned spirits be to eternal ages? To lie for ever with satan in that mysterious fire of hell, whose strange property it is always to torture, but never to kill; or always to kill, but never to consume. The dragon was not only cast out of heaven with his angels, but both were cast down into hell, even into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and

strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

After Michael and his angels, Christ and his followers, victory over the dragon and his angels, over satan and his instruments, here follows a solemn thanksgiving for the devil's downfall: the saints in heaven join with believers on earth in this song of confidence and triumph: when they speak of God, they say *our God*; and when they speak of the church below, they say *our brethren*; behold a sweet communion between the church militant and the church triumphant: indeed they constitute and make up but one church, one family, one household; the whole family in heaven and earth is, but one. Observe farther, Another name here given to satan, *the accuser of the brethren*; he accuses them continually before God, and by his instruments before men; the primitive christians were accused by their enemies to the magistrates as guilty of the most villainous practices in their religious assemblies: and behold the assiduity of satan in accusing the saints *day and night*; but blessed be God, as satan is a continual accuser, Christ is a continual mediator. Observe again, How the saints overcome satan. 1. By the *blood of the Lamb*; that is, by faith in his blood. 2. By the *word of their testimony*; that is, by their preaching, professing, and practising the word of God. 3. By their sufferings and martyrdom, *they loved not their lives unto death*: that is, they loved not their lives so well but that they were willing to expose them to death, rather than renounce the cause of Christ, and desert their holy profession. Observe lastly, After this great exultation and joy in heaven for the devil's downfall, here is a denunciation of *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea*, upon that account; that is, to all earthly, sensual men; whether they inhabit the continent, or any island in the sea; because the devil is come down full of rage, knowing that his time is short to execute his malice in. Learn hence, 1. Who is the author of wrath, and malice, and revenge: and whose children they are that partake of that spirit and temper: The devil has *great wrath*; that is, his character, and the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. Learn, 2. That something good may be learned from the *evil* one; satan is very busy, doubly diligent, because his time is short; so should we be; our grave and coffin are at hand, our glass has but a little sand; since but a few leaves are remaining in the book of our lives unfilled up, it concerns

us to write the closer, and the faster too; as satan's time for mischief is short, so is our time for doing good.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place: where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Observe here, The incessant and restless malice of satan and his instruments against the church; neither his fore-mentioned disappointment, his present foil and downfall, nor his fear of future destruction, could move him to desist; but having attempted to destroy the church with the fire of persecution before, he endeavours to drown it with a flood of errors now, *Diabolus mutat consilium, non deponit malitiam*; the devil sometimes changes his methods in doing mischief, but never lays down his malice; he persecutes the woman, the church of Christ, after another manner, namely, by a flood of errors and heresies. Observe, 2. The care that God took of his church's preservation from this fatal mischief also; to the woman were given wings of a great eagle, for flight into the wilderness: that is, all means and ways of evasion, which God out of his care for his church provides for her safety and protection in the time of trouble; the church's flight in times of persecution is by no means to be censured or condemned, especially when God by his providence provides her wings; that is, gives her opportunity so to do. Observe, 3. The place she flies into for safety, (namely, into the wilderness), called *her place*, because prepared by God for her safety; *here she is nourished*; that is, hath spiritual food provided for her by God, and a number of faithful ministers are qualified for the feeding of her; for a time, and times, and half a time; that is, for a certain time determined by God, but altogether unknown to us; thus when the church meets with new distresses, God provides for her new deliverances.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman: that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Two things are here observable; a new danger, ver. 15. a renewed succour, ver. 16. Observe, 1. A new danger;

this is set forth. 1. By the author of it, *the serpent*; the former attempt against the church was managed by the wrathful dragon, this is contrived by the subtle serpent; open cruelty is more dreadful, but subtle policy is more dangerous; the cunning devil is a more mischievous enemy to the church of Christ than the raging devil; subtle Julian did the church more mischief than bloody Nero, or Dioclesian. Learn hence, That what mischief satan cannot effect by open cruelty, he will attempt against the church by subtle policy; when he fails as a dragon, he will try what he can do as a serpent. 2. Observe, the matter as well as the author of this danger, "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood;" that is, a flood of errors, heresies, false doctrines, and corrupt opinions, cast out of the mouth of the corrupting seducers, endangering the very essence and being of the church of Christ, particularly the Arian heresy, which prodigiously overspread the world in its time. Heresy may be fitly compared to a flood; it is a corrupting and defiling flood, it is a swelling and increasing flood, it is a drowning and overwhelming flood. Learn hence, That the serpent's flood of errors and false doctrines, is the worst and chiefest of the church's dangers. "The serpent cast out a flood to carry away the woman." Observe, 3. The church's reasonable relief and succour; "The earth helped the woman by opening her mouth and swallowing up the flood, which the dragon cast out of his mouth;" by the earth some understand earthly ones, wicked men, who are said to help the woman, not intentionally, but eventually, by their greedy swallowing down those errors which come out of the dragon's mouth, hearkening to his lies, and believing his errors for truths; others by the earth understand the kings and rulers of the earth, helping the woman, by calling synods and councils to stem the tide, to dam this flood, and to condemn these errors and heresies, which by their overflowing endangered the church's ruin; the devil raised four abominable errors presently after the church had obtained peace, and there was a great concurrence of magistrates and ministers in confuting, censuring, and condemning the same, in and by their councils and synods. 1. The heresy of Arius, who denied the divinity of Christ, this was condemned by the council of Nice, called by Constantine. 2. The heresy of Macedonius, who denied the personality of the Holy Ghost, condemned by a council at Constantinople, called by Theodosius the first. 3. The heresy of Nestorius, who asserted that Christ had two persons, as well as two natures, condemned by a council at Ephesus, called by Theodosius the second. 4. The heresy of Eutychus, who confounded Christ's natures, making him to have but one nature, as well as to be one person: this was condemned by the council of Chalcedon: thus the earth helped the woman; these four councils tended very much to the maintaining the truth, and preserving the church from the flood of error and heresy which the dragon cast out of his mouth. Observe lastly, The dragon's rage, ver. 17. "Hewas wroth with the woman, and made war with the remnant of her seed;" that is, he was greatly enraged because the woman was extraordinarily helped, and his designs wonderfully disappointed, and when he saw he could not ruin the whole church he resolves to attack some particular members of it, even such "as kept the commandment of God, and had the testimony of Christ;" that is, those who kept close to the Scriptures, which contain the doctrine of faith, and testify that Christ

is the only Saviour of the world. Now, from the dragon's making war with the remnant of the woman's seed, we learn how insatiable the bloodthirstiness of satan and his instruments is, who when they had killed the witnesses before, and many others, yet can they not rest till they have killed this little remnant, and made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints; and never let Protestants expect any other, or any better usage at the hands of Romanists, with whom this is a certain principle, that heretics in a nation are to be extirpated root and branch, where it may safely be done; that is, when they are not too numerous, and the loss of one of our lives may not cost two of their own. If any say that Papists are now become better natured by being under the restraint of our laws, I wish them that they may never be tempted out of their humanity by advantages of power; and as Almighty God has once more delivered the neck of this nation from the pinchings of the antichristian yoke, may our sins never provoke him more to deliver us into the hands of those men, whose tender mercies are cruel. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the visions of this, and the following chapter, are represented to St. John the great straits which such christians as were the sincere worshippers of the true God should be reduced to; on the one hand, they are threatened with damnation, if they do worship the beast, chap. xiv. 9, 10. On the other hand, they are threatened with death, if they do not worship it, chap. xiii. 15. So that whenever this should happen, it would be a time of great trial to faithful christians, and therefore it is added, verse 12. Here is the patience of the saints: this is represented in St. John's vision, as the last and extremest persecution of the true worshippers of God, which shall precede the final downfall of Babylon. And when this should happen, when he tells us, that the patience of the saints would be tried to purpose, and it would then be seen who are faithful to God, and constant to his truth: the particulars hereof follow.

AND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Observe here, 1. The place where St. John had the vision related in this chapter; he apprehended himself to stand on the sea-shore; a place fit for the sight he was to see, namely, a *beast rising up out of the sea*. Where note, That it is usual in the prophets, Daniel especially, to set out temporal monarchies oppressing the church by great beasts. Whence we learn, What a base and vile, what a low and mean esteem God has of the mightiest enemies of the church and people; let the world admire them as gods, if they abuse their power God calls them beasts: and as such, in his own time, they shall be destroyed. *I saw a beast rise up*

out of the sea. Observe, 2. The monstrous description of that beast which St. John saw; it had *seven heads*, denoting, say some, the seven hills upon which Rome stands; or the seven sorts of governments successively in the Roman state, say others; and *ten horns*, that is, ten kings under Rome, and condescend with her. Where note, That all such kings, be they ever so mighty or many, which persecute sincere christianity, are vile in the esteem of God, accounted no better than the horns of a bloody beast, which Almighty God, in the end will either blunt or break. And upon the horns, ten crowns, which crowns they hold of God, who is the King of kings. Sovereignty is from heaven, however men come by it, or however they abuse it; which shows the horrid ingratitude of those princes, who having received their power from God, do improve it against him, and turn it upon him by whom they reign. And upon his head, the name of blasphemy; those that apply this description of the beast to Roman Pagan, understand hereby their paganish idol worship in general; and their deifying of the Roman emperors in particular. Others, as most protestants, who apply it to Rome Papal, by this name of blasphemy, understand those blasphemous titles which are given to the pope, as, "Lord God, The universal Head, The Husband of the church The light which came into the world," &c. Which are the incommunicable attributes of Christ; and by flatterers and admirers frequently given to the Papal antichrist, "Upon whose head is the name of blasphemy."

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

St. John here proceeds in giving a further description of this monstrous beast; it was in appearance like a leopard, spotted with divers kinds of idolatry, with variety of idols; with feet like a bear, denoting its strength and fierceness; its mouth like a lion, that is, cruel and ravenous. Next, an account is given from whom this beast receives its power and authority; the dragon, that is, the devil by God's permission, gave unto this beast power and great authority, to deceive by strong delusions, and hurt the soul, as also to kill and destroy the body. Note here, That when the dragon is said to give the beast his throne and power, his seat and great authority, we must not understand it as by right, for all power is from God, but as by usurpation belonging to him. That authority which is claimed to depose kings, to dispose of kingdoms, to dispense with the laws of God, all this is from the dragon, and in no wise from God, "The dragon gave the beast his power, his seat, and great authority."

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

Here St. John farther declares what he saw concerning this beast, namely, 1. That one of its heads was wounded;

by which head many understand the fall of the ancient imperial powers, the decay of its wonted glory; and that ample jurisdiction which Rome heretofore had under the pagan emperors: and by the wounding of this head, they understand the abolishing of paganism and idolatry, and putting a stop to persecution by the christian emperors. 2. It is asserted, That his deadly wound was healed: namely, when idolatry, The same for substance with the pagan and old heathenish idolatry, but in a new dress, was gradually restored by the papal powers. 3. Here is the effect of this healing, all the earth wondered after the beast, that is, followed him in blind devotion. Where, 1. Observe, Who the admirers of the beast are, the earth, the men of the world: no wonder to see them seduced! 2. This admiration is general, the whole earth wonder after the beast: how false is it then, that multitude is a note of the true church. Behold the several instances of the world's wondering after the beast at Rome; they receive their doctrine and worship from him, they make all their appeals to him, all the church officers receive their ordination from him, and are installed by him.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies: and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

From admiration in the former verse, they proceed to adoration in this, they worship both the dragon and the beast, that is, they did worship idols, which are often in scripture called devils; like the Gentiles of old, who are said by St. Paul to sacrifice to devils, and not unto God, 1 Cor. x. 20. Behold here a vast difference between God's judgment and the opinion of the seduced world. They think the worship they give to a creature is given to God; but God accounts it as given to the devil, who is the author of all idolatry. Note next, That as the seduced world worshipped the beast, so do they extol his earthly grandeur and surpassing power, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" Who can resist his power and greatness? The greatest princes are not able to withstand him. See how pomp and worldly grandeur dazzles the eyes of its admirers. Note farther, That a mouth was given this beast to speak, that is, a power by the devil's instigation and God's permission, to utter blasphemies against the Most High. 1. The blasphemous mouth of the beast is opened against the name of God, that is, against the word of God, by which God makes himself known, as a man is known by his name. Now, the word of God is blasphemed by the beast and his worshippers, when it is charged with obscu-

rity, with imperfection, called a *dead letter*, and a *nose of wax*, &c. The spirit of God is then blasphemed, when his divinely inspired writings are thus vilified and undervalued. 2. This blasphemous mouth is opened not only against God's name, but against his *tabernacle*, the place of his instituted worship, meaning by his *tabernacle* the true church, wherein God is worshipped according to his word. God accounts himself blasphemed when his true worshippers are called *heretics*, *schismatics*, and in a way of scorn, *Hugonots*, and the *synagogue of satan*. 3. They blaspheme them that *dwell in heaven*, by which some understand the holy martyrs now in heaven, whom they frequently called damned heretics, blackening their names, and blasting their reputations; others understand it of some saints in heaven, whom they pretend to honor, as the Virgin Mary, &c. They blaspheme them, namely, by speaking of them, and praying to them *blasphemously*, as when they bid the holy Virgin, "in the right of a mother, command her Son." Hence observe, That when we give that honor and worship to saints and angels, which is only due to God, it is an idolatrous and impious blaspheming of them that dwell in heaven; were the Virgin Mary sensible in heaven of that idolatrous adoration which is given her here on earth, with what indignation and disdain would she look down upon this sacrilegious violence offered to her only Son, in robbing him of that divine honor which is peculiarly due to his divine nature? for religious adoration is peculiar to a deity. *

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Observe here, 1. A war proclaimed; the *beast* makes war upon the saints, by bloodshed and persecution, and by the force of those weapons overcomes them; that is, to outward appearance, and in the opinion of the world, they seem to be totally overcome, because visibly slain; but really do the saints overcome him by their patience and constancy under sufferings; and by rejecting his cursed idolatry, and adhering to the truth. Observe, 2. The large extent of the *beast's* power that was given him, namely, *over all kindreds, tongues, and nations*. This must not be understood of individual persons, nor universally of all nations, but of the nations belonging to the Roman empire; whole nations were carried away with his idolatry, though not all of every nation. Christ's flock is a little flock, compared with antichrist's herd; how wrong a note then is multitude of the right church? Observe, 3. That as the power of the *beast* is universal, so is the worship also; *All that dwell on the earth shall worship him*; that is, the generality of the Roman empire shall obey and honor him, and comply with him in his idolatry; few comparatively refusing it. Yet, 4. We have a number excepted, *whose names are writ-*

ten in the book of life. Blessed be God for this comfortable restriction: all are not worshippers of the *beast*. Christ has his number of faithful ones, who are not defiled by antichrist's pollutions; a number whose conversations are in heaven, and whose names are written there, in the book of life, called the book of the Lamb: because it is by him, and by the merit of his blood, that we obtain eternal life. Observe lastly, The title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, he is styled the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, and that in several respects, 1. In the purpose and decree of God. 2. In the promise of God made from the beginning, Gen. iii. 15. 3. In respect of the types, shadows, and sacrifices, whereby his death was prefigured and represented, Christ was slain typically in those sacrifices which Adam and Abel offered up unto God daily. 4. In respect of the virtue and efficacy of his death which was effectual to all that truly believe in him, from the first promise made of him. The merits of Christ's death have saved all that have been saved from the foundation of the world. Behold here, The tender care of God in providing for our salvation before we were, yea, before the world was; and observe also, that the saints of God, in all ages, have been saved the same way, and by the same mean, namely, by faith in the death of Christ, which has extended itself to all true believers from the beginning of the world; and the efficacy of it will reach to all such, even to the end of the world; the virtue of the sacrifice is as fresh as the first moment it was slain, the death of Christ is of eternal efficacy.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Observe here, 1. That this acclamation, *If any man have an ear, let him hear*, it is added in scripture, when something went before, which required a very diligent attention and close application of mind; *If any man have an ear*, that is, a spiritual understanding to discern the meaning of what has been foretold, let him ponder and consider what is here revealed concerning this beast, and take heed that he be not found amongst the number of the worshippers of it. Observe, 2. The consolation here given to the saints, from the consideration of God's just retribution to his and their enemies, "He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity:" that is, the beast, who has brought many of the saints into captivity, shall himself at length be taken captive, and thrown into that lake of fire and brimstone, spoken of, chap. xix. 20. With what measure antichrist metes to others, it shall be measured to him again: God has as many ways to hurt his church's enemies, as they have to hurt his people; if they lead into captivity, so can he: if they kill with the sword, so will he. Observe, 3. The end and design of God in suffering antichrist's rage to break forth against the church; it is for the trial of his church's faith and patience, *Here is the patience and faith of the saints*. Where note, 1. That none can stand under, or bear up under sufferings like saints, 2. That under great sufferings, saints themselves will have

great occasion for the exercise of faith and patience. 3. That the faith and patience of the saints will be made very conspicuous by great and sharp sufferings. 4. That faith and patience must accompany each other in suffering times. 5. Patience is the soul's shoulder to bear what is afflictive at present; faith is the christian's eye to discover a glorious deliverance to come; where no patience is, it is a token of no faith; and where no faith is, there will appear great impatience. Behold then, the faith and patience of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth: and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men.

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth, That they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

Here St. John enters upon the description of a second beast, very different from the former, yet not succeeding the former, but appearing during his continuance; and this beast (whoever he is) we find sundry ways here described, namely, 1. By his original, he *ascended out of the earth*, verse 11, which denotes his rise from a small beginning to a mighty height, as those things which from small seeds grow out of the earth to be tall trees. Thus has one risen from being *episcopus urbis*, to be *episcopus orbis*. 2. He is said to have *two horns*, whereas the former beast had *ten*, verse 1. which signifies ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire, after its dissolution, should be divided. Accordingly, by the two horns here, in all reason, may be understood two of those kingdoms of which this beast, (whoever he be) shall be possessed. 3. He is said to look like a *lamb*, but to speak like a *dragon*; that is, to pretend to great meekness, and make a show of much lenity and mildness in his proceedings, but should really be very cruel; pretending to do all without violence, but doing indeed all by force, assisted by his armed dragons, and booted apostles with javelins in their hands. 4. It is affirmed, verse 12, that he shall arise during the continuance of the first beast, and engage in his cause, assuming to himself as great, or a greater power, than any emperors did before him, causing

the *earth*, that is, all earthly-minded men who are subject to him, to worship the first beast, that is, to yield as great reverence and obedience to his decrees for establishing idolatry, as ever the people did under the pagan emperors. 5. He is remarkable for working wonders, and particularly for causing fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men; that is, he seemeth to the deluded multitude to do as great miracles as Elias did, who brought down fire from heaven to confirm the religion he professed: in like manner the beast here works wonders seemingly great, lying wonders, false miracles, such as false prophets may work, and have wrought for confirming their false doctrines: accordingly we find this beast here called the *false prophet*, elsewhere, chap. xvi. 8, 9. 6. He requires the inhabitants of the earth to make an image to the beast, that is, he persuades them, now professing christianity, to introduce and bring in such a kind of idolatry, that the old heathenish idolatry may seem to revive again. Here note, That the idolatry of the church of Rome is a living image of the old heathenish idolatry; this is but the image of that, that was performed to heathen deities, this to departed saints. Popery, says the learned Mr. More, is such a christianity, as in all points answers the model of the old execrable heathenism, with which the gentiles were enamoured then as are the papists now: thus the wounded and dead image of pagan idolatry revived, and lives again in papal idolatry: good God! that any persons professing to know and worship the blessed Jesus, should thus dishonor him, by intermixing the old heathenish superstitions or something worse, with his holy institutions.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred threescore and six,

St. John proceeds here to give a farther character and description of the beast, which he had begun to describe, verse 11. And 1. His bloody cruelty is set forth, verse 15. "He causeth them to be killed that would not worship the image of the beast." Where, mark, it is not said that he killed them himself, not challenging directly the power of

life and death to himself; but he causeth them to be killed, namely, by the secular power, by kings and princes, who are the horns of the beast, and who give their power and strength to the beast, and war against the Lamb. Again, 2. After his cruelty follows his compulsion, he causes all sorts of men, high and low, bond and free, to receive a mark in their right hand, and in their forehead, in allusion to an ancient custom, which was to mark servants and soldiers on the arm, by which it was known what master or captain they belonged to; in like manner the beast here is said to have a mark for those that are his, which mark seems probably to have been an open owning of him, an alive engagement for him, a professed subjection to him. 3. The beast is here said to interdict and forbid all trade and commerce with those that had not his mark, verse 17. "He causeth that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast." Several bulls and decrees have been sent forth from Rome, commanding that no traffic or commerce be had with any heretic in buying or selling, but only with those that profess themselves members of the Romish church. 4. It is added, that the *Number of the beast is six hundred sixty six*, that is, that the numeral letters of a certain word or name being computed, should amount to that number. I shall close this chapter with the words of a great man, archbishop Tillotson, on Rev. xiv. 13, page 329, "Unto whom all the forementioned characters of the beast do agree, and especially the number of his name, I shall not presume to conjecture, much less positively to determine, because it is said to require a particular wisdom and understanding to find it out: "Here is wisdom, let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast." However the event will discover it." And again, on St. Luke ix. 55. he thus speaks; "It is believed by many, and not without cause, that the Pope and his faction are the antichristian beast; I will say no more than I know in this matter; I am not certain that it is he that is particularly designed in Scripture by that name; but however that be, I challenge antichrist himself, whoever he is, and whenever he comes, to do worse and wickeder things than he has done; verily it almost looks uncharitable, barely to relate what these men have not blushed to act."

CHAPTER XIV.

The design and scope of this chapter is threefold: first, to show that during the reign of the beast, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, Christ had a church, a number of virgins, of pure and unpolluted souls, who did zealously and sincerely worship him. Secondly, That the light of the gospel, which had been so long suppressed, should at length break forth gloriously, in the faithful preaching of it, to the downfall of Babylon, and the comfort of Zion, the church of God. Thirdly, The chapter acquaints us with the happy condition of such as die in the Lord; and particularly of the martyrs which die for the Lord; and concludes with an account of the dreadful punishments which God would inflict upon their persecutors.

AND I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

This verse represents to us a fresh vision which St. John had, in which several things are very observable, as, 1. What and whom St. John saw, a *Lamb*, by whom Christ is to be understood. 2. The posture which this Lamb was found in, *he stood*, showing thereby his readiness to deliver his church, and to do every thing that is needful for her. 3. The place where he stood on, *mount Sion*, that is, in the midst of the church. Christ ever has been, is, and will be present with his church, even to the end, although his presence with her is not always sensibly perceived, his care is mysteriously exercised; he is then taking most care of her when he seems to take least, nay, when the men of the world think he takes none at all. Observe, 4. His company and attendants; and they are described two ways, 1. By their number, to wit, an hundred forty and four thousand, whereby the collective body of the whole church is to be understood, and intimates to us, that in the worst of times, even when apostasy and persecution do most universally prevail, Christ never wants a church, and is not without a number of true worshippers. 3. They are described by their badge or marks, having the *Father's name written on their foreheads*; in opposition to the mark of the beast mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and in allusion to a custom amongst men, who put their mark or names upon their goods, especially upon such as are very precious, as silver or gold vessels, and the like; so that the mark of the Father's name upon the forehead denotes both the precious esteem which God has of his people, and also intimates their open profession and owning of him for their Lord and Master, and their faithful adherence to his worship. Learn hence, That the sincere worship of God, with the open and avowed profession of his holy and undefiled religion, accompanied with a suitable conversation, is a better mark and note of the true church than multitudes and numbers, which are a note of the antichristian synagogue; the world wonders after the beast, when mount Sion here affords only an hundred and forty-four thousand, which had the Father's name written on their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

St. John here describes the true worshippers of Christ in the midst of antichristian idolatry, where we have, 1. The acceptable worship they perform, prayer and praise, and

heavenly exercise, which like *thunder*, and the *voice of many waters*, sounds loud in the ears of God, and is certainly heard by him, and is melodious like the *harp*, and therefore acceptable to him as the sweetest music is to us. 2. The persons described who perform this acceptable worship, such as were *redeemed from the earth*; where the *earth* is *not* for earthly minded men the *false church*; the meaning is, that God has fetched this small number of true worshippers, the hundred and forty-four thousand, from among the false worshippers and impure ones, he hath rescued them from the world of idolaters; and from the superstitious multitude. 3. The persons described before whom this worship is performed, *before the throne, and before the four beasts and elders*: Before the throne, to show the reverence and sincerity wherewith they performed the same as in the sight of the great and glorious God; and before the beasts and elders, that is, the whole congregation of the saints, according to that of the Psalmist, *Psalm 82*: 7. "God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him."

4 These are they which were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

St. John proceeds here in describing the true worshippers of God, which would not comply with antichristian idolatry. 1. He styles them *virgins*, thereby intimating that they are the chaste spouse of Christ, and the true church, who worship God alone with religious worship, and they have not defiled themselves with women, that is, spiritually committed whoredom; they have not been inveigled with the whore to commit spiritual fornication. Where note, That idolatry is a filthy sin, it is as odious to God as whoredom and uncleanness; and an idolatrous church is a filthy whore, unworthy to claim the title of a mother, unless it be the mother of fornications. 2. They are said to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; this is spoken in opposition to those who followed the beast, and denotes their imitation of Christ's example, and their firm adherence to the purity of his doctrine and worship, although it exposes them to hazard and danger. 3. They are called the *first fruits unto God and the Lamb*, which denotes their paucity, like a few sheaves in comparison of the whole harvest; their sanctity, the first-fruits were holy to the Lord, and were his peculiar portion, also their safety and security, as the first fruits were God's portion, so it was both sacrilegious and unsafe to rob God of his portion. By calling them the first-fruits which were holy to the Lord, we see the special interest and propriety that God has in his faithful servants and true worshippers beyond all others, they are his peculiar portion, his inheritance, his treasure, which he will ever take care of, and be concerned for.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Here St. John closes the description of the forementioned followers of the Lamb. 1. With the character of their integrity, like the Lamb, no guile is found in their mouth, as there was none in his, 1 Pet. ii. 22. they were free from that hypocrisy which was found amongst antichrist's followers, who profess to worship God, but adore their idols: Sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man was found with them. 2. They are said to be without fault before God, which may be understood comparatively; they have no such faults as antichrist's followers are guilty of; they worship God aright, and are approved by him; or if absolutely, we must understand it of their glorification in heaven, where all the saints are without spot, and blameless before the throne of God, perfectly like unto God and the Lamb, as well in purity as in immortality.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Here St. John has another vision of an angel flying in the midst of heaven with great swiftness, which interpreters apprehend to signify the faithful minister's zeal and diligence in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to a lost world. Where note, 1. The title given to the gospel of Christ, it is called the *everlasting gospel*; so it is, partly in regard of its author the everlasting God, partly because it promises and offers everlasting life, but chiefly because it was preached from the beginning of the world; and shall continue to the end of the world, and never be abrogated, as the legal administration was. Note, 2. The universality of that grace and salvation which in and by the gospel is held forth and tendered even unto all nations, tongues, kindred, and people; so that none are debarred, but those who by impenitency and unbelief do wilfully and finally debar themselves. Note, 3. That God sending the everlasting gospel to be preached, is here called the *hour of his judgment*, the preaching the gospel is the hour of mercy to some, but of wrath and judgment to others, even to all refusers and contemners; and accordingly all are warned to fear God, and give glory to him, and instead of worshipping idols and images, to worship the true God according to his will revealed in his word.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,

Here we have the second angel's proclamation, denouncing the fall of Babylon, whose fall is in the prophecy threat-

ened, and in the threatening ingeminated; *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, to show the certainty of her downfall: and it is observable how this comes in, immediately after the restoring of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses, "I saw an angel fly, having the everlasting gospel to preach," verse 6. "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen," verse 8. Whence learn, That it is the zealous and faithful preaching of the gospel which is the ruin of antichrist, and the means of his downfall and destruction; this is the breath of the Lord's mouth, by which he is consumed, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*. *Quest.* What is here meant by *Babylon*? *Ans.* All agree that literal Babylon is not here meant, which was the chief city of Chaldaea, but spoken figuratively; and it is as generally agreed that by Babylon is Rome here intended: some will have it Rome Pagan, under the Heathen emperors, others Rome Papal, under the antichristian tyranny, and that she is paralleled with Babylon for her idolatry and cruelty, yea, far exceeding her in both, "for in her is found the blood of the prophets, of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," Rev. xviii. 24. Observe next, her ruin declared in the present tense, *is fallen*; as if already accomplished; and ingeminated, *Is fallen, is fallen*; which repetition denotes both the certainty of her fall, and the joy which the church should express upon that occasion; though Babylon be never so great, yet she shall fall, she shall assuredly fall; and it is the church's duty to pray, that as it is in the prophecy, so it may be in the history, that *Babylon is fallen*, and to express the highest joy upon that great occasion. Observe lastly, The cause of Babylon's ruin is here assigned, *she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication*. Where, 1. Note, That by *fornications*, her errors, idolatries, and false worship are understood. Note, 2. That these are compared to wine upon several accounts. Is wine pleasant to the palate? so is idolatry to corrupt nature, which is hugely pleased with a pompous worship, and a sensual religion. Is wine inflaming? so is idolatry: inflaming themselves with idols, Isa. lvii. 5. Does the wine deceive, and insensibly steal upon the drinker, and intoxicate him ere he is aware of it? so doth error and idolatry grow upon persons by insensible degrees; and accordingly, chap. xiii. the beast is said to deceive them that dwell on the earth: in a word, as persons drunk with wine are altogether incapable of counsel and advice from their best friends, in like manner such as are drunk with error and idolatry, with the wine of the whore's fornication, are besotted, benumbed, will not acknowledge their error, nor receive instruction. Note, 3. That this wine, as sweet as it is, is called *the wine of wrath*, partly because it inflames them that are drunk therewith with rage and cruel fury against sincere worshippers, and partly because it brings the wrath of God upon them that drink it; little do idolaters think of this, because it is a worship of their own invention, it pleases them because it feasts their outward senses, it is as grateful as wine unto them, but they forget that this wine is mixed with wrath, even with the wrath of God, the dregs of which shall be wrung out, and all idolaters shall drink them up.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast with his image, and

receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Observe here, The great and special care which Almighty God takes to warn men and women of those dreadful plagues, which should most certainly come upon the heads of idolaters; "a third angel followed, crying with a loud voice;" O how good is God, in that he doth always premonish before he punishes! warns before he strikes, and advises all not to partake with others in their sins, lest they be partakers of their plagues? Observe, 2. A most dreadful denunciation of the wrath of God, against all those who shall "worship the beast and his image," that is, submit to the enjoined idolatry, and "receive his mark in their forehead, or hands," that is, yield obedience to the beast as a servant, and openly own subjection to him as his slaves. Lord! what a dreadful guiltiness is it to follow antichrist, and to continue obstinate in idolatry, after God has sent one angel after another, minister after minister, to acquaint them both with their sin and danger. Observe, 3. The denunciation itself in several parts of it. 1. They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God," that is, for their sin shall partake of severe judgments, the effects of God's wrath. Mark, Here is wine for wine: for the "wine of Babylon's fornication," here is "wine of the wrath of God;" the former wine was not so sweet, but the latter shall be as sharp. 2. Here is the quality of this wrath, "it is poured out without mixture;" its being poured out shows the abundance of it, and without mixture, shows that it is without the least drop of mercy to allay the extremity of their torment. 3. It is called "a cup of indignation," thereby intimating, that it is not the correction of a father, which is accompanied with lenity and love, but the vengeance of a judge that designs utter destruction. 4. Here is the effect of their drinking of this cup of the Lord's indignation, their being tormented with fire and brimstone, which expression denotes these sinners' torments to be most exquisite, both intolerable and indeterminate, and their punishment both ceaseless and endless. 5. It is here said, that this their torment shall be in the presence of the holy angels, and of the Lamb; in the sight of the Lamb, against whom and in the sight of the angels, before whom they had sinned in worshipping the beast, they shall see them, but none shall help them. 6. The eternity as well as the extremity of their torments is here set forth; "their smoke ascends for ever

and ever;" the torments of hell are here set forth as most acute and exquisite, and as endless and ceaseless, they have no rest day nor night, not a moment's ease. It is well observed by Mr. Mede, that there is not a more terrible description of punishment in the whole book of God, than is here denounced against those idolaters which adhere to the beast, "the smoke of their torment," that is, the fire and smoke wherewith they are tormented, ascendeth up for "ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." And if the church of Rome, or papal Babylon, be here intended, and not pagan, as most protestants believe and affirm, then this shows that those of her communion, living and dying in a firm adherence to the chief doctrines of popery, and framing their lives by them, after they have had, or might have had, sufficient means to convince them of their error and idolatry, do expose their salvation to extreme hazard and danger. Blessed be God for our happy reformation, from the idolatry and superstition, from the tyranny and oppression, and the intolerable yoke of the church of Rome. God grant that we may be reformed in our lives as well as in our religion, otherwise our damnation is as sure as theirs is great, for the holiest doctrine and purest worship will be of no avail to impure worshippers and unholy livers; it matters not what church, or what communion a bad man is of, for it is certain he cannot be saved by any.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

That is, here at this time will be exercised all the faith and patience of Christ's faithful servants, and this their exercise of these graces will make it appear that they were true and not counterfeit christians; it follows, "here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," that is, who discover themselves sincere in their profession, by obeying the commands of God, and rightly believing in our Lord Jesus Christ. Where note, What is the characteristic mark of a sincere christian, namely, faith, and obedience united together, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to the will of God in all things, are never separated where they are sincere.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.

These words in their original and primary intention were delivered by the Spirit, and commanded to be written by St. John, for the support and comfort of the church under that severe persecution which should befall it; and to declare the happy condition of martyrs particularly, and such as die for the Lord; but they may be considered in a greater latitude, and be of general use to the church of God in all ages, and under all circumstances, and administer comfort to all believers who die in the Lord, that is, in the faith of the Lord, in the fear of the Lord, and in the favor of the Lord, to all that die sincere christians, both in faith and

practice. Here note, 1. A solemn declaration of the blessed state of good men after this life, their death is blessed, and a blessing to them. Note, 2. The time from whence their blessedness commences, from henceforth, that is, from the time of their death, then doth their blessedness begin. Thence learn, that all good christians, immediately upon their dissolution and departure out of this life, are in a blessed and happy condition. Note, 3. Wherein the blessedness of the righteous after their departure doth consist. 1. In resting from their labors, that is, from all the troubles, sorrows, and sufferings, from all the calamities, infirmities, and miseries of this frail mortal state; no sin shall affect them, no sorrow afflict them, no danger affright them. 2. In reaping the comfort of all the good works they have done in the world, "their works follow them," that is, 1. A delightful remembrance of their good works is found with them, which if it refreshes their souls with transporting pleasures now, how will it swallow them up with the highest transports of complacency and delight then? 2. The blessed fruits and happy effects of their good works and the special reward belonging to them, shall accompany good men into another world, which will render them completely blessed, by procuring for them, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, an admission into heaven, where they shall drink of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Note lastly, How this truth concerning the future blessedness of the righteous, deserves our most serious and attentive regard and meditation, because delivered by an audible voice from heaven, expressly commanded to be written and confirmed by the solemn asseveration of the Spirit, "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

In these verses a description is given of Christ as coming to judgment; to inflict punishment upon his stubborn enemies, and here we have the judge described, 1. By his form or shape, he was one like the Son of man. 2. By his place and posture of judgment, sitting on the white cloud, the cloud denoting the sovereignty of the judge, and whiteness prefiguring the uprightness of his proceedings, and both signifying his speed and swiftness in coming to execute judgment: on this white cloud did he sit, denoting thereby, both his composedness and freedom from all passion and

perturbation as a judge, and also his majesty and authority, sitting as a king upon his throne, as well as like a judge upon his tribunal. 3. He is described by his royal ornament, *having on his head a golden crown*; behold here the different estate of our Lord Jesus Christ above, from what it was here below; here crowned with thorns, there crowned with gold, the reward of his sufferings! blessed be God, that as it was with the head so shall it be with all the members. 4 By the instrument which he had in his hand fit for the work which he had in hand, namely, a sharp sickle for the reaping of the earth. A sickle is a circular instrument, and compasseth the corn round about which it is to cut down; the judgment of Christ upon the wicked will embrace them all, not a soul of them shall be able to escape it; and a sharp sickle signifies the quality of his judgment, that it will be severe. Behold here the unavoidable destruction of the wicked, and how impossible it is for them to escape the judgments of Christ: all the wicked together are no more in the hand of Christ than as an handful of grass, or ripe corn, to a sharp sickle in a strong hand.

In the fifteenth verse, we have a manifestation of the church's fervent desire that Christ would make speed, and hasten his work, and come quickly to judgment, both for the expiation of their glory, and for the destruction of his own and their enemies; "thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the harvest is ripe;" that is, it is full time to execute thy judgments on the wicked, for their sins (which call for these judgments) are now come to the height. Behold here Christ's day of judgment is like a day of harvest: when the corn is ripe, the sickle is got ready; when the sickle is got ready, it is set to work; when it is set to work it cuts down all, wheat and tares, corn and grass, without discrimination; but the Lord of the harvest soon commands a separation to be made of the good grain from the tares, of the righteous from the wicked, laying up the former in the granary of heaven, binding up the latter for the fire of hell.

In the sixteenth verse we have observable, 1. Christ's ready answering of, and complying with, the desires of his people, to thrust in the sickle of his judgment, and reap the earth; "he that sat on the cloud did thrust in his sickle." How ready is Christ to fulfil the desires of them that fear him, to hear their cry, and help them in his own time, in the best and fittest season! Observe, 2. The great and infinite power of our Lord Jesus Christ, that upon the thrusting in of his sickle, the whole earth was presently reaped. Behold the ability of Christ for judgment, as well as his impartiality in judging; such a judge is he, as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a judge, as the riches of the wealthiest, cannot bribe; such a judge, as the subtlety of the wisest cannot deceive; in a word, such a judge, as there is no appealing from, no repealing of his sentence. O great day! when the stiffest knee shall bow at the tribunal of Christ, and the strongest back shall bend under the insupportable burden of the wrath of the Lamb; when the Alexanders and Cesars, which once shook the earth, and caused the world to tremble, shall revere and lie prostrate at the foot of Christ! Behold then, and admire the wonderful power and dexterity of Christ in judging, that upon the thrusting in of his sickle the whole earth was presently reaped?"

17 And another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

20 And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

In the former verses we meet with the metaphor of an harvest, in these we meet with that of a vintage; there the wicked were compared to ripe corn fit for the harvest, here to ripe grapes fit for the wine press; signifying by both, that the wicked, by filling up the measure of their sins do make themselves ripe and ready for judgment. Note here, 1. That as the true church is called a vine, so is the wicked antichristian church here called; but with this addition, *a vine of the earth* cleaving to, and only savoring of the earth; a good name will signify little in judgment; to be called christians, virgins, &c. what will it profit, without burning and shining lamps? Note, 2. Whereas the grapes of this vine are said to be not only ripe, but fully ripe, how great is the forbearance and long-suffering of God towards the wicked? *Maximum miraculum est Dei longanimitas*, the patience of God towards sinners is the greatest miracle in the world; but though lasting it will not be everlasting: when long abused, it turns at last into fury; ripeness in sin is a sure prognostication of judgment at hand. Note, 3. The vine with all its clusters is gathered, small and great, one and another, all shall appear before the bar of Christ, chap. xx 12. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those books." Note, 4. Whither this degenerated vine, with all its clusters, was cast, namely, into the wine-press of God's wrath, which is called *a great wine-press*, because it can contain all the wicked; it will hold them all, be they ever so many: and is said to be trodden; that is, by Christ, denoting the severity of that vengeance which will be inflicted upon sinners; the grapes which have hung a long time ripening in the sun are severely pressed at last. Note, 5. That the blood which came out of the wine-press, (the blood of the grape) was so much

in quantity, that it came up to the "horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs;" all metaphorical expressions, signifying, that wise is the wrath of God, and the cup of his indignation; and the hyperbolical expression of its height, reaching as high as the horses' bridles; and of its length, reaching more than a thousand furlongs, show that mighty deluge and inundation of God's wrath which the wicked in general, and all antichrist's followers in particular, shall not only drink of, but swim in; and as they shed the blood of the saints abundantly; in like manner, God will give them blood to drink in great abundance. Note lastly, That although these two metaphors of the harvest and the vintage signify one thing only, the vision is doubled, like Pharaoh's dream, to show the certainty thereof, yet we may conceive that the similitude of a vintage here holds forth greater judgments than the harvest: Almighty God, in his providential dispensation towards the wicked, proceeds gradually; as they proceed from one degree of wickedness, so does he from one degree of wrath and vengeance to another; the vintage follows the harvest, the sharp sickle follows the sickle, the harvest is said to be ripe, the vintage to be fully ripe; if the blood of God's anger in this life will not wash sinners clean, the deluge of his wrath in the next will wash them quite away; "blood came out of the wine-press, even to the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." Eternal thanks to Christ the Lamb, who has delivered his from this dreadful wrath to come!

CHAPTER XV.

AND I saw another sign in heaven, a great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

This and the following chapter acquaints us with a fresh vision, which St. John had of the pouring forth of the vials, or the inflicting of the seven last plagues and judgments upon the world, upon the heathen world, say some, upon the antichristian world, say most. "I saw seven angels, having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God;" where by seven angels, understand the ministers and executioners of the wrath of God: by the seven plagues, understand the last dreadful judgments that should be inflicted, which would make a final end of him, whoever he be, that they should be poured forth upon him one after another. Where note, 1. How the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering goodness of God is wonderfully seen in his carriage towards sinners: though he punishes the wicked sometimes, to let them see that his justice is not asleep, yet he doth not stir up all his wrath, nor poureth it out all at once upon them, but gradually; desirous of, and waiting for their repentance, even when he has begun in justice to punish them. Note 2. Whereas it is said, *in them*, (that is, in the present seven plagues) *is filled up the wrath of God*;

we learn what final impenitency and incorrigibleness under former judgments, will produce at last; namely, judgment to the uttermost; ripeness in sin will at last make men ripe for ruin: and when they have filled up the measure of their sin, God will fill up the measure of his wrath; *in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

2 And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sung the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

There seems here to be an allusion to the Israelites' deliverance out of Egypt, and to the song of Moses upon that occasion, recorded Exod. xv. As they were delivered out of literal Egypt, so these from mystical Egypt, both nests of idolatry and false worship; a deliverance from both, which deservedly called for a song of thanksgiving. "I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire;" that is, a great number of pure zealous christians, their multitude being represented by the sea, their purity by glass, and their zeal by "fire, who had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image;" that is, who overcame all temptations to idolatry, both from the pagan and antichristian emperors, called the beast his image. "Having the harps of God in their hand," in allusion to the musical instruments used in the temple-service, and denoting hearts fitted for, and tuned by, the spirit of God; to praise him with cheerfulness for preserving them from being overcome by temptations to idolatry. Learn hence, That such as are sincerely gracious, are truly thankful to God for all his benefits and blessings, but especially for their preservation from sin, and their getting victory over temptations. Observe next, The work of solemn praise and thanksgiving, which these purified and preserved souls were engaged in, and employed about; "They sung the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord." Where note, 1. The title of the song, namely, "The song of Moses and the Lamb." The song of Moses, that is, a song much like unto that of Moses and the Israelites, after they had passed safely through the Red Sea, Exod. xv. And the song of the Lamb; so called, because it was a song indited by the Spirit of the Lamb, and tending to advance the glory of the Lamb. Note, 2. The matter of the song,

which is divided into two parts. 1. The church's confession and declaration of those works which Christ doth; "Great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways;" that is, they are great and wonderful works, fit only to be done by him who is the Lord God Almighty; just and true; well becoming him who is King of saints. 2. The use which the church makes of these works; and that is, 1. To record, celebrate, and punish them. 2. To oblige and bind themselves faster, and closer to him in his worship and service. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy." Observe farther, The titles, which are here by the church given unto God. 1. "The Lord God Almighty." A title full of comfort to the saints in their greatest straits, and full of terror to their enemies in the midst of their abundance. 2. He is styled the King of saints, they receiving special protection from him, and he exercising a particular care over them. 3. "He only is said to be holy;" that is, essentially and casually: essentially in himself, and casually with respect to us; all holiness is originally in him, all holiness is derivatively from him, therefore should the praise thereof be given to him. Observe lastly, The duty inferred from all those glorious titles which are here given to God, and for all the great and marvellous works done by him; "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" As if he had said, "All ought to do so, and there is great reason for so doing." As God is to be feared because he is full of power and justice, so then especially should his people fear him, when he is taking vengeance on his enemies, his own and his church's adversaries: "Who shall not fear thee? for thy judgments are made manifest."

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Observe here, 1. The vision which St. John had; he thought he saw the Holy of Holies open to him, and seven angels coming forth with seven plagues, as the executioners of God's judgments upon idolatrous persons. Where note, 1. The instruments employed by God for executing his wrath upon sinners, *angels, seven angels*; not that he needs them, but he is pleased to make use of them; and they are but instruments in his hand, his bow, and his battle-axe, mere dead tools, who receive all their efficacy from the hand that uses them: their presence adds no strength to him, their absence makes the work no more difficult before him. Note, 2. From whence these seven angels came, namely, *out of the temple*, out of the oracle, more immediately from the presence of God; implying, that they came forth to execute vengeance by God's special directions; and not barely by his permission; and consequently that the work was very acceptable and well-pleasing unto God which they went about. Note, 3. How they are furnished, *having seven plagues*, namely, to inflict upon the idolatrous enemies of the church. Note, 4. In and after

what manner these angels were apparelled and appeared. 1. They were clothed in *pure white linen*, to denote the holiness of their persons, as also the holiness of that work which they had then in hand. 2. This clothing of theirs was girded to them, expressing thereby their great readiness for, and their great alacrity and cheerfulness in their work. 3. The girdle wherewith they were girded was a *golden girdle*, exactly answering the habit of the high priest, when he entered into the Holy of Holies, to inquire of God, or came out with an answer from God. From the whole learn, That when the Lord comes to pull down Babylon, as well as to build up Zion, he will appear in glory: the angels are God's special ministers; when they go forth to pour out the vials of his wrath upon Babylon they appear gloriously apparelled, glittering like the high-priest, and girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. That what was called seven plagues in the foregoing verse, is here called *seven golden vials full of the wrath of God*: In this verse vials are full cups. Vials of wrath are prepared when the measures of a people's sins are filled up; full cups of sin are followed with full vials of God's wrath. Next, these vials are said to be of *gold*, signifying, that these judgments proceed from a just God, with whom there is no corruption nor iniquity in judgments, he being holy in all his ways and righteous in all his works. These vials are also said to be "*full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever*," as an aggravation of the same, it not being like the wrath of a mortal man, of short continuance, but of endless duration; it is the wrath of him that ever lives to maintain his wrath, and to uphold and sustain the sinner under the execution, and infliction of this wrath, that the sinner cannot run from him. O what a fearful thing is it, to fall into the hands of the living God, whose wrath is both intolerable and interminable! the sinner can neither stand under it, nor flee from it. Observe, 2. The executioners of this wrath are said to be *seven angels*. The angels, which are merciful attendants upon the godly, are also at God's command, the executioners of this wrath upon the wicked. These angels are here said to be *seven*, to signify that God's judgments upon his church's adversaries shall be heavy and great: one angel plagued all Egypt, and destroyed Sennacherib's mighty host, but here went out seven angels to destroy antichrist. Observe, 3. The tremendous dreadfulness of this wrath, intimated by filling the temple with smoke, thereby signifying, that the wrath of God kindled against his enemies shall be unto them like a devouring and consuming fire, before the flames of which burst forth, a cloud of smoke appears. "And the temple was filled with

smoke from the glory of God, and from his power." Learn thence, That Almighty God is glorified in the destruction, as well as in the salvation of sinners; his glory is as well seen in his smoking wrath against the wicked, as in his saving mercy towards the godly. "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power;" it follows,—*No man was able to enter into the temple*; that is, to deprecate God's anger, and supplicate his mercy, or to avert the plagues threatened, and now just ready to be inflicted; when mercy has been long offered and despised, the Lord at last becomes inexorable, and will suffer none to intercede, or plead with him, Jer. xv. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind cannot be towards this people; cast them out of my sight, &c. The sins of a people may sometimes grow to such an height, that Almighty God will no longer be entreated; and when we know it, it is our duty to cease praying for them, *Hæc, uoc, uoc*, be unto such a people!

CHAPTER XVI.

In the former chapter, preparation was made, and a general commission given for inflicting the seven plagues, and pouring forth the seven vials upon the antichristian state. In this chapter we read an account at large, of the infliction of those plagues, and the effusion of those vials accordingly; and for as much as Rome is often in this prophecy compared to Egypt, Sodom, and Babylon, for their idolatry, cruelty, and other sins, Almighty God is here pleased to parallel her plagues with theirs: and it is observable that many of the plagues mentioned in this chapter do very nearly resemble the plagues of Egypt, recorded in the book of Exodus, as will appear by consulting the chapter itself, which speaks thus:

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Observe here, 1. The command given to the seven angels, the executioners of God's justice, to do their office, namely, in pouring out the vials of his wrath upon the earth. The command is here said to be given by a voice, by a great voice; because it was the command of a great God, and about a great work; and it is said to come out of the temple, in allusion to the Holy of holies, the place of God's exhibiting himself, and from whence he gave forth oracles of old. Observe, 2. How the seven angels (the instruments of God in executing his judgments) receive their commission from God, and pour out not one vial on the earth till they are required so to do; and being called *vials of the wrath of God*, it gives us this intimation, that what is done against antichrist is not the effect of man's revenge, but the fruit of

God's wrath; and whereas vials are vessels of large content, but of narrow mouth, which pour out slowly, but distil effectually, and drench deeply, it imports, that the wrath of God is, though slow, yet sure; it comes upon sinners gradually; but if, upon its approach, they repent not, it will at last, like a mighty torrent, wash them away from off the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vials upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Observe here, 1. What allusion this plague inflicted upon Babylon has to that plague which God of old inflicted upon Egypt, Exod. ix. 9. Egypt had her boil, breaking forth, with blains upon man, and upon beast! in like manner, the worshippers of the beast having noisome and grievous sores upon them; that is, great trouble and uneasiness of mind upon the first prospect of the shaking of their kingdom, by discovering the vanity, blasphemy, hypocrisy, and tyranny, of their devised religion; even as sores and blains do vex and torture those that are troubled with them. Learn hence, that it is no small vexation and trouble to the wicked, when they have their sins detected and discovered, it is as great a torture to their minds as an ulcer or a boil is to their bodies.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers, and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Observe here, That this second and third plague poured out upon the sea, and the rivers of waters, whereby they became blood, have a manifest allusion to that plague of Egypt whereby all the waters were turned into blood, Exod. vii. 19. Observe farther, That by the sea and the rivers full of blood, the bloody persecutors in the antichristian church are supposed to be meant, who, by slaughter and bloodshed, seek to plant and propagate a bloody religion throughout the earth. Observe lastly, That the pouring out of these vials gradually and successively upon idolaters and persecutors, and not all together, and all at once, but one after another, teaches us how abounding the patience, forbearance and long-suffering goodness of God is even towards the worst of sinners; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:

6 For they have shed the blood of

saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink ; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

These verses seem to be a key to let us into the right understanding of the verses immediately foregoing : and clearly show, that as the idolatrous enemies of the church did shed the blood of saints and martyrs, so should theirs be shed ; which is called *their having blood to drink*. Here note, 1. The approbation which the angel gives of the equity and righteousness of God's judgments upon the bloody persecutors : " Righteous art thou, O Lord ! for thou hast given them blood to drink." Where the retribution which God makes of blood for blood, shows the righteousness of God in his judgments inflicted ; and also declares that Almighty God doth sometimes so suit his judgments to the sin committed, that persons may read their sin in their punishment. As these persecutors thirsted after blood, so here they get blood to drink. Note, 2. How the angel in the fifth verse, and the other in the seventh verse, do both rejoice in the execution of God's judgments, and in the terrible revenge of the blood of saints. For thus they sing, " Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments."

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun ; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues : and they repented not, to give him glory.

Observe here, 1. That the fourth vial is said to be poured forth upon the sun, which metaphorically taken in scripture usually signifies some great prince or potentate : here the head of the antichristian party is supposed to be the sun, upon which the wrath of this vial falls. Observe, 2. The effect which follows hereupon, *Power was given him to scorch men with fire* ; and the event which ensued was double, *men blasphemed the name of God, and repented not, to give him glory*. Learn hence, 1. That although God sends his judgments to call the wicked to repentance, yet they will not repent of sin, even when they lie under the wrathful hand of God, but will rather break forth to farther wickedness, even to blaspheme the holy name of God. Learn, 2. That what the damned do in hell, where the wrath of God is poured out upon men to the uttermost, that do incorrigible and unreclaimed sinners upon earth ; they are scorched with great heat, the vengeance of God cometh upon them ; they are mad and enraged, and blaspheme the holy and just God, who bringeth such plagues upon them ; but they have no sense of their sins, no thoughts of turning unto God, or

of giving glory to him : these men here blasphemed, but repented not.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast : and his kingdom was full of darkness : and they gnawed their tongues for pain.

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pain and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Observe here, 1. The gradual approaches which Almighty God makes by his plagues and judgments towards the antichristian beast, he began farther off at first, and then came nearer and nearer to him ; the first vial was poured out upon the earth, the second upon the sea, the third upon the rivers, the fourth upon the sun, now the fifth upon the seat of the beast ; that is, probably, the seat of his empire, the chief place where he appeareth in the highest majesty and glory. This should teach us all at the first alarm of judgments to draw near to God by a true and timely repentance, before he comes nearer to us by a succession of plagues and punishments. Observe, 2. The effect and consequence which did ensue and follow upon the pouring out of this vial upon the throne or seat of the beast. 1. His kingdom was full of darkness ; this vial did not destroy, but distress him, it filled his kingdom with the darkness of misery and trouble, of calamity and confusion ; not but that the kingdom of the beast was a kingdom of darkness before but that darkness was a darkness of ignorance and error : this is a darkness of calamity and horror ; by the loss of that lustre, respect and reverence which the throne of the beast had before, but was wanting now. 2. As an evidence of this distress it is here said that *they gnawed their tongues for pain* ; that is, they were almost distracted at the declining of their grandeur. Where note, 1. From the gnawing of their tongues, which was an indication of the horror of their consciences, that as Almighty God makes the guilty consciences of the wicked to be their own accusers, so he can make them whenever he pleases, to be their own tormentors. Note, 2. How Almighty God so suits his judgments sometimes to people's sin, as that if they do not wink hard, or wilfully shut their eyes, they may and must see and read their sin in their punishment. These worshippers of the beast seduced others by their false doctrine, and sinned with their tongues, and now God makes their tongues like so many scorpions' tails, the instruments of their torment ; " They gnawed their tongues for pain ;" it is added, " That they blasphemed the God of heaven, and repented not of their deeds." Where note, That as the plagues he inflicted resembled the plagues of Egypt, so the worshippers of the beast, whom they were inflicted upon, resembled Pharaoh king of Egypt, who hardened his heart yet more and more against the Lord, and repented not.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates ; and the water thereof was dried up, that the

way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Observe here, 1. In the drying up of the river Euphrates, a manifest allusion to the manner of old Babylon's destruction. The river Euphrates ran through old Babylon, and was a greater defence to it than its celebrated walls, which for thickness and height were the wonder of the world. Cyrus, when he took Babylon, cut many ditches, and let the river Euphrates run out, and so he and his soldiers entered the city, then fordable, and took it. Now, as the drying up of the Euphrates then was an immediate forerunner of the destruction of Babylon, in like manner the drying up of Euphrates, signify what it will, shall be the immediate forerunner of the destruction of antichristian Babylon, whenever it shall be. The Romish Euphrates being dried up, the Romish Babylon will hasten again towards its final ruin. *Quest.* But what is meant by Euphrates here? *Ans.* Probably the Turkish empire, according to Mr. Mede and Dr. More, the Turks first taking up their habitation about this great river; so that by Euphrates may be understood the people inhabiting about Euphrates; and by drying up its waters, the diminishing and lessening of their empire. By the kings of the east, the Jews are said to be understood, who inhabit the eastern countries, to whom God made a promise, Exod. xix. 6. that they should be a kingdom of priests: so that here seems to be a prophecy of the Jews' conversion to the christian religion, which two things do chiefly hinder, namely, the idolatry of Rome, and the power of Constantinople; the image worship of the Papists, and the puissance of the Turks, but both these being taken away by the fall of Babylon, and the ruin of the Turks, the way then will seem prepared for the Jews receiving of the christian faith. Taking the words in this sense, the notes are these, 1. That the days will come wherein christian princes and states shall pour out the wrath of God upon Popish idolatry and Turkish tyranny. 2. That the pouring out of the wrath of God upon both these grand enemies of God, will prepare and make ready the way for the Jews' conversion for him.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

In the foregoing verses an account was given of the subject upon which the sixth vial was poured out, namely, upon the river Euphrates. Here we have an effect that followed thereupon, namely, a warlike expedition or gathering to this battle. Where note, 1. The principal commanders in this battle, namely, the dragon, the beast, and

the false prophet. 2. The instruments employed, and made use of by them, who are here said to be, for their nature, spirits, for their quality, unclean, for their number, three, for their similitude and resemblance, like frogs, namely, with respect to their original, they breed of corruption, and in great numbers swarm and croak in all places, and live both in the water and upon the earth; by all which many interpreters understand emissaries, missionaries, negotiators, solicitors and legates, sent forth and employed by antichrist for the support and strengthening both of him and his kingdom, by soliciting the kings of the earth to join together, in a battle against the church. Behold here how the dragon, the beast, and the false prophets, do send forth all their emissaries, and employ all their instruments to stir up princes, and engage them in battle, to withstand the reformation of christians, and the conversion of the Jews: "I saw unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and go forth to the kings of the earth, to gather them to battle." Observe farther, The actions here said to be performed by them, namely, their working miracles by the power of the devils: that is, such wonderful things as satan can sometimes produce, or at least delude people's senses, and make them believe that they are produced and effected by him. Where note, That the advantage which the false church makes of a pretended power with her to work miracles, the Spirit of God, both here and elsewhere, 2 Thess. ii. 9. makes to be a badge of antichrist and his followers: "They are the spirits of devils working miracles."

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

These consolatory words of Christ seem to be inserted here for the support of the faithful servants of God, against those great preparations of the enemy in the day of battle. Behold, says Christ, I then come as a thief, secretly, suddenly, and unexpectedly, to destroy these enemies when they least expect me: and then I am at hand to take vengeance on them, and to deliver my church, when they least think of me: "Blessed is he that watcheth," namely, against those temptations which he will be then exposed to; and keepeth his garments, that is, his profession, unspotted from sin, and the defilements of antichrist; lest he walk naked, that is, appear as a man destitute of uprightness and sincerity: and they see his shame, which ever follows upon a sinful course. Note here, 1. That when Christ comes, he comes suddenly, even as a thief cometh. 2. That although Christ comes suddenly, and as a thief, yet he is pleased to give us warning of his coming. Behold I come. 3. That when Christ's coming is near at hand, there is danger that many for want of watchfulness will lose their garments. 4. That is, to such as through negligence shall lose their garments, this misery will befall them: they shall walk naked, and men shall see their shame. 5. That those few who watch and keep their garments, are certainly in a happy and blessed condition. "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments."

16 And he gathered them together into

a place, called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

He, That is, Almighty God, by his permissive providence suffered the kings of the earth to hearken to antichrist's missionaries, who, like frogs, hop abroad even into king's palaces, and persuade them to assemble and gather together as Jabin and Sisera gathered together against Israel, to their own destruction: and whereas the place of their gathering together is called Armageddon, this is so named from the event of the battle; signifying such a place where the enemies of the church shall be destroyed. Learn hence, That the event and success of that battle, which the adherents of antichrist shall fight for him, will be desperate destruction to themselves, joyful victories and triumphs to the churches of Christ.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail: for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

These words describe and declare unto us the pouring out of the seventh vial by the seventh angel; in which we have observable, 1. The subject upon which it fell, namely, the air: not that the elements of air, earth, or water, are to be understood in this chapter literally; for the vials poured forth are vials of wrath, and consequently are poured forth upon the proper subjects of God's displeasure, which the elements are not: but it is the earthly antichristian church which is thought to be here intended, so called in opposition to the heavenly and pure church. So that by

the air here, Mr. Mede understands all the subjects of satan's kingdom, who is called the prince of the air; and the pouring out of this vial upon the air denotes the full and final destruction of satan's power. Observe, 2. The adjunct accompanying the pouring out of this vial, namely, a voice out of heaven, saying, *It is done*; that is, "These last plagues are now finished, the work of God is done, and what in his counsels he designed for the destruction of his enemies, and for the deliverance of his people; this is said to be done, because it was now doing; and accomplished, because it was now accomplishing." God's threatenings of judgment (except men repent) are sure when denounced, as if they were already executed. Observe, 3. The direful effects and dreadful consequences of this last vial's pouring forth; namely, 1. *Thunder, lightning, and earthquake*; all implying thus much, that the storm of God's wrath now coming upon the kingdoms of sin, satan, and antichrist, would be very terrible and amazing. 2. "The great city was divided into three parts;" into three factions, say some, and that antichrist's kingdom was now fallen by being divided within itself: *and the cities of the nations fell*: namely, heathen nations, and places which withstood Christ and his gospel. For all Christ's enemies are now to be deposed from public authority. "And great Babylon came up in remembrance before God:" not that God was ever unmindful of her, either of her impiety towards himself, or of her cruelty towards his people; but as good works are said to be remembered when they are rewarded, so wickedness is then remembered when it is punished; *God remembered Babylon*, when for the full cup of her sins, he put into her hand a full cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. God is never forgetful either of his church's sufferings, or his enemies' sins, but will punish the one, and redress the other, in his own appointed time. 3. As another effect of the pouring forth of this vial, it is added, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not to be found;" signifying, say some, that the remotest and strongest places, which owned and maintained Babylon, shall either be converted or confounded. Intimating, say others, that there shall be no place in that day of God's wrath, to flee unto for safety: neither island on the sea, nor mountain on dry land. Observe lastly, The superadded judgment of unusual hail which God poured forth upon Babylon, as before upon Egypt, *Exod. ix.* "There fell great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent." An hyperbolic expression, setting forth the design and purpose of God to pursue Babylon, and the worshippers of the *beast*, until they be utterly destroyed. A talent, say some, was an hundred pounds weight; if so, these hail stones were sufficient not only to kill men, but to dash them all in pieces. This heavy hail shows that weighty sins procure heavy judgments; yet mark what a bad use these obdurate sinners made of all these tremendous judgments, *they blasphemed God*. They were so obstinate in their idolatry, that they stood it out against all God's judgments. And when they should have humbled themselves under his mighty hand, they opened their mouths in blasphemies against him. Here note, That in the book of *Exodus* we do not read that the old Egyptians blasphemed God when the plague of hail was inflicted upon them, nor when they lay under any of the ten plagues: but these idolaters, instead of giving glory to God, they blaspheme him, because of the greatness of their plagues. This, per-

haps is an emblem of what the damned will do at the day of judgment; though their consciences be convinced of the righteousness of their sentence, yet will they not cease to pour out blasphemies against God, upon the account of the severity and eternity of their torments. But verily then will all the divine attributes be conspicuously glorified, his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed, his exact justice terribly demonstrated, his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded, and all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved, and the injured honor and glory of Almighty God visibly cleared and repaired, to the joyful satisfaction of all good men, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of all impenitent sinners, who with these worshippers of the *beast* will gnaw their tongues for anguish, and blaspheme the holy and just God most unjustly, for bringing upon them that destruction which they had deserved, yea, that damnation which they had chosen.

CHAPTER XVII.

AND there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters;

Observe here, 1. The angel's invitation to the subsequent vision, "One of the angels talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee," &c. Where we see the readiness of those ministering spirits, the holy angels to do any good office for the saints, and with what cheerfulness they are employed about things for our consolation, and the sweet familiarity that is between them and the saints, evidenced by that expression, "He talked with me, saying, Come hither." Observe, 2. The promise which the angel makes to St. John, namely, to "show him the judgment of that great whore." By the whore all understand the city of Rome; only some will have it Rome Pagan, others Rome Papal, or the great idolatrous city and church of Rome: idolatry is often, in scripture-style, called whoredom; and idolaters are said to go a whoring from God. A whore is a person married to an husband, who afterwards proves false to his bed. The Papal present church of Rome deserves this name, having been guilty of the greatest defection and apostasy from the true evangelical doctrine and worship that ever was in the world; and she is deservedly also called the "great whore," because of her whoredoms committed with so many under her power and jurisdiction, having many people subject to her, and for that reason is here said "to sit upon many waters." The true church is Christ's bride and spouse, she is betrothed unto him in righteousness, in loving-kindness, and in tender mercy, and at any time by idolatry to apostatize from him is spiritual whoredom, which shall not pass without deserved punishment. Learn, hence, How hateful idolatry is to God, and how highly it provokes God's wrath, even as the whoredom of a woman who plays the common harlot, provokes the jealousy of her

husband. Verily, never was husband more jealous of the chastity of his suspected wife than God is jealous in point of worship.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Babylon was charged with committing whoredom in the former verse; in this, the persons are declared *whom* she committed whoredom with, viz. with *kings*, and the *inhabitants* of the earth; that is, with all sorts of persons, small and great, rich and poor. Where note, That she is, 1. A catholic whore, common and shameless: she refuses none that will be lewd with her. 2. A politic whore, she first draws kings and princes to commit fornication with her, and then other inhabitants; well knowing how fast the example of superiors is commonly followed by inferiors: and whereas she is said to *make them drunk with the wine of her fornication*, the Spirit of God seems to intimate, that idolatry is like unto wine; a sensual sort of worship, and therefore alluring; making persons drunk, therefore intoxicating. Wine is sweet, but proves deceitful; idolatry is pleasing to man's corrupt nature, but brings wrath and judgment upon the sinner.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet color, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

5 And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Observe here, 1. That St. John was not in one continued ecstasy, but at several times *in the spirit*; that is, in an ecstasy or rapture of mind, wherein his outward senses being bound up, his understanding was fixed and raised up to the contemplation of divine objects, represented to him in the vision. A spiritual frame of mind is requisite for discerning the visions of God; *He carrieth me away in the spirit*. Observe, 2. The place whither St. John was carried, and where he saw the following vision, namely, *in the wilderness*; *He carried me away into the wilderness*; a place of privacy, say some, where he might discern things undisturbed.

turbedly and undistractedly. Solitude is fittest for contemplation. A wilderness, say others, was the fittest place to see *that church* in a vision, which was itself a *wilderness*: the apostolical church before was driven into the wilderness; here the apostate church follows her, as an harlot succeeding to a faithful city. Observe 3. The vision itself; *I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, &c.* The woman here is the same with her that was called whore, ver. 1, namely, idolatrous Rome; she is represented as a woman richly and splendidly arrayed, with her wealth and riches, with her pomp and power, enticing the world to her idolatry, called so often whoredom and spiritual fornication; and the *golden cup* in her hand is an allusion to harlots, who with their philters or enchanted cups, do allure and provoke men to sensual satisfactions; in like manner doth Rome, by her outward splendor, allure, and, by other specious pretences and means, draw persons to her idolatries and superstitions. Note lastly, the name written on her forehead, to wit, *Mystery, Babylon the Great*; that is, not literal, but mystical Babylon, the great city of Rome, the mother of idolatry, the patron of cruelty, the patroness of all impiety; and propagating all these by her power and policies, who calls herself *the mother church*, but it is indeed *the mother of harlots*, and of all manner of *abominations*; that is, of abominable doctrines and practices:

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration,

7 And the angels said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 And the beast that thou sawest, was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they beheld the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

St. John proceeds in the description of this woman; he declared her to be a filthy and common whore, in the foregoing verse; in this he represents her as a cruel and bloody whore; she is said to be *drunk, drunk with blood, drunk with holy blood, drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs*. Behold the blood-thirstiness of the Romish church, and her insatiableness therein, even unto drunkenness. Observe, 2. With what wonder and admiration St. John was filled, when he saw this woman drunk with blood, *I wondered with great admiration*; intimating, that so astonishing is the cruelty of that church, that it justly causes wonder and

admiration to all that are not of her cruel and bloody disposition. I wondered that God should suffer so much of his dear servants' blood to be shed by her, and at her insatiable cruelty in the shedding of it. Observe, 3. How the Spirit of God was pleased to open this mystery, which indeed is the only vision of this nature expounded throughout the whole book: he begins first with a description of the beast, affirming, that *he was, and is not, and yet is*: as if he had said, "The Roman empire was once pagan, now is not pagan, but christian; and yet is as idolatrous now, as it was of old: the same it was, only in another form." Rome papal is certainly as idolatrous, as cruel and bloody, as ever Rome pagan was of old: yea, perhaps, much more so, beyond compare. Observe next, The rise and original is declared from whence this idolatrous church should spring, namely, *out of the bottomless pit*, because her working is after the working of satan, with all deceivableness, with signs and lying wonders. And as its rise is declared, so is its ruin foretold; *it shall go into perdition*, that is, shall be finally destroyed, never to revive again: but before this destruction, the world shall be under such an insatiation, that the generality of the inhabitants of the earth, some few excepted, *shall wonder after the beast*; that is, be wonderfully taken with him, and shall follow him with an implicit faith, paying homage and subjection to him. But these admirers, and adorers of the beast are only such whose names were not written in the book of life; intimating to us, that in times of the greatest apostasy, and most universal defection from the truth, the Lord wants not his own true church: he ever had, and has, yea, ever will have a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth.

9 And here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Here the angel cometh directly to declare and unfold the mystery of the beast, premising first, that it requires heavenly wisdom in a person to understand it, and apply the marks accordingly. *Here is the mind that hath wisdom*, that is, the mind that hath wisdom, may here exercise itself. The seven heads, saith the angel, are seven mountains, that is, signify seven mountains; a clear description of Rome, as to its local situation, being built upon seven hills. And there are seven kings, that is, seven forms of government, by, and according to which, Rome was governed, namely, by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, dictators, and emperors, that were pagan. Five of these were fallen in St. John's time, that is, utterly extinct, namely, the government by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, and dictators:

And one is, to wit, the government by pagan emperors, which was in St. John's time in being. *And the other is not yet come*, that is, the government by christian emperors was not yet in being, and when it did come, it held but a little while before the bishops of Rome wrested the government out of their hands, and took it into their own. Behold here the great mutability of all earthly things! governments have their periods, kingdoms come to an end. Happy they, who serving God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, have secured to themselves a kingdom that cannot be moved! Heb. xii. 28.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet: but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him, *are* called, and chosen, and faithful

Observe here, the angel farther explains to St. John this great mystery of the beast; declaring, that the *ten horns* of the beast, do signify ten kings, which should employ their power with the beast, and in conjunction with his established idolatry, to uphold his bloody religion; Next their wicked unity is declared, in giving their power and strength to the beast; *They have one mind*, ver. 13. that is, they unanimously concur in aiding, strengthening, and assisting the beast, in using their power, and employing their authority to maintain him in his idolatrous and pagan-like superstitions. Lastly, it is declared for what end they thus concur together, in giving their power and strength to the beast; namely, *to make war with the Lamb*; that is, to take part with antichrist, and oppose Christ in his truth and gospel, in his ministers and members, in his children and servants.—*But the Lamb shall overcome them*. Some shall be converted by the power of the gospel, others shall be confounded, one way or other brought into subjection; for he is *Lord of lords, and King of kings*; that is, clothed with divine power, Christ, though a meek Lamb, yet is a mighty Lord. The titles here given him, show his Godhead and omnipotency; and having such a power, he knows how to fit instruments for his purpose; and those whom he will make use of in this work, shall be chosen persons, and faithful in the discharge of the trust committed to them. All that are faithful to Christ, shall share with him in his victory.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

Here the angel proceeds, and goes on farther in the explication of the vision. By the *waters*, whereon the whore sat, he declares are to be understood, many and divers nations belonging to the Roman empire. Behold then of what church *multitude* is a note! not of the church of Christ, his flock is a little flock; but of the antichristian synagogue, which vaunts, that multitudes are on her side; "The waters whereon the whore sat in multitudes, peoples, nations, and tongues." Alas! the multitude, or generality of persons, are prone to oppose that which is good, and those that do good. Next, it is declared what instruments God will make use of, as the executioners of his vengeance upon this great whore; the ten horns, that is, the ten kings which did before idolize her, and commit idolatry, and spiritual whoredom with her, shall at length revolt from her, hate her, "make her desolate and naked, shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." Lord! what a strange, sudden, and mighty change doth the power of converting grace make! Behold these ten kings, who sometimes doted upon the painted beauty of this great whore, when once their eyes shall be opened, their hearts will soon be alienated, Babylon's courts shall be crowded with suitors no longer; they shall make her desolate, by deserting her communion; make her naked, by withdrawing their former supplies afforded to her; they shall eat her flesh, feed themselves with spoils, and take her revenues to themselves, and burn her with fire; that is, shall utterly ruin and destroy her. The destruction of antichrist once begun, shall hold on constantly by degrees, till his final destruction.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Observe here, 1. How the infinitely wise and perfectly holy God, can, and does so order things, that all his judgments shall be executed by sinners, without his being the cause of any one of their sins; though by the permissive will of God, these kings gave their power for a time to the beast, yet they never had his approbation for so doing. God so overrules the actions of wicked men, that when they are doing their will, contrary to their own intentions, in and by them the Lord is likewise doing his will. God sometimes does his will by those who resolve they will not do his will. Observe, 2. The time when Almighty God, who permitted them to submit to the whore, will put it into their hearts to hate her, and help to destroy her, namely, "when his word is fulfilled." God's word shall be fulfilled, in spite of satan and all his instruments: yea, the wicked are then fulfilling God's word and will, that is, his permissive will, when they are going on in their wickedness; "God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil his will."

18 And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

This is so clear a description of Rome, that the church of Rome herself acknowledges it: for, if that be the city built upon seven hills, the city that allures the inhabitants of the earth to idolatry; if her idolatries be a lively image of the old pagan idolatries; if to her many kings have given their power and strength; and if she reigneth over the kings of the earth, there remains no doubt but that this great city is Rome; that Rome is the mystical Babylon, which has shed the blood of saints and martyrs without number, and must be destroyed for so doing; no pomp nor grandeur can exempt, or shall save her from the avenging hand of God, and his just indignation.

Lord! hasten that desirable time!

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter contains a large and particular description of the certainty of Babylon's ruin; whose destruction is set out in expressions borrowed from the old prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who prophesied of the certainty, terribleness, and irrecoverableness of old Babylon's ruin and destruction, unto which the Holy Ghost seems to allude throughout the whole chapter.

AND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

The destruction of spiritual Babylon hath, in this prophecy, been several times predicted and already foretold: Now here an angel from heaven is employed, to declare it shall certainly be performed. This angel is variously here described: 1. By the place from whence he came, namely, from heaven; signifying, that the destruction of Babylon was there surely decreed, and should most certainly be accomplished. 2. By the authority and power with which he came, in the name of, and by commission from

the great God, and having great power. A mighty angel is employed in this great and mighty work, to destroy Babylon, the mighty throne of antichrist. 3. By the effect of his appearance; "The earth was lightened with his glory;" denoting, that Babylon's destruction should be open and manifest, and matter of joy and glorious rejoicing both to heaven and earth. Learn hence, That as the destruction of Babylon is the work and office of an angel, under God, so is it unto the angels matter of joy and triumph, especially to such of them as are employed as officers therein; "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory." Observe, 2. The place against which the mighty angel doth denounce the vengeance of God, and that with an imprecation, or repetition of the threatening: *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen*; where, by Babylon, all, both Papists and Protestants, do understand the city of Rome, though in different respects. This is called mystical Babylon, in an allusion to ancient Babylon, because of their resemblance, 1. In sin; namely, in pride and self exaltation, in cruelty and oppression, in sorcery and witchcraft: See Jer. li. 7. 2. In punishment, the destruction of old Babylon was a sudden destruction; Isa. xlvii. 2. and a perpetual destruction; see Isa. xlii. 20. compared with Rev. xi. 10. and Rev. xviii. 8. It is also called *Babylon the great*, 1. Because of the greatness of its strength and glory; it was the strongest and most fortified place in the world. Cyrus besieged it thirteen years before he took it, and then by cutting channels, and drawing dry the river Euphrates. 2. In regard of her great power and dominion: Literal Babylon said, *Are not my princes altogether kings?* and mystical Babylon ruleth over all the kings of the earth. Farther, it is here said, that *Babylon the great is fallen*, nay, it is imprecated and repeated; *is fallen, is fallen*; implying, 1. The certainty of her ruin; it is a speech of faith, speaking of things to come as already past; God's punishments, when threatened, are as certain as if already inflicted. 2. It denotes the suddenness of her destruction, *she is fallen*, that is, *subito ruitura* she shall soon fall; as when Christ said of his suffering work, *It is finished*; he meant, that it was very near finishing. 3. It denotes her utter ruin and destruction, *is fallen, is fallen*, never to rise more: the church shall never more be tormented by her, or troubled with her. 4. It denotes the joy and rejoicing which will be found in Sion, at Babylon's downfall and destruction, *she is fallen, is fallen*; it is not only a speech of faith and trust, but of joy and triumph. Learn hence, 1. That Rome or mystical Babylon, shall certainly fall, shall utterly fall, shall irrecoverably fall. 2. That the downfall of Babylon will be matter of great joy and triumph to the inhabitants of Sion, because she has been to the church of Christ an old and inveterate enemy, a cruel and bloody enemy, and shall be the last enemy. When Babylon is fallen, then shall all persecutions cease; satan shall be bound, and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ. Let all that have an interest in God, be instant in prayer with him to hasten its time, that it may be in the history, as it is here in the prophecy, that *Babylon is fallen*. Observe lastly, What an heap of multiplied expressions the Holy Ghost is pleased to make use of, to set forth the utter ruin, and final desolation of Babylon; "She is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird;"

that is, as devils and evil spirits are supposed to haunt desolate places; and birds, which make hideous and dismal noises, do dwell in ruinous and ruined places; in like manner, these expressions denote how entirely and absolutely God will bring about the destruction of Babylon; inasmuch that the place which hath known her shall know her no more, and her habitation shall be an eternal desolation, so that none that pass by shall say, *This is Babylon.*

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The Spirit of God is pleased here to assign the reason and cause of Babylon's fatal ruin and final desolation: namely, 1. Because "all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." All nations, that is, very many; the generality of the Roman empire have been allured to, and intoxicated by her idolatries, which have brought all this wrath upon her and them. Where note, 1. How idolatry is compared to wine, because very pleasing to corrupt nature, and also very enticing and ensnaring, overtaking, like wine, a person unawares, and it is called wine of wrath, because it exciteeth and provoketh God's wrath against a person or people guilty of it. 2. Because "the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her;" that is, joined with her in her idolatrous worship. Where note, The policy of Babylon in drawing kings and princes to the bed of her fornications, well knowing how fast their example would be followed by inferiors. The example of superiors in doing evil is strangely powerful; Jeroboam made Israel to sin; not by commanding them to worship the golden calves, but by commending that idolatrous worship to them in his own person. 3. Because the "merchants of the earth were waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." By the merchants, understand all such as trade in Babylon's wares, her pleasing and costly wares of pardons, as masses and indulgencies, by which so many were enriched. All things are vendible at Rome; any sin may be forgiven for silver, and a licence for any thing that is unlawful for money. These are the reasons here assigned for Babylon's ruin. "The nations were made drunk by her, kings committed fornication with her, and the merchants enriched through the abundance of her delicacies."

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:

Observe here, An admonition given, and a double reason

assigned for that admonition. 1. The admonition itself; "Come out of her, my people; that is, come out of mystical Babylon, have no communion with that idolatrous church; abstain from all communicating with her in her sins, as ever you would approve yourselves to be my faithful people. Here note, It is not so much a local departure, as a moral separation, that is here intended; not so much from Babylon's local bounds, as from her abominable errors, superstitions, and idolatries. Learn hence, 1. That God has, and ever had, a people, even in Babylon. Learn hence, 2. That it is a special duty which God requires of his people, to depart from mystical Babylon, especially when her downfall is approaching. 3. That such a departure from Babylon is no schismatical separation; it is not a departure from the true church, but the true church's separation from an idolatrous communion; and that by the express and positive command of God himself, "Come out of her, my people;" an allusion to the charge given with respect to Babylon of old, Jer. li. 6. 9. "We would have healed Babylon, but she would not be healed; forsake her." Observe, 2. A double reason assigned for this admonition. 1. Because we are in danger of being partakers of her sins, namely, by incurring the guilt of her sins, and by contracting the spot and filth of her sins. 2. There is a danger also of being made partakers of her plagues; there is no safety in being near those who are under the curse of God; participation in sin will certainly cause a participation in judgment. How dreadful is this text to such as continue in, or apostatize unto, Babylon's idolatry and communion!

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Observe here, 1. The reason assigned why Almighty God inflicted such severe punishments upon Babylon; be-

cause her sins, that is, the cry and clamor of her sins, "had reached up to heaven;" the measure of her sins was filled up, "and God had remembered her iniquities," that is, manifested his remembrance of them, by inflicting on her so great, so just a punishment for them, viz. for her idolatry and persecution. Learn hence, That although sins be transient actions, yet they have a permanent pleading before the Lord's tribunal, to bring down judgments upon incorrigible sinners. And 2. That although the justice of God may be thought to be asleep, and he may seem to be forgetful of sin and sinners, yet he will take his own time to manifest that he remembers them, by inflicting the heaviness of his judgments upon obdurate sinners; "her sins reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Observe, 2. The injunction and command given by God unto his people, to every one of them in their place and station, to contribute regularly all they can towards Babylon's downfall and destruction, "Reward her as she rewarded you, yea, double;" this is required, not from a private spirit of revenge, which christianity expressly forbids, but as a public work, in an authoritative way and manner, out of an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and from a just indignation against her tyranny and idolatry: and the command to "double unto her double," implies, that a double punishment is due unto her, yea a just one, according to her works. Behold here! what bloody persecutors may at length expect, namely, to receive at the Lord's hand double for all their sins. Babylon's punishment shall be double, respecting what she has acted, but not double in respect of what she has deserved; if possible let her have as much blood again to drink as ever she spilt; for one drop of the blood of Sion is worth more than an ocean of the blood of Babylon; give her therefore double, for though it be more in quantity, it is nothing so much in value. Observe, 3. How suitable and answerable Babylon's punishment inflicted will be to her sins committed; her sins were pride and insolence, luxury and voluptuousness. Note, 1. Her pride, "she said in her heart, I sit as a queen;" Mark, she did not barely say, I am a queen, but, I sit as a queen; as if she had said, "I am not only in a high place, but in a sure place: I have a warm and firm seat, I am well settled, I have a great command, yea, an uncontrollable command: "I am no widow," no desolate widow, no disconsolate widow; for I have many children to comfort me, many sons and daughters to support me; "I shall see no sorrow, I neither feel nor fear any." Behold how worldly men fancy to themselves an everlastingness in worldly things; they fancy themselves sitting as upon down pillows for ease and softness, and as upon rocks of adamant for sureness and unmoveableness: "I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Note, 2. Her luxury and voluptuousness; she lived deliciously, in pompous palaces, pleasantly situated, plentifully furnished; and her judgment bears a strict proportion to her sin, "how much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; the justice of God will exact all the arrears of abused mercy. Sinners that now fare deliciously every day, shall pass from their good things here, to the flames which live by the breath of God's revenging wrath. Ah! doleful exchange! one hour's feeling of that fire will be more tormenting than an age's enjoyment of this world's delights can be pleasing. Observe, 4. The equity, the ce-

lerity and multiplicity of Babylon's punishments; their equity is intimated in the illative particle therefore, that is, because of her former sins her plagues shall come: the celerity and swiftness of her punishment is intimated, they shall come upon her in one day as did Sodom's plagues, suddenly and unexpectedly: and the multiplicity and variety of her plagues is particularly here expressed; death, for putting the saints to death; mourning, for her former rejoicing; famine, for famishing God's people; and burning, for having burnt so many of the bodies of the holy martyrs to a coal. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments." Observe lastly, The reason here assigned for the unavoidableness of all these plagues coming upon Babylon, *for strong is the Lord who judgeth her.* True Babylon has all natural power, and all civil strength on her side; but the strong God is against her, it is his controversy with her, and he is able to effect what he pleaseth, how incredible soever the thing may seem to us; sooner may the ark and Dagon be reconciled, and cease to be adverse, than God can be at peace with Babylon; *strong is the Lord who judgeth her.*

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

The Spirit of God having in the former part of the chapter set forth the certainty and severity of those judgments which should come upon mystical Babylon: he next declares what wailings and bitter lamentations her downfall would occasion to her votaries and admirers, to her friends and followers: more particularly he acquaints us with three sorts of persons that shall bewail Babylon's destruction, kings, merchants, and seamen; the former we have here before us, in these two verses; *the kings of the earth*, who have adhered to the whore, committed spiritual fornication with her, and delighted themselves in her carnal and pompous idol-worship, when they see the smoke of her burning, and understand the certainty of her destruction, they shall stand afar off, like persons astonished, and like persons afraid to come near, lest they be involved in it; and the words of their lamentation are here set down, *Alas, alas, that great city Babylon! in one hour is her judgment come!* As if they had said, "Notwithstanding all Babylon's grandeur, which we so admired and magnified, and which she herself put so much trust and confidence in, to our astonishment we behold in one hour, her judgment come upon her; a great and mighty city destroyed, a gay and splendid church politically founded, powerfully strengthened, on a sudden broken in pieces, and brought to desolation; *Alas, alas, that great city Babylon!*" Learn hence, That when God begins to enter into judgment with his church's enemies, the strong-

eat arm of flesh cannot avail, but kings with their armies will flee and be discomfited, the stoutest hearts will be afraid and terrified, not daring to approach the presence of an angry God, "the kings of the earth shall stand afar off for fear of her torment."

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of the most precious wood, and brass, and iron, and marble.

13 And cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.

16 And saying, Alas, alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.

The second sort of persons who passionately lament, and bitterly bewail Babylon's downfall and destruction, are, the merchants who traded in and with Babylon. Here we have an allusion to the merchants and merchandise of Tyre, spoken of, Ezek. xxvii. As Tyre was the mart of the earth for temporal things, so was Babylon for spiritual things; making merchandise even of the souls of men, persuading

the people that they could purchase the redemption of souls out of purgatory by masses. Here note, That Pagan Rome, though she did traffic for slaves, yet not for souls: but Papal Rome deals for both. She sells also the souls of men, by selling her ecclesiastical benefices, and cure of souls. And I would to God that this piece of spiritual merchandise were only found amongst them, and not heard of elsewhere. Observe next, The Holy Ghost is pleased to enumerate at large several sorts of wares, and the kinds of merchandise, which Babylon dealt and trafficked in, namely, "gold, silver, precious stones, fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet;" all things for ornament, necessity, and delight; the pride and sensuality of Rome prompted her to buy up all sorts of commodities, and took off all that the countries round about could bring in; partly to gratify her pride, and partly to serve her idolatry. Observe farther, What a bitter lamentation is here taken up: but for what? Not for their sins, their luxury, or idolatry, but for the loss of their market and merchandise only. Behold, in these Babylonians, the spirit and temper of all natural men; they weep not for sin, but for sufferings; for any temporal cross they have tears enough, they refuse to be comforted; but for their sins, which are not their cross, but their curse, their plague, yea, the greatest of all plagues, because spiritual, these they can speak of with dry eyes and unaffected hearts. Observe, lastly, How these merchants here, as the kings before, stand afar off, for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, pining and condoling one another, greatly affected and sorely afflicted to see the ruins of that polity that sustained them, but not able to help one another. Behold! how fruitless and helpless the wicked's friendship is to one another in the day of visitation; they stand afar off for fear of torments, but can afford no succour to each other; they durst not come near to help Babylon or them.

—And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off.

18 And cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city?

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

The last sort of mourners for Babylon's ruin are sailors and seamen: all spiritual seamen that have an oar in St. Peter's boat, shall lament greatly, whose life and livelihood did depend upon the merchant trade of that great city, These though they stuck so close to her, and trafficked with her in the day of her prosperity, yet now with the rest they stand afar off from her, lamenting her ruin, and their own loss, in the day when her desolation cometh. And as an evidence of the greatness of their sorrow and mourning,

they are here said to cast "dust on their heads;" which amongst the ancients was used as a special token of extraordinary grief and sorrow, Job ii. 13. In a time of deep affliction we may express our outward sorrows by our outward gestures: These mourners for Babylon express their sorrow for her and themselves, by casting dust upon their heads.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets: for God hath avenged you on her.

Note here, 1. That as Babylon's ruin was matter of great grief and sorrow to the forementioned mourners who merchandised and traded with her; so is it matter of great joy and rejoicing to all spiritual and heavenly-minded persons which are the true church, who are commanded to rejoice at it. *Rejoice over her, O heaven; that is, ye angels in heaven, or ye saints, or that are of an heavenly disposition. And all ye holy apostles and prophets: that is, all faithful ministers who succeed them, who are endued with the same spirit, and teach the same pure and holy doctrine with them.* Note, 2. The cause of this rejoicing declared; *for God hath avenged them upon her.* The church does not, the saints of God dare not, rejoice at Babylon's calamity, as such, but as an act of divine vengeance. God will be avenged on Babylon for the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by her, and for the rules of worship violated by her, and for all the barbarities and indignities which his church and people have suffered from her: God will revenge the wrongs of his people, when through want of power they cannot, and through his prohibitions they may not avenge themselves.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all,

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee: and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee. For thy merchants were the great men of the earth: for by thy sorceries were nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, of all that were slain upon the earth.

Observe here, 1. Babylon's utter desolation represented by the type and sign of a mill-stone cast into the sea: like a mill-stone she had ground, and oppressed the church of God, and now like a millstone thrown into the sea, she sinks into the pit of destruction. Almighty God, by this sign or symbol, signified to St. John, that Babylon's ruin should be violent, irrecoverable, and irreparable; she falls never to rise more. The casting of a stone into the sea was anciently the emblem of everlasting forgetfulness. Observe, 2. The application of Babylon's ruin particularized in several instances. 1. That nothing should ever more be found in her that belonged to pleasure or delight; *no voice of harpers, musicians, or trumpeters.* 2. Nothing which belonged to profit or trading, no artificers or craftsmen. 3. Nothing belonging to food, no noise of a millstone for grinding corn and making provision for bread. 4. Nothing to relieve against the darkness and terror of the night; *as the light of a candle.* 5. No means for the propagation of mankind by marriage: "The voice of the bride and the bridegroom shall be heard no more." All which expressions do imply extreme destruction and utter desolation; intimating, that Babylon shall be a place utterly abandoned and forsaken. Observe, 3. A threefold cause assigned for all this, to wit. 1. Damnable covetousness; "Her merchants were the great ones of the earth." Her sinful way of merchandising, by dealing in spiritual commodities peculiar to Rome, seems to be here pointed at, her making merchandise of the souls of men, as we have it, ver. 13. 2. Her bewitching idolatry, called her *sorceries*, whereby she enticed people to join with her in superstitious worship. 3. Her cruelty and bloodshed; "in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." *Quest.* But how can the blood shed by others be laid to her charge? *Ans.* 1. Because the doctrines which caused their blood to be shed were with her. 2. Because her jurisdiction gave commission to slay the saints which were slain in other kingdoms. 3. Because by the influence of her example at home, much blood had been shed abroad. God will charge upon others as he did upon Babylon, not only the sin which they have acted, but all the sins which they have been accessory unto.

CHAPTER XIX.

The foregoing chapter reported to us the final downfall and destruction of Babylon, never to rise more, together with the bitter lamentation of her friends and votaries upon that mournful occasion.

This chapter before us represents the great joy and rejoicing which was found both in heaven and earth, when it pleased the holy and just God to pour forth the vials of his wrath and vengeance upon that inveterate and bloody enemy of his church and people. A choir of singers is here found praising God, as ver. 1. informs us.

AND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God;

Note here, That the first which sing this song of thanksgiving for Babylon's destruction, are glorified saints, called here much people in heaven; and they are said to sing with a great voice, expressing thereby their united zeal and fervent affection in this duty of thanksgiving, and they begin their song with an Hebrew word *Alleluia*, which is a word of excitation, and signifies, *laud ye the Lord*. Some think that hereby the christian churches do invite the Jews or Hebrews to join with them in praising God, and that after Babylon's overthrow Christ shall be solemnly praised as by the Gentile, so by the Jewish church: the tenor of their song is much the same with that which we had before, chap. vii. 10. to wit, *salvation*, (or deliverance from all evils, spiritual and temporal, particularly from those which the church suffered under Babylon's tyranny) "and glory, and honor, and power, be ascribed, unto the Lord our God," and to him alone, who is the Author of all good, and hath manifested his great power in destroying our enemies. Learn hence, 1. That the church's salvation is entirely from God, and the special effect of his divine power. 2. That to him, upon that account, all possible honor and glory is due, as having shown himself his people's God: "Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto the Lord our God."

2 For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke arose for ever and ever.

Observe here, 1. The cause assigned and set down, of this their doxology and solemn thanksgivings, namely, the truth and faithfulness, as also the justice and righteousness of God in the execution of his judgments upon Babylon; his truth appeared in performing the threatening which Babylon despised, and his righteousness in suiting his judgments inflicted upon her, to the sins of idolatry, and bloodshed committed by her. Observe, 2. The title here given to Babylon, she is called the *whore*, because of her idolatry, which is often in Scripture styled *spiritual whoredom*, and the *great whore*, because of her universal corrupting the whole earth; she made others to sin, and cruelly murdered those who would not sin. Hence learn, That idolatry and persecution constantly go together. Babylon's idolatrous practices were accompanied with bloody cruelties. Observe, 3. An intimation given of the irreparable ruin and

irrecoverable destruction of Babylon, "her smoke rose up for ever and ever," that is, God followed her with a succession of plagues and judgments until she was ruined past recovery. Observe, 4. That the word *Alleluia*, as it begins the song, so does it also close the same, to show thereby the raisedness of the church's affections, and their unweariedness in praising God for this deliverance by Babylon's destruction.

4 And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

Note here, 1. How the whole heavenly choir praise God on the forementioned account, acknowledging the justice of his proceedings against Babylon; and, 2. An invitation is here given to all the saints upon earth, both small and great, to fear and praise him: Whence note, How the church triumphant and militant, the saints in heaven, and christians on earth jointly give praise to God, and glorify him for this great work, adoring his divine justice in destroying Babylon, the mother of idolatry, the nest of luxury, the seat of oppression and cruelty; it is a duty well becoming the saints both small and great, to celebrate the praises of God for the equity of his judgments upon his church's incorrigible and unreclaimable enemies; and here God himself, and his ministers, call upon the whole church to join in the solemn works of praise and thanksgiving, "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God: and the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts fell down and worshipped."

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

In the former verses, an exhortation was given to all the
14 R

saints to abound in the duty of thanksgiving; here ye find them unanimously addressing themselves to the practice and performance of that duty; and accordingly, they are called here "a great multitude, their voices like many waters for unity, and like mighty thunders," denoting that zeal and fervor which is in their thanksgiving. Where note, How exceedingly the church doth rejoice and triumph; no so much in Babylon's ruin, as in the glory of God advanced, and as his own kingdom is promoted by it. Observe, 2. A superadded ground and reason for this extraordinary joy and rejoicing, "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the wife hath made herself ready." By the marriage of the Lamb, Mr. Mede and Dr. More do understand the conversion of the Jews; by the Lamb's wife, the nation of the Jews, so called in regard of that relation which they stand in to God by virtue of the covenant: and she is said to have made herself ready, namely, by the wedding-garment of faith, to accept of the formerly despised bridegroom. Note, That it is probably conjectured by some, that the conversion of the Jews shall soon follow the destruction of antichrist; for his idolatry and persecution are great scandals to the Jews, and mighty stumbling-blocks in the way of their conversion: And whereas it is added, "that it was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen," the words do seem to import, that the Jews shall, in due time, be brought in to Christ, to submit to his righteousness, and be clothed with it, and that an holy emulation shall be found between the Gentiles and them, which shall most and best adorn the profession of the gospel. From the whole, note, How the church is called Christ's wife. Christ and she are here betrothed to each other; but at the great day, the marriage will be here consummated. Note farther, The church's spiritual nakedness in herself considered: "It was granted to her to be arrayed in fine linen;" she had it not of herself, but it was put on by Christ; he decks and dresses his own bride with the ornaments of grace here, and glory hereafter; that he may "present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, holy, and without blemish."

9 And he saith unto me, Write; Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it not*: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

"Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb;" that is, (say they, who understand by the marriage of the Lamb, the conversion of the Jews) who shall live in that happy time when the Jews being converted, shall, with the Gentiles, make up one glorious gospel church. But the marriage is one thing, and the marriage-supper another; the marriage-supper follows the

marriage; so that the kingdom of glory rather seems here intended: blessed are they which are called to it, being made meet and prepared for it, by grace here, for glory hereafter: we must be made meet for heaven, before we can be admitted into heaven; "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." Observe, next, That St. John being overjoyed at the good news of his countrymen's (the Jews) conversion, fell down at the angel's feet to worship him, as Cornelius did at St. Peter's, when he heard of the conversion of the Gentiles, Acts x. 24. "And I fell at his feet to worship him." The holiest and best of saints are not wholly free from passionate infirmities: he would now have worshipped this angel, yet we read not of any attempt made to worship any of the former angels which conversed with him. This makes it probable that he apprehended it to be an uncreated angel, even the Son of God, which now talked with him. Observe next, With what indignation this holy angel rejected the offer of religious adoration, and how peremptorily he forbids it; *ἀγαπᾷ μὴ*, by no means, upon no terms do it. See *thou doest it not*. The church of Rome asks us, Why we reprove them for worshipping the angels, when St. John himself did it? Our answer is ready, That St. John himself was reprov'd for it: the angel rejected it as none of his due. O the presumption of those men, who dare do that which the angel expressly forbids to be done! Yet, after all, Beilarmine says, That St. John did well to worship the angel; then, say we, the angel did ill to reprove St. John: but whether we shall believe a cardinal at Rome, or an angel of God, judge ye. Observe, lastly, The reasons assigned why the angel forbade it. 1. Because God, and God alone, is the sole and proper object of religious worship: *Worship thou God*. 2. Because the angel was St. John's equal in office, though not in nature: *I am thy fellow-servant*. As if he had said, "Those who serve and worship God together with you, must not be worshipped by you: Those who are fellow-servants to one master, should not give to another that worship which is only due to their Lord and Master. But we are fellow-servants: how doth that appear? Thus: You have the testimony of Jesus, and I have the spirit of prophecy. Now, the spirit of prophecy and the work of the ministry in testifying of Jesus, being of the same nature and kind of service; therefore, from those that are employed in one of them, religious worship is not due to the other. 'Tis Christ that employs us both, and therefore, he alone is to be worshipped, and neither. I nor thou: "Worship God, to whom religious worship is justly and peculiarly due."

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns: and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself;

13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture

dipped in blood : and his name is called, The word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Here we have a new and fresh vision, in which St. John saw heaven opened, and Christ represented as a great and victorious General, marching forth with a glorious army for his church's enemies full and final destruction. This great General is first described from the place whence he comes, namely, from heaven ; he is no earthly prince and potentate, but an heavenly monarch. Next, he is said to sit on a white horse, denoting victory, prosperity, and success ; "He is called faithful and true, and righteous," because faithful in his promises, true in his threatenings, righteous in all his dispensations towards his enemies ; he will do them no wrong. Next his eyes are said to be as a flame of fire ; denoting his clear and piercing knowledge, and also his terror as a judge, his eyes being in wrath as a flame of fire ready to consume his enemies. And farther, to show his royal dignity, it is added, "on his head were many crowns," which also denoted his many victories over his many and mighty enemies. And by the name which no man knew but himself, some understand his nature and essence, which is so incomprehensible and unsearchable, as that none but he who is true God, is able to comprehend it fully, or reveal it perfectly. Others by his name, understand his judgments and ways by which he is known, as a man by his name. Observe next, This great and mighty General is described from his "vesture dipped in blood," which denotes the mighty overthrow of his enemies ; the cruellest and proudest of them can expect nothing in the end from him, but extremity of wrath and deserved destruction ! for they must all become his footstool. And his name being called, "The Word of God," speaks dread and terror to antichrist, who slanders, opposes, corrupts and suppresses, and offers all manner of indignities to the word of God ; and exercises the utmost cruelties against the preachers and professors of it. Observe farther, That after the description of this great and mighty General, follows next the description of his armies, his attendants, and followers, namely, the holy angels and glorified saints, ver. 14. these also ride upon white horses, as their General before them, and are clothed in "fine linen, white and clean." Behold the comely conformity, and purity, and holiness, between the general and his soldiers, between Christ and his

followers ; they both appear on white horses, suitable to one another. Christ will admit none to be his followers that are not like him. Next, we have the *weapon* described, ver. 15. which Christ makes use of for the destruction of antichrist, and all his church's enemies ; and that is, "a sword, a sharp sword," the holy scriptures, particularly the threatenings of the word, with which he will smite all the wicked nations that side with antichrist against him and his kingdom ; dealing with his enemies as men do with grapes gathered into a wine-press, which they can easily crush. Lastly, He is described by a new name of royal dignity and supreme power, being called "King of kings, Lord of lords." And this name is said to be written on his vesture, and on his thigh, partly for perspicuity, that all might take notice of it ; and partly for permanency, to show that as long as himself lasts, which is for ever, so long shall his kingdom and dominion over all endure.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ;

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

After the description of the General and his army, follows next the event and success of the battle, which is a prodigious slaughter of the church's enemies : and as eagles and vultures, and other birds of prey, do attend an army, and flock where the slain lie in like manner, almighty God here invites the fowls of the air to sup upon the carcasses of his slain enemies. Antichrist would not suffer the dead bodies of the witnesses to be buried, but to be cast out, and lie in the streets ; and here God metes to him the same measure ; their carcasses also shall be a supper for the birds and the fowls of the air. "Come to the supper of the great God," to the slaughter of Antichrist and his adherents. Where note, That by calling it a supper, two things may be probably intended. 1. The facility and easiness of the victory ; that Christ and his church's enemies will not put him hard to it to overcome them ; as we proverbially say, they will be but a supper to him, or a breakfast for him. 2. The word supper seems to import, that this shall be the last effort, the last great opposition, that antichrist and the church's enemies shall ever make against Christ to the end of the world, as the supper is the last meal of the day.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies,

gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse; which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Observe here, 1. The final issue of the great battle, namely, the total ruin of all the enemies of the church; the beast and false prophet were taken, and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Behold the punishment of idolaters and idolatry; the false prophets had cheated credulous princes and people, with his pretended miracles, into idolatry; he had cast others into a bed of fornication, and God casts him into a bed of flames. Lastly, it is added concerning the remnant, that they were slain with the sword of his mouth: That is, by Christ's judicial sentence, they were righteously adjudged to be slain, and when they were so, all the fowls were filled with their flesh. Where note, That these persons were not excused, because they followed their leaders, and did what they bade them; Christ commands, for all that, that they also should be slain. Lord! how vain will the plea of many sinners be at the great day; we followed our guides, we did as we saw others do before us! Remember we, that God has given us a rule to walk by, the inallible and inflexible rule of his word: and neither the example of the most, nor of the best, must influence us to act contrary thereunto: for if we will do as the most do, we must be contented to go where the most go, even into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

CHAPTER XX.

AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand:

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan, and bound him a thousand years.

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit,

and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.

This chapter begins with a fresh and glorious vision which St. John had of an angel's descending from heaven, to bind satan for a thousand years: and herein we have observable, 1. The person binding, *the angel* of the covenant, Christ Jesus, (for he only has the keys of the bottomless pit, of hell, and of death, Rev. i. 18.) This angel is here said to come down from heaven, and with a great chain in his hand, denoting his omnipotent power and sovereignty over satan, and his ability to restrain him. Observe, 2. The person bound, satan: Where mark, That he is set forth here by five names; he is called the *dragon*, the *serpent*, the *old serpent*, the *devil*, and *satan*. And note, Christ's power is set forth in as many terms as the devil has titles; he is said to lay hold on him, to bind him, to cast him into the bottomless pit, to shut him in, or seal him up for a thousand years: that is, to restrain him, and render him incapable of doing such mischief to the world as he had done before. Observe, 3. What we are to understand by Christ's binding satan: some thereby do understand Christ's overthrowing the power of the devil in the heathen world, his casting down those strong-holds of satan, to wit, ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and lying oracles, by the light and power of the gospel, preached among the Gentiles; his curbing of satan, that he should no more cozen the world with heathenish delusions as he had done. Others understand this binding of satan to be after the destruction of antichrist; when the Jews shall be converted, and there shall follow a quiet and peaceable state of the church for a long time, styled here a thousand years; during which time satan shall be bound, and there shall be no molestation from him. From the whole learn, That be the devil never so devilish, Christ has power to overpower him. Christ has a great chain in his hand to bind satan: Intimating, That how mighty and malicious soever satan is, Christ has him as a dog in a chain. But observe a little, how Christ's power meets with, and masters satan's power; the devil carries power in his name, he is called a *dragon*: in his nature, as being an *angel*: in his numbers which are numberless; but Christ overpowereth him, so that he cannot do his own will without him; he bound him in the execution of his malice, though his malice be boundless. Satan is bound in a double chain, in a chain of justice, and a chain of providence: he cannot move a foot, either to tempt or trouble us, without a permission from Christ:

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them: and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast,

neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

These words are conceived to set forth the glorious and happy condition of the church of Christ here on earth, during the time of satan's restraint; and the term of a *thousand years*, shows that it will be the longest happy condition that ever the militant church enjoyed, for purity of ordinances, for increase of light and knowledge, for the power of godliness, for the abundance of professors, for the more open and public profession of christianity, for outward freedom and peace, and all this for a long continuance of time: which happy state and condition is here set forth by *thrones*, showing the saints' dignity and dominion over their enemies. And whereas St. John says, he saw the souls of martyrs, who had shed their blood for Christ, the meaning, say some, is, *He saw them* in their successors of the same faith, those pious christians which should at that time live, and in their principles and practices are like the holy martyrs; these shall then enjoy a more quiet, happy, and comfortable state, during this time, than the servants of God enjoyed at any time before. Yet observe farther, That this glorious condition of the church is not absolute, but, comparative only, both in respect of purity, and in respect of peace; for whilst the church is on this side heaven, there will be both corruptions without, and temptations with crosses; hypocrites will be, and offences will come, though freedom from all these will at that time be more than usual: yet taking up the cross, and being conformed to Christ in his sufferings, will be duties belonging to saints whilst the world endures. Observe, lastly, That yet there is no ground from hence to expect Christ's personal reign upon earth, or his corporeal presence with his church here; for it is not said that he reigned *with them*, but that they reigned *with him*; denoting, that his kingdom is spiritual, consisting in purity and peace, in righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost. As to a personal reign of Christ then with his people here on earth, it seems not probable, because the scripture is silent of it, and joins Christ's personal coming, and the day of judgment together. Besides, were Christ personally upon earth, how should we enjoy him and converse with him? 'Tis impossible we should enjoy a glorified Christ till our bodies be spiritualized, which they will never be till they get to heaven. Once more, What will become of the saints during these thousand years of Christ's supposed presence with them! Either they will live all that thousand years (which is not rational to suppose,) or they will die in that time; if they die, and go to heaven, they will go *from* Christ, and not *to* him, and must for a time be absent from him, instead of being for ever with him; and doubtless, heaven will be a melancholy place, if Christ be out of it. The sum then is this, "That the saints living and reigning with Christ, holds forth the flourishing condition of the church militant: the expression of sitting upon thrones, speaks an honorable condition that the church will be certainly in, after the downfall of antichrist: and the term of a thousand years, shows it

will be the longest happy condition that ever the church enjoyed." God Almighty hasten that desirable time!

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power: but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

By the rest of the dead, understand the subdued enemies of the church in their successors, who are said to be dead politically, in respect of their outward condition, which will now be very low, *they lived not again* a political life: that is, they did not regain or recover that power to persecute the church, which once they had, but are now divested of in great measure, namely, till the thousand years are finished; then they shall have liberty again to vent their enmity against the church, joining with Gog and Magog, as their predecessors, the worshippers of the beast, did combine together before them. *This is the first resurrection*, that is, the living again of the saints in that glorious manner before described in holy societies with greater degrees of purity and peace. Learn, That the reformation of the church, after the ruin of its Pagan and Papal enemies is as a splendid and glorious resurrection to her; and accordingly, such as are sharers in this political resurrection are pronounced blessed; *blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection*; that is, blessed are they that shall have their lot to live in this happy time, when the means of holiness will more abound, and the measures of holiness be more extensive and universal. *The second death* shall never affect them; everlasting misery shall be escaped by them; and *they shall be priests unto God*, to offer up, not expiatory, but gratulatory, sacrifices of prayer and praise unto him; and as the priesthood is spiritual, so is the kingdom also. *They shall reign* spiritually over their lusts and corruptions, and have greater power to overcome temptations, and this for a thousand years; that is, during the time of their living here, in that part of the happy millenium in which they shall live; they shall in that time enjoy a more holy, happy, peaceful and flourishing condition than the church of God did ever so long enjoy in former times. Some will have all this to be understood concerning a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin to a life of holiness and grace; over such indeed the second death, or everlasting misery, shall have no power; but though this may be alluded to, yet a political, not a spiritual resurrection seems here to be principally intended.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Observe here, 1. A prophetic prediction, that when the long time of the church's liberty and peace shall be expired, which is here expressed and set forth under the notion of a thousand years, God will then take off his restraint from the devil, and he shall influence the wicked world once more to make opposition against his church; "When the thousand years are expired, satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Behold here satan's restless malice against mankind, and particularly against the church of Christ. Observe next, That satan is first said to deceive the nations, and then to gather them together to battle against the saints: the same saints, either in their persons, or in their successors, who did formerly reign, will now suffer: but by whom? by Gog and Magog; where is probably an allusion to those two names mentioned often in the Old Testament, who were the last enemies of the Jewish church before Christ's first coming. In like manner, the last enemies of the christian church are here set forth by that name, who shall be utterly destroyed a little before Christ's second coming to judgment. Satan, with all his united power, and combined force, will attempt the whole body of the christian church before his last and fatal overthrow. Observe, lastly, That after the destruction of these agents and instruments of satan's fury, his own fall and final destruction is declared; which may be called his second imprisonment in that lake of fire and brimstone, which is both ceaseless and endless, there to keep company with the beast and false prophet to all eternity. Behold here the deceiver and the deceived plagued together; the devil that deceived, and the beast and false prophet that were deceived by him, and were his instruments to deceive others, are cast together into the lake of fire, to be tormented for ever. Satan was indeed condemned to this before, and reserved thereunto, but the actual and final execution thereof is suspended till the end come.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face

the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Here is another vision which St. John saw, namely, a lively representation of the great day of Judgment, when all, both good and bad, that ever lived, shall be raised and sentenced according to their works; the state of the wicked is set forth in this chapter, and the happy condition of the righteous in heaven gloriously described in the two next chapters. Observe here, 1. The Judge described, as sitting upon a throne or seat of judgment; a *throne*, to denote that this Judge is a King; and a *white throne*, to denote the purity and righteousness of this Judge; and a *great white throne*, because erected for a great Judge, and for a great service, namely, the judging of the whole world. Observe, 2. The dreadful majesty and glorious power of this Judge declared, that neither heaven nor earth are able to abide his presence, but are said, "to flee away, and that there was no place found for them." Observe, 3. The persons judged are here described, and that, 1. By their condition and qualification, all the dead, both small and great; all that ever lived, and all that shall then be found alive. 2. By their posture; they stand before the Judge, while he sits to show his authority. 3. By the manner of proceeding which is represented as being after the form of well-ordered judicatories here on earth; wherein the books are produced, namely, the book of God's omniscience, and the book of conscience, and the book of the law, and the book of the gospel. They that had not the written law, shall be judged by the law of nature; they that had the written law, are to be judged by that; and they that had the gospel, to be judged by that; and every one according to their works. Observe, 4. The execution of this sentence of this great Judge upon the wicked and impenitent world; they are cast into the lake of fire

which is the second death. From the whole, learn, 1. That it is certain that there shall, and necessary that there should, be a day of judgment. 2. That in that day there will be no exemption of any persons from the examination of the Judge; *I saw all the dead, small and great stand before God.* 3. That Jesus Christ, called here God, (which clearly proves his deity) shall come in the clouds to judge the world; and will then be found such a Judge as the riches of the wealthiest cannot bribe; such a Judge as the power of the mightiest cannot daunt; such a Judge as the subtilty of the wisest cannot delude; such a Judge as there is no appealing from, no repealing of his sentence. Learn, 4. That as the same persons shall be judged, who formerly lived, so in the same bodies that died, and were either buried in the earth, or consumed in the sea: *The sea gave up her dead*; by which understand all places, though attended with never so many improbable circumstances of a resurrection, shall yet give up the dead. *Death and hell, that is, death and the grave, gave up the dead, which were in them*; that is, by the power of God were made to restore them. Learn, 5. That the sentence denounced will be according to every man's works at the great day; according to the nature and quality of the wicked man's works, shall his judgment and punishment be; according to the sincerity, not according to the imperfection of the righteous man's works, shall his reward be. God grant that the consideration of this may so far influence us, that no profit may tempt us, no pleasure entice us, no power embolden us, no privacy encourage us, to do that thing, of which we cannot give a good account in the day of judgment.

CHAPTER XXI.

In the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, St. John had a vision of the Judgment, and the execution of the sentence on the wicked was briefly declared and set down; in this chapter he has a vision of the New Jerusalem, the holy city, out of which all the wicked are excluded, and the excellencies thereof are more largely insisted upon, for the consolation of the righteous: concerning which he thus speaks:

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there was no more sea:

2 And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

By the new heavens and the new earth here, all understand a new state and face of the church; but some apply it to the state of the church militant here upon earth, and others to the state of the church triumphant in heaven,

Accordingly they take the new heavens and the new earth to be the effect of that great change which shall be made by fire at the universal conflagration: and they are called *new*, not so much in regard of substance, as in respect of qualities, being now for nature more stable and for beauty more glorious. *Quest.* But what use shall there be of this new heaven and new earth? and who shall dwell therein? *Ans.* We cannot tell, but must rest satisfied with what God hath told us, that therein shall dwell *righteousness*; and it will be a standing monument of God's power and greatness: it is added, that "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;" not by annihilation, but by a qualitative mutation. *And no more sea*: that is, say some, as it was before, turbulent, changeable, subject to corruption and vanity; say others, no more troublesome state of things, which is oft-times signified by the sea. A new and glorious state of things was undoubtedly here designed relating to the church. Observe next, The character St. John gives of the glorious state of the church triumphant, ver. 2. He compares her, 1. To a beautiful city, for amplitude and largeness, for compact structure, and for commodious habitation; she is called *holy*, because no unclean thing can enter into her, and because that holiness shall there be perfected which was here begun. 2. To an adorned bride; no spouse on her marriage day so adorned as she was. The church in heaven is so called, to denote her dignity, and the love which Christ bears to her, and the delight which he takes in her, which is so continual, as if it were always a wedding-day; and she is adorned for him, and adorned by him, with spiritual beauty, and glory, and perfection of grace.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

Observable is that variety of expressions which the Holy Ghost here makes use of, to set forth the excellency of the church triumphant by. 1. She is blest with God's immediate presence and abode, of which the tabernacle was a sign; the Lord manifesting himself in heaven unto his saints in a more immediate way than ever he did unto them here on earth. *The tabernacle of God is with men*; and to show the permanency of this privilege, it is added, *He shall dwell with them*; after an inhabitation here by grace, shall follow a cohabitation hereafter in glory. Next it is said, *They shall be his people, and he will be their God*; which must not be so understood, as if that relation did now begin between them, but the comfort of that relation is now perfectly understood, and they reap the complete advantage of that covenant-promise, whose sweetness

they did only taste before. 2. Having described the positive good which the triumphant church shall eternally rest in; St. John next sets forth the private evils, which they shall everlastingly be freed from. All sorrow, and all the causes of sorrow, shall be removed; they shall have no outward occasion, nor inward disposition to weep: there shall be no more death, but immortality and eternal life; nor any more pain or sickness, but pleasure for evermore. Lord! what a sovereign cordial is this against all our present sorrows and sufferings! to consider the time is at hand when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, all sorrows, and the causes of sorrow, banished from our hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess our souls, and we shall be with our Lord for ever, to obey him with vigor, to praise him with cheerfulness, to love him above measure, to fear him without torment, to serve him without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality!

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the end; I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely,

Note here, 1. How these new heavens and a new earth come to be effected and made, namely, by the omnipotent power of Christ. Behold, I make all things new; a good argument to encourage us to go unto Christ by prayer, for renewing grace. Surely, he that makes new heavens can make new hearts; he that renews an old world, can renew us in the spirit of our minds, and make old things pass away, and cause all things to become new. Next he commands St. John to write that these words set down here and throughout this prophecy, are true and faithful. We see then that the holy scriptures were written at the Lord's command, and therefore from him they do derive their authority. Observe, 2. The word of assurance here uttered by Christ, for the confirmation of what he had before declared and promised, he said unto me, It is done; signifying thereby, that it is as certain as if it were already done; namely, whatever he had promised relating to his church's happiness, and all that he had threatened relating to her enemies' destruction: let not the church then at any time stagger in her faith. Observe, 3. The title which Christ is pleased here to resume, which before was given by himself, chap. i. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, to show, that as he first made the world, so he was now about to put a period to it, and would give to every thirsty or believing soul an everlasting life in the New Jerusalem, which shall no more decay, than water, which is in an ever springing fountain, can be dried up.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all

things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Observe here, 1. That our desires of happiness must be accompanied with endeavours after it, or they will be ineffectual; to thirsting in the former verse, he joins overcoming in this verse: we must not barely wish, but work; not only talk, but fight; and not only fight but overcome our spiritual enemies in fighting, or we are miserable; how strong soever our desires after happiness may be supposed to be, without proportionable endeavours, we can have no good ground of hope. Observe, 2. He that overcometh, that is, he that is overcoming, he that daily maintains the combat, though he has not yet obtained a perfect conquest over his spiritual enemies, yet keeps the field with sword in hand, resolving never to throw down his weapon, but to die as a conqueror, rather than be taken prisoner. Observe, 3. The encouraging promise given to the conqueror, He shall inherit all things. Where note, The extent and latitude of the promise, the enjoying all things, that is, all blessings and benefits, all joys and comforts that are requisite to make him perfectly and perpetually happy. Note also, God's way and manner of dispensing the mercy promised, and that is by free gift, he shall inherit all things, not merit any thing: an inheritance is *gratuitum paterni amoris pignus*, an estate freely given by the father to his children. Observe, 4. A superadded promise, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son;" that is, I will give him the manifestation of his adoption before angels and men; I am now his God, and he is now my son, but the world knoweth it not; they brand my people for a generation of hypocrites, and sometimes they call in question their own sincerity, and their title to the privilege of adoption; but at the great day I will publicly own them before angels and men, and make it appear that I love them as a father, and they shall live with me as sons for ever and ever; "He that overcometh," &c.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

After a description given of the celestial happiness of the righteous at the day of judgment, here follows the eternally miserable condition of the wicked; and eight several sorts of sinners are here summed up, who shall be excluded out of heaven, and cast into hell; namely, the fearful, such as dare not own Christ, or for fear of suffering have disowned him, or apostatized and revolted from him; unbelievers, such especially as have sat under the dispensation of the gospel, but have rejected our Lord Jesus Christ, and refused to come unto him that they might have life: the abominable, such as live in the practice of sins against nature, sodomy, and such uncleanness as renders them abominable in the sight of God and man, Rom. i. 26. murderers, such as de-

stroy either the soul, body, or good name of their neighbours, especially persecutors; the whore and her followers, who are drunk with the blood of the saints; *whoremongers* of all sorts, both spiritual and corporal, particularly such as are guilty of uncleanness in a conjugal state; *sorcerers*, such as exercise witchcraft, consult with the devil, and trade with familiar spirits; *idolaters* of all sorts and kinds, such as worship false gods, or the true God after a false manner; covetous persons, who make the world their God, and sensual persons who make their belly their God; lastly, all *liars*, those who lie with the lip, and talk falsely; those that lie in their lives, as all hypocrites do, whose practice gives their profession the lie: those who are the inventors of the doctrine of lies, which is no better than the doctrine of devils; these, all these shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, that is, in exquisite torments, and everlasting. From the whole, note, 1. How the timorous and fearful stand in the front of all those vile sinners, whose ways lead down to the chambers of death and hell. Behold here! God's martial law executed upon cowards and renegadoes, whose fear makes them revolt from Christ in time of danger. Think of this, all you timorous and faint-hearted professors! who cannot bear the thought of lying in a nasty dungeon for owning Christ, how will you endure to lie in a lake of fire and brimstone for disowning of him! Is not the little finger of an angry God heavier than the loins of all the tyrants and persecutors in the world? Note, 2. That although eight sorts of sinners only are here reckoned up, yet all others who live and die impenitently in any known sin, besides these, of what kind soever, are certainly included, and their damnation implied also, as well as these; for whosoever lives in the habitual practice of any known sin, without converting from it unto God, is certainly in a state of damnation. Note, lastly, That the sins here mentioned must not be understood copulatively, but disjunctively; we must not suppose that such as are guilty of all the before-mentioned sins, are the persons threatened with hell fire; but such as are with allowance guilty of any one of these, or of any other besides these, and continuing impenitently in them.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal:

12 And had a wall great and high, and

had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

13 On the east, three gates, on the north, three gates, on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

St John having delivered, before, a general account of the saints' happiness in heaven, descends here to a more particular description of it. Heaven, called the New Jerusalem, is represented by a city, with magnificent gates and walls; and the church, the collective body of glorified saints, is here called the Lamb's wife espoused before, but the marriage solemnized now. Note here, That as the earthly Jerusalem was a type of the church militant, so the church triumphant is called the New Jerusalem, and compared to a great city, for the multitude of its members; and styled holy, because sanctity is the special qualification of those who are the inhabitants of it. Note, 2 The light which is found in this city, it is not compared to the light of the sun, for that is attended with scorching heat; nor to the light of the moon, which is variable and uncertain; but to the light of precious stones, which is clear and pure, and has nothing annoying in it. Note, 3 The great safety and security of this city, and of all the citizens inhabiting therein: here is a wall great and high: Walls are for defence (called *mœnia a muniendo*) and the higher the wall, the greater the defence; God's omnipotency is a wall, and will be an invincible bulwark about his saints in heaven, nothing shall endanger them, nothing shall offend them. Note, 4. Here are twelve gates, for convenience of entrance into this city on all sides, and to give free and easy access from all parts, east, west, north, and south; to signify, that the church in heaven will be made up of persons coming from all parts as Christ foretold, Mat. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29. They shall come from the east, &c. and shall sit down with Abraham. The triumphant church is a collective body of believers, of all nations, kindreds, and people, tongues and languages. Note, lastly, That as the names of workmen are sometimes set upon the foundation-stones, by which it is well known in after-ages who were the builders; in like manner it is here intimated, that as the ancient Jewish church was founded in twelve patriarchs, so the latter christian church in and by twelve apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, the foundation of both, he being *fundamentum fundans*, they *fundamenta fundata*, teaching us, that our faith must be built upon the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and upon no other doctrine whatsoever, though it has a pretended stamp of infallibility upon it.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16 And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs; The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

Still St. John proceeds in the description of the heavenly state, and the church triumphant in it! this is called a *city*, in respect to its magnificent building, comely order, and invincible strength; a *great city*, in regard of its largeness and capaciousness, being full of glorified saints and angels; and *Jerusalem* because of that everlasting peace which is there enjoined, as the Hebrew word signifies; and here an account is given of the measuring of this great city. We read of its measuring before, chap. xi. but differently from its measuring now; then it was measured by a man, now by an angel; then by an ordinary reed, now by a golden reed; intimating the transcendency of the state of the church now, to what it was before, and representing the firmness, perfection, and greatness of the New Jerusalem. Here note, An observable difference in the measuring of the church militant, and of the church triumphant; the church militant, upon a just measure by the reed of the word, is found unequal in its parts, some parts of it are purer and better than others, but in the New Jerusalem all parts are equal in perfection and purity; the length is as large as the breadth, and height equal to either; the church of Christ in heaven shall be exceeding large and great, perfect and complete, nothing shall be found irregular in it, all things can there endure the measuring reed, and abide the exactest trial.

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire: the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

Some will have all this to signify and represent the purest state of the church here upon earth: but if there shall be any state on this side eternity which answereth this glorious representation, how much more will the perfect glorious church in heaven fully answer it? What was said of Jerusalem of old, may be truly spoken of the New Jerusalem above, Ps. lxxxvii. 3. *Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God*; her pavement of gold, her gates of pearl, her walls of precious stone, denoting the durability and permanency of the saints' happiness, the delight and satisfaction that accompany it, and the resplendent glory of it. As gold excels all metals, and is not subject to corruption, as precious stones are full of splendor and glory, in like manner will the mansions of heaven be most glorious, the conversation there pure and incorrupt, affording saints such an entire satisfaction as entirely exceeds all that the most rich and glorious things of this world can afford for the gratification of the outward senses.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it,

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Observe here, 1. St John declares that the New Jerusalem shall not want either those spiritual supplies or natural advantages which Jerusalem below stood in need of; no need of any temple there for external worship and ordinances, which it is our duty to wait upon God in here: what need of an house of prayer for them that want nothing to pray for? what need of ministers and ordinances, to teach them whose knowledge is perfected? what need of sacraments to remember Christ in and by, when they shall always see Christ face to face? Again, what need of the natural light of the sun and moon, where the Sun of Righteousness for ever shineth, and where God is all in all? Happy they that enjoy him, for they enjoy all good in him and by him, he being the fountain of all goodness! Observe, 2. Having thus described the city, St John next declares who shall be the citizens, namely, the nations that are saved, all believing Jews and converted Gentiles, called elsewhere, "the general assembly and church of the first born," which are a great multitude; these shall be admitted into it, and partake of the glory and happiness of it: and whereas it is added, that "kings do bring their honor and glory into it," this is not to be so understood as if there would be a distinction in heaven between kings and subjects; no, all the saints there are kings and priests unto God; neither is it meant that kings shall carry their earthly glory and honor with them into heaven; but that kings who shall be so happy as to come thither, shall see all their honor and glory swallowed up in the glory and happiness of that place and state, and shall confess that all their crowns are infinitely short of the crown of glory, and that their thrones are dunghills compared with the dignity of this throne. Observe, 3. It is declared what perfect security and peace the saints enjoy in the New Jerusalem, together with their glory, riches, and happiness: this is signified, ver. 25. *The gate shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night to shut them in; the gates shall be open to show their peaceable state and secure tranquillity, without fear of any hostile invasion or entry of enemies, either by force or fraud. It is added, There shall be no night there, either in a literal or a metaphorical sense, no darkness, nor interruption of happiness, nor fear of danger, nothing that can either disturb or disquiet. Observe, 4. Who the persons are that shall be everlastingly debarred the enjoyment of all this happiness, all that have defiled themselves by lust and uncleanness, every person that hath not, by holiness of heart and life, separated himself from sin and wickedness, and dedicated himself to God and his service; nothing that defileth, nothing that worketh abomination; no open scandalous sinner, or he that maketh a lie, shall be admitted: to tell a lie is bad, but to make a lie is much worse; this is the devil's sin in a special manner, it is his by temptation, it is his by approbation, it is his by practice; he is a liar, and the father of lies and liars; it were well if our customary liars would consider it. The sum of all is, That without grace and holiness here, there can be no expectation of glory and happiness hereafter; this fits at once for the employment of heaven, and the enjoyments of heaven, it makes meet for the inheritance in light, and if we have not our present fruit unto holiness, our end can never be everlasting life.*

CHAPTER XXII.

AND he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

St. John, in this and the four following verses, goes on with the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, which he had begun in the former chapter: and here we have observable, 1. The city described as having a clear river running through it, and this of the water of life, an allusion doubtless, to the earthly paradise, Gen. ii. which was well watered, without which accommodation no place can be happy; the heavenly paradise here, or the New Jerusalem, is said to have a pure river of water in it, denoting the pure and unmixed joys of heaven, and those "rivers of pleasure," which are at God's right hand for evermore." Here is not a well of water, but a river, not of muddy or feculent water, but clear as crystal; not corruptible or dead, but living water, water of life. Observe, 2. The head or spring of this river declared from whence it doth arise, not from the hills, which may be cut off, diverted, or dried up, but it proceeds out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and therefore can no more fail, than God and Christ can fail: no river can fail, unless the springs that feed it fail; the saints in heaven shall be refreshed with such consolations as flow from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and their comforts cannot fail till they fail; he showed me a pure river of water, &c. proceeding out of the throne of God.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits: and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Note here, 1. That as there was a river and a tree of life in the terrestrial paradise, so in allusion thereunto, both are said to be in the heavenly paradise: behold here a tree of such vast proportion and extent, that its branches extend to both sides, that all may receive benefit by it; whom can this agree with but Jesus Christ, who is called a tree of life, because from him we have our natural, our spiritual, and our eternal life? From this tree do bud forth all the fruits of grace and comfort, and that for all seasons and conditions. In Christ, 1. Our souls have all necessities for food and physic, *Its leaves are for healing, as well as its fruits for food.* 2. All variety of fruits, called here twelve manner of fruits, that is, variety of graces and comforts of all sorts. 3. In him are these fruits at all times: this tree bears fruit every month, winter fruits as well as summer fruits, even in the black months of sickness and death. Christ is continually distributing of his divine fulness to the satisfaction

of his people; he is all in all, in the enjoyment of mercy; he is all in all, in the want of mercy; he is all, in order to his people's salvation; and he is all in their glorification.

Quest. But will there be any need either of food or physic in heaven? If not, what need of the fruits of this tree for food, or of its leaves for healing? *Ans.* We cannot suppose that in the heavenly state there will be any want either of meat or medicines, any hunger that shall require food, or any sickness to stand in need of physic; but as food and physic are the instrumental means of the preservation of natural life, without which it will certainly and suddenly decay; in like manner our Lord Jesus Christ doth not only give spiritual life unto his people, but he is the conserving cause of it, he doth maintain, and will preserve it without the least decay to all eternity: thus are the leaves of this tree for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads,

5 And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

St. John has not yet done with this copious description of the New Jerusalem, but here he closes it by doing these two things. 1. He shows what shall not be found there, *there shall be no curse*, no accursed person, or accursed thing, no sin, nor any thing sinful, that deserves the curse; and *there shall be no night there*, no darkness of ignorance or error, no darkness of affliction, temptation or desertion, no night of natural darkness, no night of spiritual darkness, much less of eternal darkness, which is the portion of the wicked; farther, there shall be no need of natural light, the light of the sun: no need of artificial light, the light of a candle; no need of the spiritual light of the world and ordinances, all which shall then and there cease. 2. He shows what there shall be there, namely, 1. *The throne of God and the Lamb*, that is, the glorious and everlasting presence of God and Christ, as on a throne of royal majesty, insomuch, that the name of the city may be *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there. 2. It is added, that *his servant shall serve him*, that is, the glorious angels and glorified saints shall continually stand before him, and administer unto him, not spend their eternity in a perpetual gazing upon God, but executing his commands, obeying him with vigor, praising him with cheerfulness, loving him above measure, fearing him without torment, trusting him without despondency, serving him without lassitude and weariness,

without interruption or distraction, praising God and singing eternal Hallelujahs to the Lamb for ever and ever. 3. It is declared, *that they shall see God's face*, which imports fruition as well as vision of him, together with a sweet and satisfactory delectation in him. St. Mat. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. *Blessed are the pure in heart*, and holy in life, *for they see God*; that is, have a clear apprehensive, though not a full and comprehensive knowledge of him. 4. *His name shall be in their foreheads*; his name, that is, his holy nature, his image and likeness, by which they shall be known, as a man is by his name; an allusion probably to the highpriest, who had holiness to the Lord written on his frontlet; or a reflection upon the worshippers of the beast, who have his name on their foreheads; in like manner the name of God shall be on his servants' foreheads; they are thankful for imperfect lineaments here, but shall be satisfied with his likeness then and there. Lastly, it is closed with this, *they shall reign for ever and ever*, not for a thousand years, as the militant church is said to reign on earth after antichrist's destruction, but for eternal ages, and this not partially, but fully and completely, when all the spiritual enemies, sin, satan, and the world, yea, death itself shall be put under their feet, and that for ever. From the whole learn, That when we are at any time dejected upon the account of our dark and imperfect knowledge, or afflicted upon the occasion of many wearisome nights and days of sin and sorrow, of trouble and temptation, of misery and desertion, which we have here on earth, let this meditation comfort us, that the happy day is coming, when there shall be no night, but an eternal sabbath of rest, light and life, with plenty of all good things, even *fulness of joy and rivers of pleasure for evermore*.

*O Lord, the well of life so pure
Doth ever flow from thee,
And in thy light thy saints are sure
Eternal light to see.*

—"The Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel, to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And, when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do

